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Trans-modernism and a Legon tradition of African philosophy

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Abstract
Philosophic strands certainly underlie the characteristic claims of modernism, the creed whose foundational assumptions postmodern philosophy repudiates. This paper defends the thesis that three Ghanaian philosophers, who have been affiliated to the University of Ghana, Legon, have successfully created and defended a systematic and humanistic approach to philosophy in the African context that merits the status of a tradition of philosophy; and that these pioneers of a Legon tradition of philosophy espouse an eclectic, “trans-modernist” outlook that appropriates aspects of modernism and rejects some post-modernist features.

Keywords: Trans-modernism, Legon tradition, African Philosophy, postmodernism, modernism

Introduction
Three Ghanaian philosophers – Kwasi Wiredu, W. E. Abraham, and Kwame Gyekye - have had extensive association with the Department of Philosophy1, University of Ghana, Legon and exerted decisive influence on its philosophical orientation and the development of the current corpus of African philosophy. From their thoughts and orientation has evolved what I term a “trans-modernist” philosophical praxis. I have argued elsewhere that their normative emphasis configures a coherent discourse that justifies joining them into a tradition of Ghanaian political philosophy2.

1 Now called Department of Philosophy and Classics.
I limit my ambitions here to asserting their role in pioneering a nascent Legon tradition of normative philosophy.

By “trans-modernity”, I allude to a conscious appropriation of foundational concepts and principles of the modernist canon for ideas and objectives that those elemental blocks of the canon can neither propose nor sustain, and to doing so without a methodic rejection of modernist thought. The Legon philosophers displayed dexterity in negotiating their conceptual responses through the modernist framework, without claiming to be philosophizing beyond it. Modernist concepts and aspirations were their vehicles, but they intentionally moved these vehicles toward destinations that could not entirely be claimed by modernist visions. Thus, they can be identified neither with modernism nor postmodernity, as they selectively appropriated and rejected features of both.

The philosophical orientation and praxis of these three thinkers, which configure the tradition of philosophy to which I allude in the first paragraph of this paper, are formed around rational humanism, a philosophical method, and three substantive themes. These themes are (1) the relevance of tradition to modernity, (2) the appropriate form of democracy as means of legitimating political power, and (3) the relative status of person and community. Despite their several differences, their convergences on method and thematic concerns justify joining them into a tradition. The three themes reflect concerns that emerge from a postcolonial condition, and the three philosophers responded to them, along with several others, as members of the first and second generations of professionally trained Africans philosophers in postcolonial Africa, such as Hountondji (1983) and Oruka (1990, 1997). It would therefore be misleading to insist that their philosophical concerns and practice place them in an exclusive category apart from those of other 20th century African philosophers. However, the claim that the works of three Ghanaian philosophers disclose a distinctive approach to African philosophical practice can also be established.

Democratic theory, the relationship between person and state, and the evaluation of traditions of thought are recurrent
themes in political theory. But unlike other African philosophers, the reflections on these themes by the Legon thinkers appear in two interlocking modes. The first is reactive, and responds to the pejorative characterizations of African thought and culture, mainly by Western thinkers, that stretch for hundreds of years and are discernible in the works of Hegel (1956) in the 19th century and, in more recent times, those by Horton (1971). The second is expository, and endeavors to expound their own thinking on these themes and on the philosophical fertility of African traditions of thought. In the Legon philosophers, the two modes always dovetail into each other, as their insistence on the relevance of African traditions to modernity invariably reflected in their critique of the denigration of African thought by Western thinkers and their confidence in the value of the constructive tenets of African traditions for modern life.

The conundrum of the modern and postmodern: A critical perspective

Before I begin to address my main subject, trans-modernism, it would be appropriate to make some drawn-out introductory remarks about modernity and postmodernity. Most narratives of the story of the project of modernity recognize its genesis in efforts by Enlightenment philosophers and their followers to develop objective science, moral universalism and aesthetic principles “according to their inner logic” (Habermas, 1981, p. 9). The story will argue how these aspirations and the efforts expended to achieve them bred, in the opinion of Habermas (1981), expectations that the arts and sciences would promote the control of natural forces, an understanding of the world and of the self, moral progress, the justice of institutions, and the happiness of human beings (pp. 8-9). These aspirations make evident that the intellectual framework of modernity contains at least three salient strands of philosophic thinking: metaphysics, epistemology and normative theory.

Several authors have identified a prejudicial streak at the core of the metaphysics of modernism, which projects the being of the Western human as ontologically superior to other forms of
human existence, and as exemplifying human being-ness per se (Serequeberhan, 1998, pp. 142-143; Eze, 1998, p. 214). And cogent arguments have been advanced to indicate how these claims are not conclusions of pure abstract speculation on being, but conclusions saturated with intention to demonstrate that racial distinctions are necessary and rational, and on the basis of this to Europeanize humanity by substituting the model and standard of European personality for the fact of human being-ness. Serequeberhan (1998) portrays this as a “metaphysical pretext” (p.145) and “pervasive bias located in modernity’s self-consciousness of itself” (p. 142); a bias which, no doubt, constitutes a fallacy of composition but which places the very existence of the ‘other’ into question, thereby depriving the largest portion of the human race the status of humanity.

The prejudicial metaphysics of modernity had its most candid expression in the philosophies of Hume, Kant and Hegel, foremost exponents of Enlightenment philosophy. Hume asserts in an infamous footnote to his essay “Of national characters,” in his *Essays, moral, political and literary*, among others that: “I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient GERMAN the present TARTARS have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of which none ever discovered any symptom of ingenuity” (Hume [1742/1777], 1985, p. 629). In *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and sublime*, Kant outlines a taxonomy of race in which the European is atop, and has this to say of the African: “The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that
arises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through special gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color” (Kant [(1764, 1960), pp. 110-111. For his part, Hegel’s denigration of Africa proceeds from his claim that Africa is outside the framework of history, and has therefore contributed nothing to world history (Hegel, 1956, p. 99).

Irele (1983) rightly argues that sediments of their metaphysics of the person pervaded post-Enlightenment practical philosophy and stimulated the beginnings of anthropology in the 19th century, which in turn legitimated the ideology of Western colonial domination of Africa (pp. 12-14). Hume’s infamous bigotry had immense philosophical consequences. It certainly influenced Kant’s philosophical anthropology, which sought to prove that the African is less human than Whites (Eze, 1997, p.122). This pronouncement is rightfully interpreted as contributing to establish a threshold notion of moral personhood according to which some races are “excluded from full membership of the moral/political Community” (Mills 2005, p. 181). What this means is that Africans are disqualified from benefitting from the prescriptions of the categorical imperative³. Moellendorf (1992) observes, the justification of colonialism and slavery in terms of the European mission of civilization was the ideological raw material at hand for Hegel (p. 253). In fact, Hegel was emphatic in his endorsement of the slavery of Africans: “Negroes are enslaved by Europeans and sold to America. Bad as this may be, their lot in their own land is even worse, since there a slavery quite as absolute exists” (Hegel,

³ A foundational principle in Kant’s ethics, which prescribes that all human beings be treated as ends in themselves but not as means to some other end.
Such ideology of the Enlightenment, grounded in the denigrated reality of non-European forms of existence, and its residues, justified the practices of the slave trade. Before the nineteenth century, justification of slavery was founded primarily on religious grounds – on rescuing Africans from their ‘primitive religions’ by introducing them to Christianity, the enlightened form of religious faith and practice. And as Stocking (1987), a historian of nineteenth century anthropology indicates, ideas about the ‘inferiority’ of non-Europeans justified European colonial adventure:

Civilizing efforts on behalf of dark-skinned savages could, over time, eliminate savagery from the world, not by destroying savage populations, but by modifying their hereditary incapacity. In the meantime – which might be shorter or longer depending on the weight one gave to present as opposed to cumulative past experience of it was both scientifically and morally respectable for civilized Europeans to take up the white man’s burden. (p. 237)

Enlightenment philosophy underlies the epistemology of modernity, which is characterized by obsession with infallibility as the seal of epistemic certainty and the distinctive feature, reason. This fixation is not confined to discourses on the groundwork of justifiable truth and scientific progress. It applies also to progress in ethical capacity, social change and happiness. Undoubtedly, all these functions of reason are noticeable in the origins of Western philosophy, especially in Plato and Aristotle. Plato prescribed reason as the best ruler of the human psyche and the institutions of society, and the grounds of epistemic certainty are inherited from the status of apodicticity in Aristotelian logic. But Aristotle did not insist on infallibility as the defining feature of certainty, as is shown by his affirmation of synthetic truths as grounds for justification. He conclusively affirms the validity of empirical knowledge in his

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4 Here, apodictic refers to propositions that are demonstrably, necessarily or self-evidently the case.
Posterior analytics\textsuperscript{5}. On the other hand Modernist epistemology, beginning with Descartes’ discovery of the \textit{cogito} and Kant’s re-affirmation of \textit{apodictic} certainty\textsuperscript{6}, rule out the primacy of knowledge by induction and elevate with vehemence the pure activity of reason to the zenith of human capacity. With this, they enthrone reason as an unimpeachable ground of justifiable agency. These Enlightenment obsessions have framed the standard test in epistemological inquiry in Western philosophy, and today the notion of epistemic certainty as infallible and universalizable truth continues to linger in the position that theories are nothing more than organized epistemological orientations “intended to explain universal phenomena across space and time” (Miike, 2006, p. 20).

Within modernist epistemology, then, fundamental concepts of philosophy - and therefore of human thought - were set forth as specimens of culture-neutral reason. This referred merely to the reasoning of the Enlightenment and its intellectual heritage, and yet the ‘inner logic’ of this heritage was taken to validate these concepts. The history of Western thought, in Etherington’s view (1996), has disclosed the logic that sustains this mode of reasoning to be the logic that sustains grand theories such as Liberalism, Marxism and Modernism, and their concomitant universalizing tendencies (p. 30).

For Lyotard (1984), who is credited with introducing the term “postmodernism” into philosophical literature, these features of modernist thought do evoke incredulity (p. xxiv); and to Eitiyebo (2014) they are pernicious and harmful (p. 68). Lyotard argues that history teaches decisively that knowledge and value emerge from “narratives” - interrelated and mutually fortifying discourses within the intellectual scheme of a culture - within which the validity of all claims within that culture can be found embedded (p.8). But modernity assigns privilege to its knowledge narrative

\textsuperscript{5} See Book i.13. And also in Book II.19: II.19, where he states that knowledge of principles are neither innate nor are they acquired from nothing. They must be acquired through a distinctive potentiality we have, and that this potentiality is sense perception. The chain goes like this: What is meant here is that perception leads to memory, which in turn underlies experience; and from experience we acquire the basis for Understanding

\textsuperscript{6} In Kant, as in Aristotle, the apodeictic certainty of a proposition is established when we know it to be necessarily true.
and constructs a “metanarrative” out of its epistemic and normative claims. It is to such unjustified construction that postmodernism is obliged to remain ceaselessly skeptical or “incredulous”. And such incredulity is heightened by the universalizing tendencies of modernity, which remains totalitarian by imposing conformity on other discourses; thereby oppressing, marginalizing, or silencing them. This is what makes modernity a pernicious framework of knowledge.

The assumptions and conclusions of the modernist vision of human progress mutated into systems of oppression and domination, manifest among others in the colonial dispossession of African agency and a resultant ‘crisis of conscience. (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 78). Recognition by Western philosophers and scholars of the scale of destruction generated by the modernist canon in the second half of the twentieth century prompted “an inevitable moment of disenchantment; a sense of void and despair” about “the failure of the totalizing myth of the organized Eurocentric superstructure” (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2014, p. 92). This precipitated postmodernity.

I am concerned in this paper with postmodernity as a primary conceptual category, rather than its manifold expression and interpretation in cultural forms. I therefore understand it to denote an overarching intellectual approach to the production, dissemination, and evaluation of cultural goods that revolts against modernity and its assumptions. Among the principal features of this approach are a critique of hegemonic perspectives and dogmatic commitment; a critique of normative truths as universal paradigm; emphasis on intellectual and practical pluralism, and a celebration of difference; and a critique of oppressive paradigms (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2014, pp. 101-102). What this means is that postmodernists dismiss Modernist universalism, foundationalism, and obsession with reason. In ontology, epistemology, and ethics, postmodernity upholds the validity of the particular and the provisional, as opposed to the privileged place of the general and the universal in modernist thinking (Parpart, 1995, p. 16). The postmodern thus brings awareness of the significance of difference and otherness, and value to plurality and partiality; and therewith affirms the value
of inclusive thinking as opposed to the binary and diametrically opposed “either/or” categories of modernity (p. 17). This, in turn, highlights paradox, ambiguity, indeterminacy and contingency as reasonable attributes of postmodern thinking.

Baumann (1992) has reasoned that such characterization of postmodernity may seem to suggest comprehensive consensus on its meaning and ambit of activity. But disagreement on the exact nature of the postmodern revolt is also prevalent (p. xxiv). Questions endure about whether the shift in intellectual posture that characterizes postmodernity constitutes a change of paradigm at all, or whether it should be conceived merely as a movement, or a project, or a condition. One such recurring question is whether or not the intellectual space occupied by postmodernists can be sufficiently distinguished, as they intimately inhabit the structure that they critique. A range of skeptical responses have emerged to this question. Some, like Hassan’s (1996) perceive postmodernism as evidence of a re-visioning of modernism (p. 389). The postmodern demonstrates the case that the culture of modernism “insists on old orders in clever or current guises, and, with the means of communication at hand, inhibits and restrains” (Hassan, 1996, p. 388). Hence the postmodern insistence on renouncing the modernist paradigm is an “oblique and always perilous movement, constantly risking falling back within what is being deconstructed” (Derrida, 1996, p. 345).

It is not difficult to fathom why the postmodernist revolt defies unanimous characterization. The sphere of its activity is indeterminate. It is inextricably implicated in the paradigm it contests, and yet claims to be operating “post” it. Thus, postmodernity tends to install, and then subvert, the very concepts it challenges: it shares elements of the modern and exhibit difference to it simultaneously. It simultaneously affiliates and revolts to it. Accordingly, one cannot posit an absolutely antithetical relationship between these concepts. Hence it is difficult to construe the relationship between them as one of complete historical and theoretical rupture, and find a single vision that canonizes the postmodern. In spite of these difficulties that pertain finding a unified vision of the postmodern
critique, it is generally accepted that features of this conceptual shift away from modernism are sufficiently delineated to ground it as an independent and cogent critique of modernity. I take this view in this paper.

**Postmodernity and postcolonial African philosophy**

The significance of postmodernist thought for African life is a theme that continues to jostle for attention in postcolonial scholarship. Particularly, the effect of postmodernist thinking on, and its utility for, humanistic studies in postcolonial Africa continues to be a matter of hot debate. Some authors emphasize the analogous concerns shared by philosophers in formerly colonized countries and postmodernists, such as elaborating manifestoes of and intellectual pluralism to establish affinity between the two intellectual practices. Spivak (1993), for instance, considers postcoloniality as deconstruction of “the heritage of imperialism” (p. 281). Eze and Ramose have echoed this position for the African context. Eze (1998) notes that postcolonial African philosophy ought to be “productively deconstructive” and “find ways to make sense, and speak of, the multiplicities and the pluralisms” of African experiences (p. 219); and Ramose (1999) cautions African philosophers to “abandon the path of mimetic philopraxis – the uncritical imitation of the life of non-Africans – and pursue the route of the authentic liberation of the continent” (p. 7). Yet, others perceive the aims of postmodernists as imaginatively different from African visions of humanistic achievement.

Appiah (1991) has offered perspectives that continue to refresh philosophical interest in this topic. In “Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?”, Appiah explores the relations between conditions of “postcoloniality” and “postmodernism” in the context of African novels written in the 1950s and the late sixties. He argues that novelists of the 1950s endorsed forms of realism and displayed proclivity for nationalism and traditionalism by legitimizing ethnographic inventions of uniform national histories and traditions; and that novelists of the
late 1960s challenged these earlier narratives and instead celebrated the prevailing ‘multiple existence’ in African life (p. 353, p. 349). As such, these latter novelists championed postmodern techniques and could be categorized as “political postmodernism” (pp. 352-353). But these postcolonial political postmodernists celebrated the virtues of a universal ethic, in contrast to Western-inspired postmodernism for which legitimate knowledge and values are necessarily decentered (p. 353).

In like manner, Serequeberhan (1998) contends that “hermeneutically elucidate[ing] that which has remained hidden” in the ethnocentric metaphysics that constitutes a bias in modernity’s self-consciousness of itself imposes an indispensable post-modern task on contemporary African philosophical practice (pp. 142-143, 156). This task of de-structuring the “meta-narrative” through which modernity constituted itself, the “negative and critical” task of peeling off layers of lies and misrepresentations about Africa that grounded colonial assumptions and policy and continues to sustain a crisis of conscience; must be undertaken in tandem with a positive task, one of highlighting the merits of Africa’s intellectual legacy for human culture. Both of these negative and positive tasks of African philosophy aim at the goal of reclaiming agency for the African subject in the voicing of his or her own history and for constructing a constructive future. The features of postmodernism outlined earlier in this section justify considering the work described by Appiah and Serequeberhan as postmodern acts.

But if postmodern, they constitute as well Afrocentric postures that drive the conceptual responses of the postcolonial African philosopher. Tenets of postmodernist and African philosophical concerns intersect at several identifiable points. The postmodernist rejection of modernist universalization and impositions of Western cultural experience, and rejection of the modernist deprecation of other cultural perspectives, is widespread in African philosophical practice. So too is the postmodern emphasis on provincial and diverse cultural sites as locations of valid claims

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7 I allude to Molefe Asante’s definition of Afrocentrism as requiring “regaining our own [African] platforms, standing on our own cultural spaces, and believing that our way of viewing the universe is just as valid as any” (Asante, 1998, p. 8).
to knowledge and values. African philosophical deconstruction of modernist assumptions in ontology, epistemology and ethics began in earnest at the beginning of the 20th century and continues to the present-day. Much effort has gone into elaboration of African philosophical perspectives on metaphysical and social realities, thereby stressing the postmodernist validity of diversity. Thus, African philosophy, like postmodernity, may be considered a counter hegemonic discourse in as much as it seeks to convey a mechanism for challenging the universalist pretentions of modernist theorists. So, where may the authors of the Legon tradition be located in this maze of the modern, postmodern and postcolonial?

The trans-modernism character of the Legon tradition of African philosophy

Given my perception of postmodernism as a revolt against the modernist paradigm, it is time to consider whether at all, and if so to what extent, it has exerted influence on the thinking of the pioneers of the Legon tradition of African philosophy. We have seen Appiah and Serequeberhan assert the coincidence, at several points, of postmodern and postcolonial African critiques of modernism. Undoubtedly, the Legon philosophers addressed philosophical concerns in ways that can be labeled as postmodernist. For instance, Wiredu’s insistence that truth is nothing but opinion, or “a view from some point; and there are as many truths as there are points of view” (Wiredu, 1980, p. 115), certainly coincides with the postmodern rejection of epistemic foundationalism and universalism. Additionally, Wiredu (1996) admits that knowledge requires certainty, and that one can be certain of the truth or falsity of a claim; but unlike Descartes and neo-Cartesians, he insists that certainty does not imply infallibility (pp. 139-140). Likewise, Gyekye (1987) postulates paranormal cognition a possible form of knowledge (p. 202), subverting Hume’s position that all objects of knowledge are subject to either “relations of ideas” (a priori) and “matters of fact” (a posteriori). As is well known, Hume’s distinction and Kant’s affirmation of it in distinguishing “analytic”

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8 An instructive example of such is Danquah (1927).
“synthetic” propositions strengthened the view in Western philosophy that there are only two pathways to knowledge, accounted for by rationalism and empiricism. These challenges to modernist epistemology coincide with Abraham’s extortion to Africans to believe they have good reason for confidence in their own cultural roots, and for them to reject those elements of culture and habits of thought acquired during the colonial period, but which are “unsuited to the dignity and needs of independent peoples” (Abraham, 2015, p. vi). But in spite of these resemblances to postmodernism, I believe it is less credible to identify them as postmodernists, rather than as trans-modernists.

It is now time to expand my brief definition of ‘trans-modernity’ in the introduction. I mean by it that the authors of the Legon tradition are neither modernist in the strictest sense of the term, nor postmodernist in the strictest sense of the term either. They do not wholly castigate the modernist framework of knowledge and values. They appropriate aspects of it and rework these aspects while navigating their way across the segments of the framework that they reject in their bid to achieve their own objectives, without wholesale castigation of the framework. They are neither ‘post’ modern, for they make no claims to having moved past modernity, and they did not align with central concepts of postmodernity. Rather, their works display a keen teleology and method: the method of charting a path by transiting modernist assumptions and conclusions, toward deconstructive and reconstructive philosophical goals. In doing so, they test and rupture the outer limits of modernity, and in the process construct the basis of a novel category of philosophical knowledge formation – trans-modernity – configured around a philosophical approach and a handful of themes. The method is rational humanism. And from the set of themes that engaged their philosophical attention I will choose an ethical and a meta-philosophical subject: ethical humanism and the relationship between tradition and modernity, to illustrate their trans-modernist outlook. Evidently, their method and themes are drawn from the central modernist concepts of rationality,
humanism and modernism.

The ethical reflections of the Legon philosophers proceed from belief in the primary responsibility of human beings to shape and give meaning to their lives and world. This is illustrated in their firm rejection of extra-human agency as ultimate justification for ethical principles and conduct. Abraham (2015) describes ‘rational humanism’ as a way of doing philosophy (pp. 6-7). In his view, reason is a defining characteristic of human being-ness as it equips human beings with sufficient resources to generate and constitute ultimate justifications for conduct (p. 7). Wiredu likewise emphatically endorses humanism as the foundation of morals (Wiredu, 1980, p. 6; 1992, pp. 193-194; 1996, pp. 65, 74-75, 193-195). For him, one of the loftiest moral conducts, the “sympathetic identification of the interests of a person with those of others even at the cost of a possible abridgement of one’s own interests” (1992, p. 193), should be achieved through rational deliberation. Gyekye (1997) too explicitly embraces humanism of the rational kind (pp. 259-260). For these philosophers, then, humans are the measure of all that is of human concern.

For these thinkers, an inherent feature of humans, which enables them to measure their concerns, is their rationality. The ‘rational’ part of their ethical humanism alludes to their application of critical reasoning to affirm humanistic beliefs. This was displayed in a number of ways. Firstly, it showed in their unwavering commitment to the value and universal character of reason. All three of them justified their humanistic beliefs by critical and substantive reasons. Secondly, they all rejected Hegel’s racist\(^9\) annexation of reason exclusively to the European mind. Thus, Wiredu “rejects the possibility that some cultures may be of intrinsically greater merit than others because the people who founded them are, as human beings, somehow intrinsically better intellectually endowed than other human beings” (2004, p. 109). Further, they all placed great

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\(^9\) I follow Kwame Appiah in understanding ‘Racist’ views to be those that seek to construct, encourage or justify social systems, institutions and practices that accord social significance to the biological divisions of the human species and endeavor to distribute economic, social and political goods and ills, benefits and burdens, unequally between the various races. See Appiah, “Racisms”, pp. 5-8.
emphasis on the clarity and precision of arguments as means of justifying claims. Such observation of the instrumental value of reason is certainly not anti-modernist.

Their work did not only ‘transit’ the modernist concept of rationality, by rejecting parochial attribution of the capacity to reason. They transited modernist aims as well. Implied in their rational humanistic deliberative method, as sufficiently stated in this section, is the belief in the ability of all cultures to reflect and philosophize on their experience. As first and second generation post colonial professional philosophers, they faced the task of responding to the denigration of African humanity perpetuated through the racist philosophical conclusions of modernist philosophers that sought to show that Euro-American paradigmatic forms of rational contemplation represent the thinking that real humans are capable of. And they resorted to reason to reject this claim of the racial nature of reason.

Their trans-modernist predilections are also visible in their deliberation on the concepts of tradition and modernity. Let us understand by ‘traditional’ or ‘indigenous’ African culture the social systems that flourished before Africa’s encounter with Europe, features which are in practice and which continue to command the allegiance of a great number of Africans today. A tradition, in this sense, comprises a system for producing, organizing and consuming thought, with organizing principles that have the capacity to inspire, challenge and constrain its adherents. The question of the relevance of traditions to contemporary African life recurs so frequently in African philosophical discourses that Metz (2015) has observed that a distinct feature of this philosophy is its insistent attempt to ground theory in the normative resources of traditional African life (pp. 1-2).

The authors of the Legon tradition undoubtedly believed in the value of traditional resources for modern life. This is at variance with the insistent assault of modernist thinking on the importance of tradition exemplified, for instance in Horton’s (1971) characterization of traditional African thought systems as ‘closed’
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and intolerant of theoretical alternatives as opposed to ‘open’ Western scientific thought. In Horton’s view, the ‘closeness’ of traditional society is embodied in the lack of theoretical alternatives, exemplified by an authoritarian imposition of unanimously received knowledge and values. Such unanimity of knowledge, he claims, is so strong that any challenge to it threatens stability and “evokes intense anxiety” in the traditional culture (pp. 154-155).

Undoubtedly, Horton’s conclusions descend from the chorus of elaborate rationalization of European ethnocentrism embedded in the discussions of Hume, Kant and Hegel. The upshot of this is the disdain accorded to the modes of thought that do not accord with the assumptions of Western philosophical and scientific methods, for contemporary life. Such a degraded valuation of tradition is succinctly articulated in the Modernization School, which ruled theories of development from the end of the Second World War until the 1960s, and mutated into international economic policy as the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and later as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in the 1980s and 1990s. A consensus has emerged that modernization theory portrays ‘Third World’ countries as ‘backward’ in comparison to countries in North America and Western Europe, conceived as depositories of ‘modern’ values, and prescribes modeling these societies on the development paths of the West as remedy for their backwardness (Himmelstrand, 1994, p. 37; So, 1990, p. 36).

The core claims of modernization are theoretically sustained by the assumptions of Functionalism. So (1990, p. 18), who supplies the perspective contends, in Huntington’s (1976) view, that modernization is a transformative process that renders “tradition” and “modernity” mutually exclusive (pp. 30-31). This perspective is derived from Talcott Parsons’s (1952) articulation of the concept of pattern variables, to distinguish traditional societies from modern ones and justify why a society’s traditional institutions and their values must be replaced in order for it to enter into modernity (p. 67). With this, modernization theory establishes a diametrical opposition between tradition and modernity, for if modernization
represents the apogee of social progress and requires discarding all vestiges of traditional culture, then the goods of tradition are perceived as impediments to the surge toward social progress, and therefore cannot remain on the path toward modernity.

The three Legon philosophers strenuously reject such pejorative appraisals of traditional thought. They highlight the value of heritage for philosophy, and advocate a critical appropriation of African traditional thought and practices. Gyekye identifies traditional resources as essential sources of philopraxis, Gyekye (1995, pp. 15-16), and for Wiredu, “exploiting as much as is judicious the resources of our own indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditations” is essential for conceptual decolonization in African philosophy (1996, p. 136). A tradition is neither static nor incompatible with modernity for these philosophers. In Gyekye’s (1997) view, a tradition is a cultural product that continues to inspire a wish for maintenance in subsequent generations because of its normative value to them (pp. 221-222). Subsequent generations may preserve, modify or discard an aspect of a tradition depending on whether they think it is good, bad, or sufficiently humane. This account implies a struggle, namely, the struggle to develop normative standards to refine cultural goods, and to determine whether they have become worthless. It is these continual assessments by contemporary custodians of culture that refine its intellectual products into a tradition. In this sense the modern is nothing but refined tradition, for modernity involves “innovation aimed at bringing about the kinds of progressive changes in the entire aspects of human culture necessary for the enhancement and fulfillment of human life” (Gyekye, 1997, p. 280). For Gyekye then, a commitment to modernity is implied in the normative assessment that determines which aspects of traditions merit maintenance. For this reason Gyekye perceives no diametrical opposition between tradition and modernity. In his thinking, the two terms represent two points on a continuum, and this makes a clear-cut dichotomy between them implausible. Thus, Gyekye foresees and expects modern African
life to necessarily emerge from traditional cultural life.

Wiredu likewise affirms the relevance of tradition to modern life. For him too, a tradition is neither resistant to change nor opposed to modernity. He considers aspects of traditional African philosophies as “living or fit to be resurrected” for contemporary life, and he prescribes conceptual clarification and reconstruction as methods for identifying and appropriating valuable normative elements embedded in these philosophies for modern life. (Wiredu, 2004, p. 11). Similarly, the idea of grounding the African future in useful values of the past is central to Abraham’s thinking. In *The mind of Africa*, he insists that the guiding principles for formulating solutions to problems in the African future ought to be those authenticated in cultural experience (2015, p. 31). It is for this reason that “our interest in our own cultures [ought to be] directed towards the future… [and for us Africans to] make the best of our present human resources, which are largely traditional” (Abraham, 2015, p. 36). The tenor of Abraham’s utterances suggests that institutions and solutions are not “authenticated” if they are rooted in theoretical resources that ignore and perhaps even degrade African thought, in contradistinction to what modernization theory prescribes.

What the preceding paragraphs suggest is that the Legon philosophers appropriated the notions of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernism’ embedded in modernist thinking, and chartered a course of their own understanding and use of these concepts. Their account of tradition speaks to continual attempts to refine cultural goods, in order to facilitate quick identification of obsolete and perverted elements that ought to be discarded. This means that a tradition needs neither constrain its bearers from conceiving theoretical alternatives to its organizing principles, nor prevent debate of the merits of these principles. For them, a tradition not only inspires its adherents to elaborate and defend its tenets, but also equips its bearers to refine its constitutive ideas and practices through critical assessment. These perspectives constitute a compelling rejection of the conclusions of the Western project of modernism, as articulated by Robin Horton and the Modernization School.
It is clear too that the Legon philosophers appropriated the notion of modernity and employed it in ways that can be distinguished from the modernity of Horton and Modernization theory. The Legon philosophers, like modernists, agreed that modernity implies the expectation to harness human thought to promote better understanding of the world, and the self; and for the pursuit of moral progress and human happiness, as we have seen Habermas assert in Section Two of this paper. Gyekye echoes Habermas by defining modernity as involving “innovation aimed at bringing about the kinds of progressive changes in the entire aspects of human culture necessary for the enhancement and fulfillment of human life”. (Gyekye, 1997, p. 280).

In spite of such coincidence of understanding the Legon philosophers employed the notion of modernity to subvert Modernist ideals. Habermas (1981), for instance, acknowledges the modernist aspiration to apply human thought to develop objective science to promote the control of natural forces (1981, pp. 8-9). For several Enlightenment and later modernist thinkers, this aspiration meant overthrowing the religious tedium of the Dark Ages through scientific domination of nature. William Leiss (1994) quotes from the The new organon (1620) Francis Bacon’s expectation that once the human race assumes the right over nature “which belongs to it by divine bequest, the exercise thereof will be guided by sound reason and true religion” (p. 189). Bacon was clearly mistaken. As Harvey (2003) observes, history has demonstrated sufficiently that the rationality of such domination “entailed the domination of human beings that could only lead, in the end, to a nightmare condition of self-domination” (p. 271).

It appears that the social machinery required to administer levelheaded control over science lacked the power of restraint, for as Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) observe, scientific power over human beings weakens with “every step human beings take away from the power of nature” (p. 30). Scientific domination over nature is matched by increased domination by some people over others. But neither reason nor religion has been capable of stemming the
tendency of science to simultaneously create and destroy, and the active threat to humanity by its applications for wanton destruction of the environment; and by stockpiling nuclear weapons through the doctrine of MAD\textsuperscript{10}. The Legon philosophers adopted the notion of modernity and believed in its transformative powers. But for them, it did not imply domination of the natural and social world. Rather, much could be said for the idea of modernity involving an ethic of non-denomination of man by man, and for man’s judicious usage of the resources of the natural world. The non-exploitative orientation of their philosophy, at the social level, is illustrated by their humanistic leanings, which in turn descends from their endorsement of the communitarian outlook of Akan societies.

Wiredu installed humanism as the foundation of morals (1980, p. 6; 1992, pp. 193-194; 1996, pp. 65, 74-75, 193-195) in the modern world. In stressing the importance of assigning to human beings the grounds of morals, he appeals to a maxim that constitutes a fundamental precept of traditional Akan moral thinking. This is onipa na ohia, to which he (1992, p. 194, 201) assigns two complementary meanings. According to him it means first, that, “human interest is the basis of all values”; and second, that “human fellowship is the most important of human needs”. These two meanings yield the view that a human being must have ultimate value in all human considerations, and that what is morally good is what befits a human being. And for Wiredu, what befits a human being is what “brings dignity, respect, contentment, prosperity, joy, to man and his community” (1992, p. 6). In my view, a corollary of onipa na ohia as a moral first principle in Akan thought is onipa hia mmoa, or “a human being deserves help” or “ought to be helped.” This latter precept follows from the stress on human sociality emanating from Wiredu’s second construal of onipa na ohia, and when added, the appeal of onipa na ohia strengthens the moral prescription for a “sympathetic identification of the interests of a person with those of others even at the cost of

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\textsuperscript{10} Mutual assured destruction (MAD) is a doctrine of military strategy, based on deterrence, in which a full-scale use of nuclear weapons by opposing sides that would cause the complete annihilation of both the attacker and the defender is considered sufficient deterrence from the use of it by either party. It is what sustains the proliferation of nuclear weapons.
a possible abridgement of one’s own interests” (Wiredu, 1992, p. 193). In his view, such adjustment of human interests, emanating from the belief that the human being has ultimate value in all considerations, is the means to which the moral end of human well-being is secured in contemporary times without exploitation.

Gyekye (1997) likewise explicitly advocates for the modern world, a humanism grounded in the communitarian convictions of traditional Akan society (pp. 259-260). He considers the human being to be a being that is necessarily in need of social relations and mutual interdependence for adequate self-realization (p. 39). This in turn necessitates cooperation and sympathy for others. These views are elaborated in his communitarian theory that assigns equal moral worth of person and community, and in which he conceived common good as the social conditions that enables each individual to function satisfactorily in human society (p. 64), and support her escaping a “cramped and shackled self, responding robotically to the ways and demands of the communal structure” (pp. 55-56). Thus, Gyekye’s moderate communitarian theory, which he advocates for adoption to foster social formation in contemporary Africa, seeks to promote the common good of mutual concern for one another without violating individual rights or degrading the dignity of an individual. As such, it dismisses the exploitation of man by man.

**Conclusion**

The foregoing validates the claim that the Legon philosophers perceived no diametrical opposition between tradition and modernity. In their thinking, the two terms represent two points on a continuum, and this renders a clear-cut dichotomy between them implausible. They do not assertively argue against the modernist framework of knowledge and values, but work through its concepts to reject some of its conclusions, such as those of modernization theory. In so doing, they theorize those concepts in ways that are consistent with post-modernist perspectives. But there is no visible inclination on their part to discard the framework of modernity as the majority of postmodernists advocate. Rather, they have worked to reform elements of modernity to serve the goal of constructing a
humanistic African philosophy that speaks to contemporary needs. Thus, their trans-modernist praxis is clearly illustrated in their philosophy of tradition and modernity.
References

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Historicising The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana: A culmination of women’s activism in Ghana

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Abstract
Women are one of Ghana’s hidden growth resources. Yet, Ghanaian women have been marginalized from the developmental discourse by a succession of hegemonic political administrations. At best, Ghanaian women were said to have a quiet activism, although each epoch had its own character of struggle. Bringing together history, gender and development, this article examines the historical trajectory of female agency in post-colonial Ghana. It argues that through the historisation of women’s activism, Ghanaian women’s agency and advocacy towards women’s rights and gender equality concerns rose from the era of quiet activism characterised by women’s groups whose operations hardly questioned women’s social status to contestation with the state epitomized by the creation of The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana in 2004 which played a critical role in women’s collective organisation and served as a key pathway of empowerment.

Keywords: women, activism, empowerment, Women’s Manifesto, Ghana

Introduction
Globally, there exists gender disparities in human development. According to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, gender equality is fundamental to delivering on the promises of sustainability, peace and human progress (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2016). Ghana adopted all 17 goals set to end poverty and ensure prosperity for all. Yet, in 2018, Ghana ranked 140 in the world in the UNDP’s Gender Inequality Index, with a score of 0.592 (UNDP, 2018). Ghanaian
women’s equality has been met halfway by socio-historical disparities in decision-making power and access to resources (Tsikata, 1989, 2009; Manuh, 1991, 1993; Mama, 2000, 2005; Cornwall & Anyidoho, 2010; Adomako & Asiedu, 2012; Cornwall, 2016; Darkwah, 2016). The process of governance has been male-centred creating the erroneous impression that the process of governance is the preserve and entitlement of men. In the opinion of Nzomo (1994), the battle for changing the relations of power between men and women, and the right to decision-making processes in Africa has been an uphill battle against patriarchy, poverty, and autocracy (p.17).

While attention has been focused on the state’s hegemony and political marginalization of women (Anunobi, 2002; Coffee & Bolzendahl, 2011; Hamah, 2015; Okrah, 2018), it obscures the narrative of women’s success in connecting their issues with other minorities through coalition building and collective action. Within the first two decades of the twenty-first century, Ghanaian women recognized their power within and acted together with other women to exercise power with and increase their solidarity and ability to contest and change power structures through The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana. This non-partisan, political document was a collaborative effort of women who cut across political, regional, educational and ethnic boundaries in the country. It explicitly outlined the common demands of Ghanaian women as a prerequisite for ameliorating the power disequilibrium and achieving gender equality and equity and sustainable national development. Ghana’s Women’s Manifesto also provided a platform for influencing government to address women’s rights issues in the 2004 elections and beyond. Women were empowered to use their votes as a bargaining tool and to “ensure political party accountability as they would ultimately be assessed on the basis of where they stand in relation to issues that concern women as outlined in the Women’s Manifesto” (The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana, 2004, p. i).
Analytical framework

This study adopts a historical perspective to examine women’s collective mobilization in Ghana. Ghana is an ideal case study as it ratified all major international and regional women’s rights documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1989; United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993; Beijing Platform for Action 1995; Millennium Declaration of 2000; African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender and Advancement of Women, 2004; 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015; and the Revised ECOWAS Treaty and Gender Policy 2015-2020. In addition, Ghana formulated its National Gender Policy in 2015. This policy enhances women’s rights and provides a clear framework for addressing gender inequalities deeply rooted in Ghanaian society.

The study adopts part of Mama (2000) and Manuh and Anyidoho (2008)’s framework for analysis of national machinery and extends it to women’s rights coalitions, by examining the historical context and processes out of which the Women’s Manifesto Coalition (WMC) evolved. Here, the study explores the historical trajectory from pre-colonial women’s activism to the creation of WMC. It interrogates the discourse on women’s empowerment in development that focuses on individualism and economic empowerment and ultimately undermines women’s “ability to reflect critically on the nature of unjust social and economic relations and institutions and act to change them” (Cornwall, 2014, p. 5). It contends that the marginal representation of women at the national level is indicative of the disempowering reality that Ghanaian women experience. The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana, thus, provides a platform for the progression of Ghanaian women from a state of disempowerment to empowerment in order to achieve gender equality and equity.

In this regard, the study offers an interpretive analysis of the history of women’s power in Ghana based on Amina Mama’s interviews with Ghana’s leading feminist activists, open-ended conversations with Dr. Rose Kutin, semi-structured interviews
with staff at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and ABANTU for Development as well as content analysis of *The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana*. It analyses the development of Ghanaian women’s authority and extends the theory of women’s empowerment by pointing to the relevance of networks and coalitions such as the Women’s Manifesto Coalition in reshaping the power dynamics between women and the state in post-colonial Ghana. By so doing, the WMC contested the power structures and relations that deny women autonomy in their lived experiences.

**Theoretical framework**

The experiences of Ghanaian women’s organisations within the framework of empowerment underpins this study. The concept of empowerment has been contested and conceptualised differently by scholars and advocates. In the 1980s and 1990s, women’s empowerment defined by feminist scholars was focused on transforming power relations to the advantage of women’s rights and an increase in gender equality and equity (Batliwala, 1993, 2007; Kabeer, 1994, Rowlands, 1997; Sen, 1997). This meant empowerment is not something that can be done for or to women. It requires women being conscious of the power inequalities in society and acting to bring about structural changes that would transform unjust and unequal power relations. With this interpretation of empowerment came a focus on enabling women express their collective interests to organise (power with); to develop the necessary skills and access resources to attain their ambition (power to) and to articulate their own aspirations and strategies for change (power within). Thus, empowerment became the process of contesting and transforming existing power relations and acquiring more control over the sources of power.

Currently, Cornwall (2016) notes that empowerment has become a slogan exploited by multinational entities, non-governmental organisations and development agencies. In the process, the grassroots struggles to confront and transform the deep, unjust and unequal power relations from the 1990s has been lost (Narayan, 2002; Alsop, Heinsohn & Somma, 2005). In its place is
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an overemphasis on economic dimensions of empowerment which stress access to credit, paid work and ownership of productive resources for individual women to improve their personal situations (Malhotra et al., 2002; Eyben & Napier-Moore, 2009; World Bank, 2011; Bradshaw, 2013). In this latter conceptualisation, it is assumed that the improvement in economic conditions will necessarily transform all aspects of women’s lives. This assumption does not take cognisance of empowerment as a multidimensional concept as expressed in the works of feminist scholars (Tsikata & Darkwah, 2014; Cornwall, 2014, 2016) in which what empowers one woman does not necessarily apply to another and a woman’s empowering experience in one arena does not automatically translate into agency in all spheres of her life.

This study defines women’s empowerment as the creation of an enabling environment through policies and the elimination of cultural constraints that make it difficult for women to achieve their highest potential. Empowerment here implies an active and interactive process between Ghanaian women and their environment. It results in a change from a passive, powerless state epitomised by the marginalisation of women’s associations throughout the 1980s and 1990s, to an active state commencing in 2000 and climaxing with the creation of a Women’s Manifesto Coalition in 2004. Through the Women’s Manifesto Coalition (WMC), Ghanaian women broke the chains of false consciousness initiated by patriarchal society and reinforced by the colonial structure and discarded the notion of worthlessness into the belief and acceptance of themselves as assertive citizens.

Power in this study implies the processes that led Ghanaian women to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions. This interpretation is beyond the mere integration of Ghanaian women into the existing socio-economic and political structures through increased decision-making authority. This definition of power, in turn sees empowerment as a process by which oppressed women in Ghana gained critical consciousness and acted to control their lives by taking part in the Women’s Manifesto Coalition
to shape the context and structure of their daily existence and to participate in a movement of social transformation in Ghana. In this regard, Ghanaian women recaptured salient aspects of their pre-colonial gender complementarity and solidified their agency and activism in a bid to lead to social transformation and structural change.

**Women’s foundational activism**

Women’s activism in Ghana has a long history as women have long engaged in social, political and economic concerns within their communities. During the pre-colonial era, among the diverse ethnic groups in Ghana, gender relations was modelled on a dual-gendered system of political authority. Men and women occupied leadership positions that were analogous and balanced each other (Arhin, 1983; Aidoo, 1985; Amadiume, 1987; Brydon, 1996; Odotei, 2006; Fallon 2008). The institution of the queen mother, *ohemaa* (Akan), *manye* (Ga-Dangbe) and *mamao* (Ewe) was a crucial avenue of women’s empowerment. For instance, the *Asantehemaa* (queen mother of Asante) played a crucial role in governance as she nominated the candidate to be considered *Asantehene* (king of Asante) in consultation with lineage heads. Beyond her function as kingmaker, she deliberated on issues of distribution of land, the declaration of war and controlled women’s affairs (Arhin, 1983; Aidoo, 1985; Odotei, 2006). In northern Ghana some leadership roles were reserved for women. For instance in Mamprugu, female chiefs occupy the skins of *Dindani* and *Samini*. The *Dindani-Tamboku* chieftaincy position is the preserve of the daughter of the *Nayiri* (paramount chief of the Mamprugu traditional area) (Odotei, 2006). The *Dindani Pona* notifies eligible sub-chiefs about the vacancy of the skin; she occupies the palace and takes charge of widows on the death of the chief; she settles disputes in the community with her council of elders and she also preforms ritual functions during sacrificial offerings (Odotei, 2006, p. 84).

The dual-gendered system of traditional leadership prevented any wielder of traditional political authority from
monopolizing power. It also underpinned leadership positions for women, notwithstanding the patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society. Many of the women who held leadership positions were of regal status. However, these royal women did not exercise their political power solely through their relationship with men. The existence of parallel leadership positions in pre-colonial Ghana clearly points to the fact that egalitarian gender relation was conceivable, and women had transformative power (Manuh, 1991; Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995; Fallon, 2008). Indeed, women participated in wars as leaders of the army. The case of Queen Adisa of Nanumba, Nana Dokua of Akyem and Yaa Asantewaa of Asante are all well known in Ghanaian history.

From a situation of holistic gender relations in traditional African societies during the pre-colonial era, women were disempowered, and their agency diminished during the colonial period. The introduction of Victorian values of domesticity with the distinction between the male public sphere and female private sphere altered women’s power relations and reinforced western notions of gender inequality, which systemised and subordinated Ghanaian women at the expense of their traditional gender complementarity (Allman, Geiger, & Nakanyike, 2002; Berger, 2003; Sheldon, 2017). Yet, elite women collectively mobilized resources through the formation of charitable associations based on welfare concerns to create limited space that they could hold their own. These charitable associations included the Ladies Mutual Club in Sekondi, Young Ladies’ Christian Association and the Native Ladies of Cape Coast. These organizations tried to empower Ghanaian women. For example, the Native Ladies of Cape Coast relied on the “Ladies Column” in the Western Echo newspaper to articulate women’s interest. Yet, majority of these associations were geared at moulding women in the image of the Victorian ideal woman as mothers and wives (Allman & Tashjian, 2000; Akurang-Parry, 2004). These welfare associations also suffered from legitimacy issues as they received some of their support from the British colonial government. Overall, the colonial period was
a setback for Ghanaian women’s agency as the women’s welfare groups barely challenged women’s social status.

**Post-colonial breakthrough**

Unfortunately, the historical pattern established by the British colonizers held sway into the immediate post-colonial era. Successive Ghanaian administrations failed to genuinely prioritise women’s civil and social rights. Indeed, even though women partook in rallies, protests and boycotts that facilitated the process of decolonization, especially market women and their economic power, any dream of equality was short lived. Women’s activism during this era was still propelled by socio-economic issues and did not address specific women’s rights concerns (Tsikata, 2009).

A major advancement in the course for women came with the promulgation of the Representation of the People (Women Members) Act in 1959. This act allowed the National Assembly to appoint ten women, as additional members, to parliament, representing ten percent of the Assembly (Fallon, 2008, p. 30). Patriarchal mentality was swiftly evident when the Opposition Member of Parliament, Mr. Victor Owusu, referred to the female parliamentarians as “a sprinkling of ‘lip-sticked’ and ‘pan-caked’ faces of doubtful utility to the deliberations of the House” (Parliamentary Debates, 1960, p. 24). Women’s activism received another blow when President Kwame Nkrumah declared Ghana a one-party state in 1964 and regulated the activities of governmental and non-governmental women’s organisations (Tripp & Casimiro, 2009, p. 45). Through the creation of a single women’s organisation (National Council of Ghana Women-NCGW), the Convention People’s Party (CPP) disempowered women and kept them depoliticised as the NCGW focused on welfare concerns and educational policy campaigns instead of advocating for women’s rights until its overthrow in 1966.

The period from 1966 to 1981 was characterised by an onslaught of successive military regimes that eroded the marginal gains women won during the CPP era. The military regimes were not gender-sensitive and had few women in their ranks.
They were unenthusiastic about women’s political participation and influence in public life. Few women were offered or took up public office under these dictatorial regimes (Allah-Mensah, 2005). Interestingly, it was during this period of military rule that the National Council for Women and Development (NCWD) was established in 1975 in the wake of feminist consciousness and the Women’s Liberation Movement in the West. Focusing on income-generating activities to improve women’s economic well-being rather than social transformation issues, the NCWD suffered from a lack of sufficient political will to be able to initiate policy decisions that would generate support for the promotion of gender equality and extend women’s empowerment. Furthermore, the deterioration in the Ghanaian political climate did not bode well for the sustained development of women’s activism. It was no wonder that this period also marked a hiatus in women’s mobilisation at the national level for over a decade. Instead, there was an explosion of local women’s welfare and professional groups quietly addressing women’s issues.

During this politically unstable period, brief civilian governments came to power. The first was the Progress Party (1969 to 1972), led by Dr. K. A. Busia. Unfortunately, the Progress Party stifled the activities of mass movements especially the Trade Union Congress, which was dissolved in 1971. This repressive atmosphere was a stumbling block to efforts to build a strong civil society base for women (Tsikata, 2009). The People’s National Party (PNP) administration under Dr. Hilla Limann also failed to prioritise women’s participation in governance. Women constituted 2 out of 140 members of parliament under the Progress Party and their number rose to 5 under the PNP government (Prah, 2007, p. 7).

The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government appeared to change the tide in favour of women. A few women were appointed to political office. These included Susan Alhassan, as member of the Council of State, Dr. Mary Grant, as Secretary for Health and later member of the Council of State, Joyce Aryee, Secretary for Information, Ama Ata Aidoo and Lucy
Enin-Annan, as members of the PNDC (Adjei, 1994, pp. 198-200). However, this wind of change did not impact the mass of Ghanaian women in the informal sector, especially market women.

The PNDC regime was challenged by an economic crisis in the late 1970s and early 1980s characterised by a rise in the price of food and other necessities accompanied by shortages in fuel and high unemployment rate. This sorry state of the economy led to a black market which affected the cost of living and resulted in compulsory price controls (Nugent, 1996, 2015; Oquaye, 2004; Gocking 2005). The *Daily Graphic* caption on Monday March 1, 1982 read, “Control Prices Out.” This article drew attention to the new price list in which real wax print was to sell at 400 cedis, one bar of soap at 7 cedis 20 pesewas; a carton of fish at 450 cedis; cooking oil at 112 cedis and a bag of maize at 480 cedis with an exchange rate of 2.720 cedis to one dollar (US Department of Treasury, 1982; *Daily Graphic*, 1982, p. 3).

In this atmosphere, market women who controlled the heart of commercial activity in the country were accused of being economic saboteurs and blamed for exacerbating the economic woes through high prices of commodities and hoarding essential goods. Targeted as enemies of the state, publicly humiliated in the media as symbols of corruption and moral disintegration, market women were beaten, their wares confiscated, and their shops closed by PNDC functionaries (Manuh, 1993, pp. 180-181). The targeting of market women further repressed women’s activism, which fell back on informal networks of association, amidst a culture of silence. Women increasingly maintained their distance from political issues in Ghana.

Fortunately, the PNDC’s initial hostility to women was short-lived. The United Nations, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank influenced a new gender posture. In a bid to alleviate the economic crisis and implement the Structural Adjustment Policies of the Bretton Wood institutions, most African nations, including Ghana, were required to demonstrate commitment to gender issues. Under the auspices of the Decade for Women (1975-1985) and the
subsequent Women in Development approach, governments were called upon to mobilise women for their development agenda.

The PNDC administration appropriated this developmental framework and used gender politics for its own ends. In this regard, the 31st December Women’s Movement was formed in 1982 and Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings, wife of the PNDC chairman, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, became president of the organisation. The ostensive purpose of the 31st December Women’s Movement was to encourage women to become involved in the affairs of the Ghanaian state; however, it acted as an apparatus to mobilise women under the PNDC’s patronage networks expanding its female constituencies. Despite the provision of seed money to start income-generating businesses, a positive implication for women’s empowerment, Ghanaian women were subtly co-opted to join the organisation (Tsikata, 1989, pp. 73-93). Women attended party rallies and meetings and participated in domestic frivolities of singing, dancing and preparing meals for visiting dignitaries rather than advocating for women’s rights.

Basically, the PNDC through the 31st December Women’s Movement, reinforced women’s disempowerment and political marginalisation and monopolised the space for gender work. The only exception to the picture of state co-option was the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) which mobilised women without state influence on women’s legal rights (Tsikata, 2009, pp. 185-192). However, FIDA’s mobilisation was in an individualistic and instrumentalist fashion. It did not address the core mission of transforming the structural basis of gender inequality that women’s rights activists held dear. Indeed, the PNDC’s co-option of key women’s organisations allowed the government to pay lip service to the question of women’s rights and gender equality. It effectively marginalised women’s leadership and channelled women’s collective action into narrow issues based on self-interest rather than contesting the state for space in the political arena.
Rebirth of women’s activism

During the period of state appropriation of women’s agency, Ghana was undergoing a transition from military rule to a democratic dispensation. The resurgence of Ghanaian women’s empowerment and activism in this transition was evident in the creation of a new constitution in 1992. Women participated in the Constituent Assembly. However, these women were drawn from supporters of the PNDC regime and followers of the 31st December Women’s Movement such as market women. Indeed, the focus on market women was a welcome change from the PNDC’s previous antagonism. Yet, it was contentious. These market women were either the political faithful or held allegiance to the 31st December Women’s Movement and its leader. None of these women truly represented the mass of Ghanaian women and their issues.

Furthermore, the uncertainty surrounding the general elections in 1992 and the fragmentation of autonomous women’s organisations complicated the situation for women. By 1996, women became bolder as they recognised the change in political structure and the opportunity that democratisation created to assert their voice and contest the state in the public sphere. At the same time, new associational autonomy arose as the era of quiet activism based on welfare associations and community organisations was cast off with the registration of a plethora of women’s coalitions (Manuh, 2007; Tsikata, 2009). These women’s coalitions such as Network for Women’s Rights in Ghana (NTRGLIT) formed in 2000, ABANTU for Development, Gender Violence Survivors Support Network (GVSSN) hosted by the Women’s Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE), Women’s Manifesto Coalition (2004) and the Domestic Violence Coalition (initially hosted by the Ark Foundation, itself established in 2000) were formed around specific goals and were emboldened by the decline in invincibility of the 31st December Women’s Movement. Bolstered by the 1992 constitution, women’s coalition groups used women’s collective identity to socialise women to participate in the public sphere. As Tsikata (2009) argues, the networks lent a collective spirit to the work of women’s rights in Ghana and created a platform for
women’s group to engage in discussions about issues concerning them. Ghanaian women activists realized that working in their individual units had little impact on the state. Thus, in order to create real social transformation, they needed to work together as a collective and engage the state as a united front.

Using the democratic process to their advantage, and in the face of the patriarchal and chauvinistic nature of the state, women’s organisations called on the newly elected democratic government of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) led by Jerry John Rawlings to include women and address women’s concerns. They publicly questioned the state on women’s rights issues, especially the growing reports of violence against women. In this regard, coalitions of women’s groups mobilized and drafted a Domestic Violence Bill and put pressure on the government to pass it. An integral part of this bill was the repeal of Section 42(g) of the Criminal Code, 1960 (Act 29) which states, “the consent given by a husband or wife at marriage for the purpose of marriage, cannot be revoked until the parties are divorced or separated by a judgment or decree of a competent Court” and include a new Section I (b) (ii) which forbids “sexual abuse, namely the forceful engagement of another person in any sexual contact whether married or not” (Fallon, 2008, p. 100). The crust of the issue was to draw attention to marital rape and outlaw sexual abuse within conjugal relations. However, Ghanaian patriarchal society saw the repeal of Section 42 (g) as an affront to male power and sensibilities. The state presented the inclusion of marital rape in the Domestic Violence Bill as problematic and a “western concept that would destroy marriages and lead to moral decay of the larger society” (Fallon, 2008, p. 106).

Ultimately, the Domestic Violence bill was passed in February 2007 and the marital rape section, couched in terms of cultural imperialism was deleted. Section 42 (g) was not repealed, rather Section I (b) (ii) was reframed to read, “the use of violence in the domestic setting is not justified on the basis of consent.” Interestingly, in June 2007 as part of a statutory review, the Government of Ghana quietly repealed Section 42 (g). This was
a clear victory for the women’s coalition groups that continued to pressurise the state to live up to its responsibilities in terms of safeguarding the rights of women.

The epitome of violence against Ghanaian women came to a crescendo with a spate of serial killings. It started as isolated incidences in 1997 and built up to major public embarrassment for the NDC government in 2000, with the brutal murder of over twenty Ghanaian women. The *Daily Graphic* newspaper run the headline, “Another mystery murder rocks Accra: Victim No. 25 and still no clues” on Monday July 3, 2000. The article noted, “Accra has been rocked by another mysterious murder of women, less than a week after two other women were murdered under similar circumstances” (*Daily Graphic*, 2000, p.1).

With the tally of victims reaching 30, it became quite apparent to Ghanaian women that the police were ill equipped to apprehend the culprits. A coalition of women’s groups drew on their gendered networks and formed a pressure group, known as Sister’s Keepers. They staged demonstrations and marched to the Osu Castle, the seat of government to protest. Dressed in mourning clothes with red bands around their heads, the women demanded the President and Parliament treat the gruesome murders of women as a national crisis. They also called on the government, as a matter of urgency, to deploy all resources available to embark on a comprehensive programme aimed at apprehending the culprits. The women’s right activists expressed dismay at the fact that days after the gruesome murder of a woman at another suburb in Accra, the Interior Minister had issued no official statement. They, therefore, called on Parliament to immediately summon the Inspector-General of Police and the Head of the National Security Council to answer questions on the murders.

The message of women’s right activists was clear. President Rawlings and his party, the National Democratic Congress, had effectively dismissed the murders and did not value women or their livelihood. The women’s coalition encouraged Ghanaians to vote a different party into government, one that would take
the serial killings seriously and bring the murders to an end. The opposition National Patriotic Party (NPP) heard the cries of women and its presidential candidate, John Agyekum Kufuor, specifically addressed the issue of the serial killings at diverse campaign stops and promised to end the murders. Kufuor (2001) stated:

I therefore condemn in the strongest possible terms the murders of women that have plagued us and have thus far not been solved. I shall do my best to ensure that the police give the highest priority to solving the murders and bringing the perpetrators to book. Nothing should stand in the way, and I promise that my administration will give all the help needed to enable the police get to the bottom of these gruesome murders. With God’s help and guidance, we shall soon see the end of this most unpleasant chapter in our history. (p. 2)

On January 7, 2001 John Agyekum Kufuor, was sworn in as the second President of the Fourth Republic at a colourful ceremony at the forecourt of the Parliament House in Accra. The new administration quickly sprang into action and on May 16, 2001, a 36-year-old driver mechanic, Charles Quansah, confessed to the serial murders (Daily Graphic, 2001). Beyond solving the serial murders of women, President Kufuor’s administration increased hope for open and unregulated women’s activism when he expressed his gratitude to women in his inaugural address in 2001. Kufuor (2001) stressed:

I salute you, the women of Ghana; I salute your hard work and your dedication. You deserve to be treated with respect, and the burden you carry on all our behalf must be lightened. I salute you for the uncomplaining way you look after all of us. What reputation we have as Ghanaians comes from the love and attention given us by our mothers, sisters and wives. (p. 2)

Furthermore, the NPP administration established a Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (MOWAC) to ensure that women
took their rightful place by their men-folk and guarantee that all policy was pervaded with due consideration for the interest of women. Mrs. Gladys Asmah was appointed to head this ministry. President Kufuor (2005) further asserted:

Women and children have been traditionally handicapped over the years. There have been agencies and organisations, which have championed their causes over the years. The new Ministry of Women’s and Children’s Affairs (MOWAC) institutionalises these efforts in a systematised, sustained and more effective manner right at the centre of government. Government is pursuing with greater vigour, interventions for empowering them with technical and financial support to play a more active role in the nation’s wealth creation programmes as well as in education and other social and political fields. (p. 5)

Undoubtedly, the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs appeared to be a good opportunity to initiate concrete policy measures that would lay the foundation for greater responsiveness to gender concerns in Ghana. However, women’s right activist had issues with this ministry. They argued that the ministry ghettoized women’s issues and limited its priorities to livelihood questions and less on undertaking a social transformational agenda (Mensah-Kutin, 2005). Additionally, the new Ministry was woefully under-resourced by the state and female members of Parliament felt that the creation of the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs was a symbolic gesture to the women’s activist community to concede to women’s pressure on the state. The new Ministry was seen as window dressing and a fashion statement to comply with current gender thinking and was not empowering (Mama, 2000).

These concerns of women’s right activists were confirmed by the low representation of women at the legislative level as only 19 out of 200 members of Parliament were women. The NPP administration may have opened political space for women but much more needed to be done to rectify gender inequality and
restore equity to women. Indeed, the problem in promoting gender equality has never been the lack of necessary frameworks, but the lack of political will. The NPP’s eloquently formulated policies became empty slogans during their top-down implementation. The state lacked not only the political will but also the ability to tackle the central issues of women’s marginalization. Thus, there was a clear need for social and political groups, such as the Women’s Manifesto Coalition, generated by women themselves which could lead to change from below and support the transformatory goals of empowerment.

**Democracy and women’s mobilisation**

The wave of democratisation that swept across Ghana in the 1990s created the expectation of a more gender equitable state. Ironically, the process of democratisation did little to improve women’s political influence within the state. The state remained an inherently masculine structure and grew in strength at the expense of women. Women in Ghana, in spite of their major contributions and legacy of activism, barely occupied key decision-making positions. On the off chance that they did, “the nature and character of their roles and responsibilities tend to reinforce the notion that women are merely suitable to address survivalist questions rather than exercise power for socio-economic development” (Mensah-Kutin, 2005, p. 5).

The lack of progress in redressing gender inequality was much more staggering as Ghana continued to sign all major international protocols that gave recognition to concerns of women and gender equality. In accepting the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA), Ghana agreed to the elimination of discrimination against women in the political platform and public life of the country (PFA, 1995). Additionally, Ghana accepted the call for 30 percent representation of women in all decision-making positions at all levels.

Unfortunately, the country was far from accomplishing these goals. It was therefore against this background that women’s rights activists supported by NETRIGHT and ABANTU for Development
(a non-governmental organisation) recognised the need to “rethink the concept of women’s political empowerment and refashion the tools for lobbying and advocacy and the need to hold government accountable for the commitments made to women” (Mensah-Kutin, 2005, p. 7). The idea for a Women’s Manifesto for Ghana was born.

The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana was based on the experiences of other African women in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda that had embarked on similar processes to mobilise women for consensus-building on critical issues of concern to women. Moreover, the development of a Women’s Manifesto for Ghana was vital, as there was no consensus on how women’s issues should be voiced and translated into state policy.

The Women’s Manifesto Coalition (WMC) was made up of individual women, women’s organisations and extended to include other political and socially conscious organisations such as civil society groups, non-governmental organisations, organised labour, the media, representatives from the state and political parties. The collective public action of the WMC enabled conscious Ghanaian women to break the shackles of quiet activism characterized by their existence as isolated individual entities in favour of a broad-based movement at the national level that advocated for women’s rights.

In this regard, a series of national discussions were held to ensure that the broad Ghanaian citizenry participated in the development of The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana. On 23 June 2003, the first deliberation was held with sixty-five gender activists, policymakers and civil society stakeholders (Mama, 2005; Kutin, 2005). They discussed the major issues of concern to women and explored the opportunities for increasing women’s participation in the public sphere. This initial discussion was a success as women’s rights activists and participants discovered that their inability to connect their problems with those of their peers kept them powerless and vulnerable. In addition, despite the heterogeneity of women in Ghana, they realised they all shared the experience
of gender inequality, marginalisation and limited representation on the political scene. Participants were vocal about the social order that perpetuated injustice, deprivation and limited resources and opportunities to women (Mama, 2005; Tsikata, 2009).

The next step was to sell the idea of a Women’s Manifesto for Ghana to women at the grassroots and to local decision makers. In this regard, the Manifesto Coalition organized a three-day meeting with female representatives from all the 110 district assemblies in the capital Accra, in 2003. This was a historic meeting as district assembly women from across the country met for the very first time. They discussed strategies through which they could achieve unanimity on broad gender questions, strengthen coalition-building efforts and increase women’s effective participation in the political process, especially the upcoming 2004 elections. Dialoguing with women policy makers enabled women at the grassroots level to shift their consciousness and embrace a sense of ownership in The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana (Mama, 2005).

A third consultative meeting was organized with executives of the seven registered political parties and their women’s wings. It was imperative for women’s right activists to acquaint themselves with how political parties work, how gender issues were incorporated into the framework of political parties and how women could be facilitated in playing an active role in these associations. This is because women’s rights activists are concerned about the under-representation of women in politics, policy and decision-making levels as well as in public life in general (Tsikata, 2009; Manuh & Anyidoho, 2008).

After these consultations, Drafting and Steering Committees were formed that made decisions on the process of developing and promoting the Manifesto. Key individuals involved in this process include: Rose Mensah-Kutin, Joseph Bogrebon Allan, Roselyn Baateokuo, Hillary Gbedemah, Adwoa Bame, Grace Afrifa, Sarah Quarcoo, and Dzodzi Tsikata. In April 2004, a draft was produced and used to organise broader regional consultations which included the media and parliamentarians. On 2 September 2004, The Women’s
Manifesto for Ghana was launched (Mama, 2005).

This document was made up of a preamble and ten thematic sections which explicitly outlined the common demands of Ghanaian women in order to truncate gender bias and power disequilibrium in the nation. These demands cover the themes of women’s economic development; women and land; women, social policy and social development; women in politics, decision-making and public life; women, human rights and the law; discriminatory cultural practices; women and the media; women, conflict and peace, and women with special needs. In addition, there is an eleventh section which is a call to action for advocacy work.

The thematic areas can be divided into two broad categories. Namely, issues that can be ameliorated through legislation and governmental policies and issues embedded in Ghanaian cultural norms. However, women’s rights activists believe that irrespective of these categories, the issues that underlie women’s empowerment discourse are political in nature, thus, The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana advocates political solutions. Three main issues at the heart of the Manifesto centre on women’s economic self-reliance, women and decision-making, and greater representation in government.

Economic self-reliance as a form of empowerment is vital to Ghanaian women because the prevalence of poverty among women is attributed to poor social and economic policies that have been perpetuated over time. This situation coupled with overdependence on donor aid with its attendant conditionalities has affected women negatively. In order to enable women attain economic self-sufficiency, the Manifesto calls for a change in the structure of domestic roles performed by both sexes such that men and women equally discharge responsibilities at home. This would enable women engage in economic activities outside the home. For women who still perform majority of the household tasks, the Manifesto calls for an economic policy that incorporates domestic labour into the state’s definition of economic activities, even though the practicality of this and how it is to be achieved was not self-evident.
The quest for empowerment of women in Ghana is also linked with greater representation in governance and autonomy in making decisions concerning self-determination. Women’s under-representation in governance is symptomatic of women’s marginalisation in decision-making at the domestic level and in the public sphere. Beyond the barriers of an inadequate financial base to fund political campaigns and high levels of illiteracy among women, the Manifesto points to the gap between men and women in terms of education as a key bottleneck. The idea of increasing women’s participation in governance is not merely a matter of motivating women to enter politics, rather it involves a change in socio-cultural policies that discriminate against female education and hinder women from gaining access to higher education. When this is done, the Manifesto asserts that women will have the opportunity to increase their participation in decision-making processes at the local and national level.

Historically, culture has been used as a tool to justify discriminatory practices against women in Ghana. Women are expected to submit to their husbands irrespective of the issues at stake and their submission is reinforced by religious doctrines. This cultural practice takes autonomy and self-determination away from women and invests it in the patriarchal society. Indeed, the application of this cultural dictum is inimical to women’s reproductive health, especially with respect to the use of contraception. The Manifesto notes, “while awareness of contraception is over 90% in Ghana, only 22% of married women use contraception as compared to 32% of men. The figure is even lower among the poor” (The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana, 2004, p. 43). The result is that some men refuse to allow their partners to use contraception for fear that it would encourage them to be promiscuous, thus leaving women without protection from unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. This inability of women to actively and effectively participate in decision-making processes about their bodies in the family constitutes a form of powerlessness that the implementation of the Women’s Manifesto seeks to end.
More than a decade after the creation of The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana, some of the demands in the document have been addressed. There was the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill (Act 732) in 2007, and the establishment of a Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) in all ten regional capitals; the Enactment of the Human and Children Trafficking Act (Act 694) in 2005; the prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in 2006 and the Persons with Disability Law (Act 715) in 2006. The Regional Houses of Chiefs was expanded to include paramount queen mothers as well as the establishment of customary land secretariats throughout the country and a draft Land Bill which focuses on land tenure, administration and women’s rights. Equally important are the introduction of a National Health Insurance Scheme in 2006 to enhance access to basic health care; implementation of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE); a school feeding programme that helps with the retention rate of female students; a Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Programme (LEAP) in 2008; a Social Protection Policy in 2016 and a free Senior High School education policy in 2017. The Government of Ghana ratified the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2010 and set up the Ghana National Commission on Small Arms, in a bid to resolve latent and active communal conflicts in the country that lead to abject poverty, hardship and deprivation for women. Finally, in May 2015 the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection adopted a National Gender Policy under the theme, Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment into Ghana’s Development Efforts.

On the whole, the formation of the WMC and its public education and mobilisation efforts led to some structural transformation of unjust power relations in the political arena. Ghanaian women who internalised their subordinate status began to develop critical consciousness about the unjust social structures and envisaged alternative political arrangements in which women’s rights issues mattered. One of the practical manifestations of the
effectiveness of *The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana* has been the appointment of women into high profile public leadership positions. These include positions such a Chief Justice, Speaker of Parliament; Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Director of Immigration, Director of Prison Service; Electoral Commissioner, Commissioner of Insurance; Director of Ghana Education Service, and Minister of Education, among others. This is a victory for Ghanaian women who pushed for reforms and for their voices to be transformative because they need to be heard where decisions are made.

Despite these successes, progress in women’s empowerment and collective action is never free from challenges. According Tsikata (2009) women have limited influence in political decision making and social norms and beliefs regarding women’s abilities and gender roles limit women’s voice in formal politics. In the case of the WMC, the expansion of its membership base and how to sustain collective action around the execution of the demands in the Women’s Manifesto for Ghana has been a challenge (Tsikata, 2009, p.190). On the national level, Ghanaian women remained significantly under-represented at the highest level of political participation, as well as across public and private sectors. Jennifer Asuako, UNDR Gender Analyst notes that as at December 2016, Ghana had only 31 of its 275 parliamentarians as women with less than 30% being Ministers of State and District Chief Executives (Asuako, 2016). This can be attributed to the unequal playing field created by political parties, the persistence of discrimination, gender bias, and the threat of violence, harassment and intimidation in political institutions. Clearly, there is the need for the state to meet more of the demands stated in *The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana* in order for Ghanaian women to live dignified, healthy and empowered lives.

**Conclusion**

The journey to conscientise, empower and create an enabling environment for Ghanaian women to engage, negotiate and contest the paternalistic post-colonial state has been arduous but successful. There were ebbs and flows from the era of quiet activism and state...

coopitation in the 1980s, to the rebirth of women’s activism in the early 1990s, courtesy of Ghana’s Fourth Republic. By 2004, the desire of Ghanaian women’s right activists to engage, challenge and negotiate with the state on women’s right issues culminated in the creation of a living document, *The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana*. This document marked a watershed moment in the contestation for gender equality and equity in post-independent Ghana.

Drawing its power from collective action in the serial murder cases, the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill and the establishment of *The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana* document, Ghanaian women’s mobilisation has come of age. It demonstrates that the agenda of the women’s movement is concerned with activities that address women’s rights issues at the policy level. The success of *The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana* stems from the process of dialogue by the Women’s Manifesto Coalition as a vital method in bringing about societal transformation characterized by increasing associational autonomy. During these consultations trust and mutuality was evident amongst the groups. Thus, *The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana* became a collectively owned document that set out critical issues of concern to women in Ghana and makes demands for addressing them.

The Ghanaian state’s casual approach to women’s rights issues notwithstanding, fulfilled some of the Manifesto’s demands. However, a comprehensive approach is needed to increase women’s participation in power and decision-making and *The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana* can serve as a gender check list and benchmark for measuring results of the advancement of women’s political voice and leadership for years to come. All that is needed is for women’s rights advocates in Ghana to remain as a collective and keep the momentum of their activism alive.
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Contemporarising ɔhene tene (the Akan chief’s procession) as political communication

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Abstract
This paper is about politics and communication in a Ghanaian traditional setting. It focuses on ɔhene tene (the Akan chiefly procession) as a single act of non-rhetorical symbolic communication. Situated within the conceptual frameworks of public relations and political communication, the description and analysis of ɔhene tene characterises its staging as image-making which communicates and projects power and authority. Through in-depth interviews, observation, and drawing on encoding and decoding of the sight spectacle, observed visual and sound elements of ɔhene tene are detailed, highlighting their signification and consequential roles that combine as public relations and political communication activities. Ɔhene tene is contextualised and proposed as a constructed image typology and “political language” with lessons for political communication and public relations practices.

Keywords: ɔhene tene, chief’s procession, image-making, public relations, political communication

Introduction
This study is an attempt to recast aspects of what is sometimes deemed moribund into life, render it active and show its relevance to today’s world. The indigenous ɔhene tene is an elaborate chieftaincy practice which was investigated by describing its elements as were observed for analysis that would isolate those of contemporary relevance to the practices of public relations and political communication. The analysis enabled an assessment for selection of the useful components of the procession for adoption
and mainstreaming into present day practice of public relations and political communication. Gotsi and Wilson (2001) as well as Skinner, Von Essen and Mersham (2004) and Skinner, Von Essen, Mersham and Motau (2010) consider contextualisation to be essential in articulating public relations. When contextualised, signs and symbols, as observed in ωhene tene, become the roots of perception which is a fundamental aspect of public relations and political communication.

Political communication captures the relationship between politics and communication. As a concept, it tends to be influenced by the tenets of politics and communication which constitute its dual disciplinary roots (Amoakohene, 2006). This article, which is about politics and communication in a Ghanaian traditional setting, focuses on a single symbolic communication act of the Akan, the chiefly procession (ωhene tene), as a non-rhetorical “political language” within the gamut of “paralinguistic signs such as body language, and political acts” (McNair, 1999, p. 3). The Akan are the largest ethnic group in Ghana and constitute about 48 per cent of the total population of the country (World Population Review, 2018). The Akan governance system works through chiefs, sub-chiefs and queen mothers whose status and prominence are denoted in public appearance by specific signs and symbols. Irrespective of their status, all chiefs and queen mothers make their public appearances in procession.

The thrust of the article is situated in the Akan saying: “tete wɔ bi” (the rich past) and its associate of “sankɔfa” (reclaiming and adoption). In the eyes of the Akan public, the chief’s procession, in people, symbols and sounds, which are part of the indigenous communication systems (Ansu-Kyeremeh, 2005), projects an image of power and authority (Ampene, 2014). Thus, ωhene

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1 Article 277 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, states: “‘chief’ means a person, who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage.” Sarpong (1971, p. 7) explains the Skin or the Stool as the symbol of the office of the chief; that with Stools “figures are carved into the middle section ... These figures in the middle section determine what kind of stool it is, who can own it, and what it is worth in terms of money and culture.” In this article, the terms “chief” and “king” are used interchangeably.
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tene a, ɔtene tumi, ahosden, nyansa, akokɔduro, abadae, sunsum, pae-mu-ka, ne ɔtem tenenee” (when the chief is in procession, he projects power, authority and qualities of leadership such as fitness, strength, wisdom, courage, compassion, spirituality, forthrightness and justice). One would say it is an exercise in image construction in public relations for political gain.

Within the plethora of definitions of public relations runs the central theme of communicating to favourably position clients to earn the favour of their audiences or publics. It is about relationship-building and constructing or creating a favourable image through effective communication which every politician (both traditional and modern) seeks to achieve. ɔhene tene exploits imagery in relating to a public; regardless of Grunig’s (1993) concern about less than useful domination of image in the articulation of public relations as a paradigm. Granting that “images are considered constructs that can be created” (Horst, 1993, p. 5), this study describes the Akan chief’s procession (ɔhene tene) as a political communication and a public relations image construction activity. Avenarius (1993) and Hutton (1999), appropriately, referred to the public relations practitioner as an image-maker. A routine chiefly practice, the activity of ɔhene tene is an elaborate and deliberate design, constructed to project a positively exuding image, with characteristics and attributes that are implicit as constituents of both political communication and public relations practice.

Political communication and public relations both employ many forms, tools, channels and strategies of communication to attract and reach their audiences. These may include the staging of events such as ɔhene tene. Since attention-seeking is a vital goal of the strategic use of these tools and channels, ɔhene tene provides a useful platform to project the chief. As a composition, ɔhene tene incorporates people (a chief with his retinue), sounds and symbols, in motion from one location (such as a place of abode) to another (a designated venue) in a single file. The destination is usually for the conduct of business of a meeting or other. The procession is constructed to project an image of everything that the chief is and what the chief stands for. As an act and a performance, the
procession combines visual and sound images. From the chief’s clothing to that of his elders and courtiers, symbols and sounds are assembled and arranged for logic, symmetry, sequence and hierarchy. An examination of the tene (procession) would, therefore, require evidence of the presence of these components. As public relations and political imaging, the isomorphic mental image must be a replication of the physical image for positive or negative perception.

Processions strategically display order, power and authority in politics. In Ghana, the Speaker of Parliament and the Chief Justice, for example, routinely process and recess led by identified officials, although not in an identical fashion to the chief’s procession. In the religious realm as well, choirs, for example, usually herald the entry and exit of Ministers of the Gospel at church. In the specific case of Ṣhene tene, the component signs and symbols in projecting the image of the chief may have some lessons for political image-making in political communication. The search here is for those aspects and elements of the procession that may inform image-making of, and by, the contemporary politician who epitomises Achebe’s “man of the people,” observed as: “politicians follow where the public leads them”. Contemporarising the chief’s procession is the attempt to recast the indigenous within the context of the modern.

**Image and the chief’s procession as yesterday’s PR**

There is no known communication studies or political science course that examines in a holistic manner, chiefs, their unique practices, communication and governance systems in the training of public relations practitioners and political communicators. Neither are there programmes and courses that share Grunig’s (1993) view that image is less an issue in public relations; especially when Hussain and Ferdous (2014) believe that “developing a framework of visual brand identity”, is key to “gaining a higher corporate brand reputation” among key stakeholders. In the corporate

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2 Chinua Achebe in his book Man of the People, portrays a politician character who uses his charm as a down-to-earth man to cover up corrupt practices.

world, stakeholders would be defined as persons, groups or other organisations that have an interest in an organisation. These would include owners or shareholders, employees, suppliers, creditors, the community and the government. In the traditional governance system, stakeholders would include the royals, elders, courtiers, the community and the state; all who can affect or be affected by actions and dealings of the traditional state.

In comparison with the corporate world as conceptualised by Hussain and Ferdous (2014), a procession would be a formative step in creating the image of a chief. An image is an amalgam of all activities that are visually, aurally, and sensually interlinked and interplayed in response to a stimulus or a series of stimuli (Skinner et al., 2010). It creates and assumes its own life to potentially affect perception. In the view of Turney (2000), image may be constructed, while for Zantides (2012), it is deconstructed. Nekmat, Gower & Ye (2014) contend that an image is also managed. The Asantehene’s Akwasidaekɛseɛ durbar, described as a “breathtaking” spectacle of “multisensory experience” and intense in its significance (Silverman, 2016, p. 12) is preceded by, ushered in and heralded by the procession.

A series of elements and actions merge into image-making to convey a message. The image constructor’s concern is with how, when and why the image-formulated message would elicit a positive response. The message can be clear without a word such as when: Teacher of the Year “rebuked Trump without saying a word [by letting] buttons [she was wearing] do the talking” (Knowles, 2018). This teacher’s non-verbal communication was finally verbalised and amplified in a speech she read on CNN (Bowden, 2018). Generally, the public relations practitioner or political communicator is in constant search for the attractive or pleasing image to present to us through what appears in our minds, what comes into our ears or what we see with our eyes. It is the same commitment with which the handlers of the chief strive to construct a positive image for him and his office. Both acts would be based on the gestalt isomorphic

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4 Akwasidae is a sacred day in the Akan calendar set aside for remembering ancestors in gatherings and festivities. Akwasidaekɛseɛ is a grand version of the Akwasidae.
principle that the external stimulus is replicated as the picture in the perceiver’s head. They are also an exercise in what Oržekauskas and Šmaižienė (2007) describe as actualities of public image and reputation management.

Related Studies

Various works describe and analyse the position of the Akan chief as a leader. In particular, much has been written about the Asantehene, an Akan chief of kingly status described as “the supreme spiritual and political head of the Asante Kingdom” (Manhyia Palace, 2014, p. 2). Rattray (1969), though, noted that in general, an occupier of a chiefly position was “supposed to be the spiritual head of his state ... respected by all and feared by all in virtue of his close connection with the spirit world” (pp. 13, 87). Sarpong (1974), in his discussion of myths and political authority, observed that the signs and symbols projected in the chief’s procession capture a mythical basis for authority: be it political, moral, or spiritual.

In furtherance of achieving all these quality expectations of the chief, value orders of society may be mythically constructed, using “ruling line’s divine origin, magical powers of its progenitors,” or “imagined conquests in the past” (Sarpong, 1974, p. 128). These chiefly attributes are of interest in analysing the signs and symbols of the chief’s procession. That is to look for what in the latter represents Sarpong’s (1974) myths. They (signs and symbols with the myths they represent) “justify the existing order, to show that it is right for the rulers to rule and for the ruled to be ruled” (Sarpong, 1974, p. 131).

The Asantehene, as head of the Asante Kingdom, “derives his power and authority from the Denkyemkye” (literally, the crocodile hat but, in essence, the Asantehene’s crown) with which he is crowned and which he wears “only once” in his lifetime. As part of his installation, he also “swears with the Bosomuru (warrior) Sword at Pampaso, an area in Kumasi” (the capital) (Manhyia Palace, 2014, p. 2). Elsewhere among the Akan, Hardiman (2003) has, however, observed that, in modern times, “traditional leaders
do not exercise [western-style] political power” (p. 69). She noted that during the Aburi Odwira festival, the people “honour their leader [the Aburihene], to listen to what he has to say to them, and to meet together to establish their solidarity” (Hardiman, 2003, p. 75).

As noted by Osei (2000, p. 11) in his detailed description, the Asante chief’s responsibility is also to prevent: “calamities by praying and offering drinks to God, the ancestors and the deities of the land … by pouring libation”. Furthermore, he “guides and guards the state;” as “war general of his people;” and “serves as a judge of his people” (Osei, 2000, p. 11). In addition, the “chief and his elders make laws” (Osei, 2000, p. 11). In the discharge of these responsibilities, the chief must abide by a code of conduct which “has a lot of DON’T’S to guide him. … not be a drunkard, involved in games of chance, not flirt with other people’s wives” (Osei, 2000, p. 12). As custom demands, someone should always accompany the chief wherever he goes. Violation of any of the codes is ground for destoolment. The procession is one structure that articulates the code for compliance.

Often, however, research on chieftaincy tends to dwell on the institution’s structure and functions. Earlier works including Busia (1951), Boafo (1962), Kyerematen (1966), Bentsi-Enchill (1971), Aggrey (1978) and Obeng (1987) are corroborated by later works such as Osei (2000), Rathbourne (2000), Ansu-Kyeremeh (2005), Odotei (2006), Adjaye and Misawa (2006), Amissare (2009) and more recent ones such as Ampene (2014) and Manhyia Palace (2009/2014/2017). It is similar to kingly practices even beyond the borders of Ghana. Adjaye and Misawa’s (2006) work on Nigeria narratively outlines the nature of chieftaincy, especially what the position of a chief is and what it does. Ampene and Nyantakyi III’s (2016) work, in particular, is a glittering presentation of the signs and artefacts of the kingship, photographed in colour.

Bentsi-Enchill’s (1971) analysis of the chieftaincy institution is one of the few that go beyond description to propose the “tete wɔ ɔ bi” (the rich past) and “sankɔfa” (reclaiming and adoption) of the old and its characteristics in a transformation agenda for
progress and to propose change as aligned to continuity. Similar ideas are expressed by Okoronkwo (n.d.). It seems to align with the l’Hoeste and Vila (2017) contention that the construction of image using sound and others is potentially helpful in transforming to achieve change and continuity in public relations work (Stoeltje, 2003). Grunig (1993), indeed, warns against communicating symbols alone; advocating, instead, for the “symbolic and behavioural relationships” to be intertwined for effectiveness while acknowledging the “preoccupation of many public relations practitioners with the concept of image” (p. 121).

Ampene and Nyantakyi III (2016) detail and analyse all that goes into the Asantehene’s procession. Basically, it is in three clusters: an “advance group,” the “Asantehene’s group” and the “rear group”, except during the Adaekese (grand Adae) when there is an additional group called the “gold stool group”. Depending on a participant’s group, the individual wore or bore artefact signs and signifiers with the resultant/consequential signification of a chief with power, authority and wealth. The human actors in the procession manipulated the array of paraphernalia. Their positions, roles in the chieftaincy institution and job descriptions which require the signs and symbols they bore were all sources of the chief’s image and social standing. They were also expressers of verbal art forms such as musicians, flutists, horn blowers, drummers, priesthood and militarism. Many were the courtiers who provided services and bore all kinds of insignia such as headgear, anklets and necklaces.

It was all a massive exercise of encoding the power and authority of the king and all that is rich and beautiful for the people, the audience to decode, understand and appreciate. For our purpose here, chief and king are coterminous in meaning. Each of the many signs and symbols, as a piece in the procession puzzle, has its own code. They coalesce into the chiefship as an activity encapsulated in the procession during which the humans who bear these symbols of the state wear clothing and adornments to hierarchically enhance their coded appearance to signify their specific courtier statuses.
The procession

A chief’s procession is an elaboration of the requirement that the chief must always be accompanied and never left alone. By far and of the greatest importance in Ampene and Nyantakyi III’s (2016) account on the procession is that which focused on the Asantehene’s special *Adaekese* (grand *Adae*) procession. In principle, processions by all other chiefs would follow the same pattern but with less depth, glamour, pomp and pageantry. Two basic forms of procession emerge from their description. A procession may be with the chief on foot or a ride in a palanquin. That is, the chief walks or rides in a palanquin in procession to wherever and for whatever purpose. When an *apakan* (palanquin) is used, processions usually lead to durbar or funeral grounds; otherwise it is a walking exercise. A procession by the chief may also be in happiness, such as attending celebratory durbars or festivals or in sadness such as heading towards the funeral grounds.

A chief’s procession, as an image-projecting communication activity, consolidates the verbal and nonverbal message for effective political communication. Ampene and Nyantakyi III (2016) identify nonverbal messages as in the signs, artefacts and symbols of the procession and verbalised messages as by oral performers. Among the latter are messages in recitation, *kwadwom* or *amoma* (praise poetry or bard) and *nsabrane* (appellations). The co-authors also cite “Anyan (drum poetry)” (Ampene & Nyantakyi III, 2016, p. 31). Processions are colourful and intrinsically meant to initially superficially please the eye. The whole encoding system is guided by colour codes, for example, red and black for mourning and black and white for celebration; also, of different types and colours of umbrellas, first in libation prayer; and the *Nyamedua* (God’s stump) symbol. “Samanka [a brass basin containing medicinal herbs] is carried on the head by Samanka Komfo (Samanka priest). It leads the procession to spiritually sweep or clean the route, drive away

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5 In Asante, chiefs are graded from Asantehene (the King), *Amanhene* (Paramount Chiefs), *Abrempɔnfoɔ* (Kumasi Divisional Chiefs) and *Adikrofɔɔ* (Headmen). The first three are *apakanhene* (palanquin chiefs) who qualify to ride in the palanquin. This means, not all chiefs are allowed to ride in the palanquin. Even then, their umbrellas are graded giving meaning to the expression, “*Ahenfo kyiniye, ebi da bi akyi*” (chiefs’ umbrellas vary by status).
evil spirits and neutralize all evil intentions by adversaries … The Samanka leads all kinds of processions, celebratory or those of grief” (Ampene & Nyantakyi III, 2016, p. 31).

In view of the above symbols, description and depiction of ɔhene tene as an integral part of Akan chieftaincy practices, chieftaincy, especially with its procession and other private activities such as visits to the stool house and the burial of chiefs, tends to be associated with some fetish and ungodliness. However, although modernity would so label these practices, from some official government publications, one learns about retrieving the past to incorporate it into the prevailing times or present. For example, to the National Redemption Council (NRC) military government (NRC, 1973), “it is a challenge to us – to foster our developing spiritual union; to organize and rationalize the symbols and traditions that provide the basis of our heritage” (p. 18).

**Study methodology**

Ampene and Nyantakyi III (2016) employed the observation and interview methods to gather and analyse data in their study. Both audio and video recordings were made. Moriarty (2011) believes that qualitative research methods are appropriate for collecting data such as have been assembled here as findings of the study. While Scott and Garner’s (2013) qualitative designs, methods and techniques were informative, Mulhall’s (2003) favoured “field notes on observation” techniques were instructive in the design of this study. The current study observed and documented the appearance, actions and behaviour patterns of the chief and his retinue. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with eight individual chieftaincy actors and functionaries. Comprehensive in-depth interviews were conducted with two commentators (Amooh, 2017), three chiefs, two courtiers (nhenkwaa), and a queen-mother all of whom were familiar with the system and its procession activities.

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6 Seven billboards each with one of the seven principles of the “Charter of Redemption” were erected along the main Independence Avenue. See booklet: Charter of National Redemption [Council]: Unity and Self-Reliance. Accra: National Redemption Council (1974). The first of the seven principles was: “One Nation, One People, One Destiny.”
Data collection

Processions and some ceremonies were videotaped, and for some, copies of existing video recordings (essentially by the television station, UTV) were obtained from January to December 2017, a period of 12 months, for analysis. For example, to ascertain the significance of signs and symbols in the Asantehene’s processions (business and ceremonial), an ahenkwa (a courtier) was contacted to identify all the elements in the procession. The signification of each observed activity was discussed with him and another ahenkwa. Later, the Akyeamenhene (head linguist), Sanaahene (the treasurer) and Atipimhene (a member of the rear guard), were consulted for confirmation, authentication, verification or clarification of stated accounts and views. Contents of different episodes of the UTV programme “Heritage Ghana,” broadcast on Saturday evenings, also helped to validate what Ampene and Nyantakyi III (2016) had documented.

Results

Observed visuals (such as the colour of clothing) and sounds (drums and ululation) elements of the processions studied are detailed, highlighting their signification and consequential roles that essentially combine as public relations activities and tools for political communication. Certain patterns emerge from the data which may be summarised as: the retinue; artistic expressive performance (as in speech and dance); and signs and symbols, from the Denkyemkye (crocodile hat/Asantehene’s crown), Ekye mu kyɛ (kingly crown or hat of hats) through sikabotire (golden headband) to abrafoɔ sekan (the executioners’ swords). Others were appearances of groups of people, signs and symbols packaged and projected as “the chief.” Those were reinforced with rites and rituals that were strung together into mythical beliefs through elaborate celebratory gatherings in ceremonies which created the chiefly space occupied only by the chief, thereby further boosting his image. Some of them were: Akwasidae processions; Apemanimhene’s (Apemanim chief’s) Farmers’ Day procession; and the funeral processions of the chiefs of Kwanwoma, Akwaboa, Toase, Bantama, as well as
that of the Asantehemaa (the queen mother of Ashanti), all within the Asante Kingdom of Ghana.

The retinue

The retinue comprised the chief and all the people who played various roles. They walked in the procession whether the chief also walked or rode in a palanquin. They bore all kinds of titles which reflected the roles they played and were clad in different types of clothing. Many stayed quiet, spoke no words, and sang no songs. Others carried swords, guns, smaller size umbrellas (kropɔn) or colourful bankyiniye (special umbrellas) to underscore the saying “Ahenfo kyiniye, ebi da bi akyi” (chiefs’ umbrellas vary by status). In sum, it was a processual retinue of people and artefacts which symbolised body and spirit in the person of the chief.

Artistic expressive performance

Some of the members of the procession party performed variously in artistic expressions. There were those such as the guards or executioners pushing and pulling their swords in and out of their scabbards. The esenfɔɔ and kwadwomfɔɔ (praise singers) sang or recited their praise poetry: “ɔba oo, ahunuabɔbirim” (there he comes, he of scary sight). “These are the praise singers. They are an important part of the procession”, explained an ahenkwaa (a courtier). For the procession to funeral grounds, the Asakra (war song chanting) group usually chanted asafo (war) songs (Aggrey, 1978).

Signs and symbols

Signs and symbols dominated the processions and they were packaged to project “the chief”. They were reinforced with rites and rituals among which were the firing of musketry and sprinkling of some liquid from the Samanka (brass container of medicinal herbs) and the burning of incense. Everything melded together into those mythical beliefs which underscored the elaborate performances aimed at projecting the chiefly image. Together, they constituted symbolic representations of power, authority and spirituality. Items
such as *akyeamepoma* (staff of the linguists); *afena* (attendants’ symbol of office), *mena* (elephant tail) borne by a courtier on grievous missions, and different types of *kyiniye* (umbrellas) including the smaller *kropɔn* (type of umbrella) for indoor or minor business outings used regularly by lower ranked chiefs and queen mothers as well as the colourful *bankyiniye* (special umbrella) for major festive and ceremonial occasions.

The *bankyiniye* was also used to cover the *apakanhene* (palanquin chief) when he rode in the *apakan* (palanquin). Either umbrella (*kyiniye*), the smaller *kropɔn* or the larger *bankyiniye*, may have a crown on it or a symbol with meaning such as a totem of the chief’s clan. Or, it may be colour coded such as the Bantamahene’s umbrella which is always black and the Tepahene’s umbrella which is always white to match their clothing or outfit. Thus, effectively, each sign or symbol represents an attribute and value that projects a positive association with the chief. In this regard, the chief’s handlers must accurately determine which one to use and at what time for maximum impact. The *kyiniye* covers the chief and protects him from rain and sunshine. Incidentally, the chief swears an oath of office which requires him to answer calls to arms or responsibility literally in rain or shine (*nsuo mu o, awia mu o*) making the umbrella a very useful tool although its true meaning or import could be that the vagaries of the weather should not hinder or impede the call to duty. In other words, there should be no excuses when duty calls.

**Appearance**

For the chief, as for every politically active person, appearance counts. It is a basic message of a procession which must be clear to all, especially the handlers of the event. As explained by the *Akyeamehene*, an aspect of dressing suggested that the chief was being secured in one piece to accentuate his wholeness. In this regard, strategic points of the body, “*napɔso, napɔso*” (the joints) were secured with adornments. The chiefs wore different things on the shoulder, elbow, wrist, waist, below knee (on the shin), ankle; while all fingers were adorned with rings all meant to make parts of the whole body hold together. The chief’s appearance, thus,
presented an important message to the gathering, one that the *Atipimhene* referred to as *nkammom* (unity, togetherness).

**Ceremonies**

The chief’s procession usually did not just happen. According to the queen mother interviewed, “*biribi na ede ba; na ehia ahobia ne nhyehye; yehyehye ne nyinaa reeere*” (something brings it about; it needs careful planning; it is all elaborately planned). The procession was induced, invited or stimulated. As a gathering, it was usually associated with an event; where the chief appeared to grace and honour it or be honoured by it. The processions provided colour, pomp and pageantry to spice up the activities of an event. One such event was the proceedings of the Atwima Kwanwoma District Farmers’ Day celebration that took place at Atwima Apemanim town on Friday, December 1, 2017. It was an opportunity for the Atwima Apemanim chief to process from his *Ahenfie* (palace) to the event grounds. He was led by his *akyeame* (linguists or spokespersons) bearing two *akyeamepoma* (staff of office) in a procession to the grounds where the Farmers’ Day function was held.

Mounted on the first linguist’s staff and carried by the Akyeamehene (head linguist) was the totem *kwaakwaadabi* (the magpie bird) of the Asona people to which the Apemanim stool belongs. On the second *akyeamepoma* was mounted a gold figure of two people eating from the same *ayowa* (earthenware bowl). By way of both processing and seating during the Farmers’ Day procession, before the linguists were the *nkonwa* (stool bearers) and behind them the sub-chiefs (with elders seated in front of them) from the lowest ranked Twafoɔhene to the Ntotoɛhene, Adɔntenhene, Akwamuhene, and the Krontihene just before the chief. The Gyasehene sat on the other side of the chief with the Kyidɔmhene and Ankɔbeahene behind. After the Ankɔbeahene, was seated the queen mother and her entourage.
Types of procession

Observations and interviews revealed different types of processions as found by Ampene and Nyantakyi III (2016). These may be broadly categorised into business and ceremonial or *apakan* ride and procession on foot. Business processions included the Apemanimhene, who resided outside the *ahenfie* (palace or stool house) moving from his private residence to the *ahenfie*. The King of Asante, Otumfoɔ, the Asantehene, was also observed to process ordinarily for business from his residence to a meeting venue, called *Asemnnie* (Court). Whereas the Asantehene’s processions were with the *bankyiniye* (the colourful umbrella), the lower ranked Apemanimhene ordinarily used the *kropɔn* (the smaller umbrella), with the *bankyiniye* used only during the procession to the Farmers’ Day durbar grounds.

Every constituent unit or component of a procession, person, sign or symbol indirectly or nonverbally communicated something. Both the queen mother and the *Atipimhene* pointed out that everything we see in the procession has a meaning (“*biribi biara wɔ n’asekyere*”). However, some were, in addition, instruments that were linked to direct verbal communication. For example, the chief’s message sent through an *ɔkyeame* or *ahenkwaa* (messenger/courtier) would always be accompanied by an *akyeamepoma* (linguist’s staff of authority) or *akofena* (fighting sword) or *afena* (power and authority of an *ahenkwaa*’s office). For urgent or emergency summoning, the *ahenkwaa* would carry the *mena* (elephant tail), the sight of which always spelt major trouble. As noted by Ampene and Nyantakyi III (2016) and confirmed by Amooh (2017), the Asantehene’s emissaries would carry the *Mpoponsuo* (a sword and sign of authority) to accentuate his authority and power over the other chiefs. “The swords are a major sign of authority by which the chief could also delegate” (Amooh, 2017). In procession, the Asantehene was, indeed, observed sending the *Mponponsuo* bearer with a message for a chief in the stands.

It was intriguing to observe that women were completely left out of the picture. For example, the party of priests (Ampem & Nyantakyi III, 2016) was exclusively male. There are two reasons
given to explain why this happens. First, indigenous governance is conceptualised as a military function. The display of military might is a substantial part of the procession. It is also suggested in some quarters that the woman ceded her power and authority to rule and administer because men were deemed stronger to lead wars. The only exception in Asante history was Ɔhemaa (Queen mother) of Ɛdweso, Nana Yaa Asantewaa, who led the men in a war against the British in 1900. Processions are essentially battle formations. As Ampene and Nyantakyi III (2016) state, the procession has its advance party, the chief’s group and rear party. Second, the queen mother has her own procession independent of the chief’s. It is formed by her own assistants such as akyeame (who, however, bear no akyeamepoma) and courtiers just as in the case of the chief. Nonetheless, it was observed on a number of occasions that a woman bore and fired the sahene (Bantamahene’s biggest gun/musket) with the loudest noise.

Discussion

Embedded in the constructed chieftaincy processions were aspects that are of importance to public relations and political communication. The adventurous public relations practitioner and political communicator may, therefore, want to find out how to draw on those image-making communicative aspects of the procession for a new paradigm of political communication that could inform their communication planning and strategising. Each procession has its own symbolic significance. For instance, as is still the practice today, the day of the week on which an event that demands a procession occurs, determines the nature and purpose of the procession such as the sacred Ɔfie (Friday), Nkyibena (Tuesday), Awukudee (Wednesday) (Adjaye & Misawa, 2006).

Patriotism appears to be an attribute of the chief’s procession as it colourfully assembles only state paraphernalia unlike some political organisations which would rather display party colours and accoutrements than national colours and symbols of state. There is a sense of loss of loyalty to a country by political parties when they opt to troop party and not national colours. What today’s political
communicators may want to consider for adoption are the unity and patriotism imbued in the chieftaincy procession. At least, there is the possibility of adapting some or part(s) of its communication potential to enrich their modern-day practices.

By design, the image-maker constructs with an intention, an objective in mind. For the audience experiencing shene tene, it is deconstructing the procession. As the line approaches and passes, each of the component images (image part) is assessed. The assessment continues to the end of the line. At that point, the parts become the whole. Sarpong’s (1974) myths and political authority found practical expression in the signs and symbols of the procession. The position of the chief converges in signs and symbols which define his power and authority. In symbols of state such as the Sword, Coat-of-Arms, president and speaker’s chairs, the modern Ghana state has adopted indigenous representations. The president swears the oath of office with the state Sword and uses the Coat-of-Arms as the official seal. There is, however, nothing specific for him to wear (such as a hat or crown) to signify the office or crowning into office.

In other practices, the Coat-of-Arms is the presidential vehicle number plate along with flying the national flag on his official vehicle. These and other symbols make the president stand out in public. Interestingly the Asantehene, like all paramount chiefs in Ghana, flies a flag. The Asantehene’s flag is embossed with the 

\[ \text{denkyemkye} \] (crocodile hat/Asantehene’s crown). Other paramount chiefs usually emboss their clan totems on their flags. The idea of flying the flag appears to have been borrowed from political office holders in the First Republic. Then, the District Commissioner (now District Chief Executive), the representative of the President in the local governance district, flew the national flag on his official vehicle. The practice was abandoned after the coup that overthrew that republic except for representational purposes of Ghana’s envoys abroad. But the chiefs have continued to fly theirs.
Points of conjuncture and disjuncture

As a political communication strategy, political parties have developed images that separate them from state symbols, unlike the unity of the symbolism of chieftaincy. In Ghana’s current multiparty democracy in which political parties seek attention and endorsement in their quest for power, two main frameworks have driven their actions. These are visibility (the Convention Peoples’ Party and the National Democratic Congress) and ideology as guides to their use of signs and symbols. While the Convention Peoples’ Party (CPP) enjoyed a one-party state in the first republic, the fourth republic has been dominated by two political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The National Democratic Congress party, for instance, chose to drape Ghana’s Parliament with its colours rather than those of the state. The NDC’s implementation of such strategies have been phenomenal. When in power, its colours feature everywhere including on public property such as the Accra Metropolitan Assembly’s (AMA) signposts and party member businesses. The party once directed its members to wear party colours on Friday thereby challenging the Friday African wear introduced by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government to promote local textile industries.

Earlier in the First Republic, the CPP government of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah wanted to make the nation the party by changing the national flag into its party colours. Barker (1969, p.33) cites an Nkrumah New Year message of December 31, 1963 that suggested “a change in the Ghana flag, making it identical with that of the CPP except for the central five-pointed black star.” In that sense, the colours would change from red, gold and green to red, white and green. These colours and flags are without recourse or reference to the traditions, signs and symbols associated with chieftaincy. However, as stated earlier, some chiefs have adopted the flag and other insignia such as the Coat-of-Arms as part of their paraphernalia.

In a conversation with Vincent Assiseh (Publicity Secretary of the NDC) about decorating and draping Parliament with party colours during events, he averred that the party exploits the opportunity to enhance its visibility although that practice amounted to taking advantage of opportunities to advertise.
Expectations and recommendations

Kwame Nkrumah’s fusion efforts, guided by his philosophy of the African Personality, some kind of Afrocentric renaissance, included finding political space for the institution of chieftaincy in the constitution. He created the office of the Ɔkyeame (State Linguist). Then he designed the State Sword as a symbol of power and authority held when taking the presidential oath just like Southern Ghana chiefs would take their oath of office holding the akɔfena (sword). Ɔkyeame Boafo Akuffo was the only one to have occupied the state linguist position which was abolished by the coup d’état of 1966 which overthrew Nkrumah’s government. The Ɔkyeame’s main role was that of reciting appellations (Boafo Akuffo, 1962/1975) to precede official broadcasts. A glimpse of the traditional linguist’s (Ɔkyeame) role is captured in the following dialogue between a sub-chief and a head linguist during one of the observed sessions:

Sub-Chief: “I forgot a printed version, so I have scribbled it on paper and will present the printed version later.”

The Ɔkyeame considers this statement of the sub-chief offensive and disrespectful to the chief presiding over the meeting. He therefore reformulates the sub-chief’s statement as follows:

“Ɔkyeame”: “Chief presiding, the sub-chief says he forgot the list at home so a messenger is on his way to bring it.”

Unlike mainstream political actors who normally have predetermined terms of office, traditional rulers hold power for life. Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire had drawn on the example of “paramount chief” for life (Fitzgerald, 1997) to justify his rule for life while Kwame Nkrumah’s one-party state and Acheampong’s “union government” drew on similar indigenous “rule for life” sentiments. Chapter 22 of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (Article 22 (1) & (2)) states emphatically that: “The institution of chieftaincy, together with its traditional councils as established by customary law and usage, is hereby guaranteed.”
The guarantee extends to the fact that: “Parliament shall have no power to enact any law … [that] in any way detracts or derogates from the honour and dignity of the institution of chieftaincy.”

It follows then that a dual system of governance, defined in part by Holzinger, Kern and Kromrey (2016) as: “‘dual polities’ [which] are governed by the state and organize collective decision making within their ethnic community according to traditional rules,” exists in Ghana. Unfortunately, it is an institutionalised parallel system which discourages fusion, even minimum cooperation, and is not amenable to harnessing for enrichment. Dominance of western values in the modern system of governance does not encourage researching into the indigenous for what could enrich practice. Isolating modernity from the traditional has created a cultural chasm that engenders clashes of contradiction and disenabling of otherwise purely functional units of the indigenous system.

There appears to be some incompatibility in the power duality system with the creation of two polities: one rural and less literate; and the other, urban schooled digirate, with a section of netizens communicating in the digisphere. A co-existence of the western and indigenous governance systems, as institutionalised, each with its uniquely impenetrable sets of communication systems based on its own set of values, means ways ought to be found to align the systems for accelerated development to occur. This paper proposes an aspect of alignment for enhanced public relations and political communication practice. What practitioners need to do is to show interest in the indigenous, searching for its progressive elements which can then be infused into political communication for greater effect.

**Risk in deconstructing the message**

In the audience deconstruction of the procession formulated image, there is the risk that part or some of its parts could distort its message. To communicate, the message constructor, the chief’s image-makers, with the intent of communicating, carefully compose, arrange and choreograph the tene processual message
with logical sequence uppermost in the mind. Nonetheless, there is always the risk that all this will be turned upside down in the audience de-constructor’s eyes. In other words, a constructor’s designed sequence of what should follow which, could confuse the de-constructor who is untrained to appreciate the logical sequencing.

For example, for an audience member who does not take kindly to indigenous spiritualism, the sight of the samanka (brass basin containing medicinal herbs) will immediately lead to drawing the conclusion that chieftaincy is essentially about fetishism with no expectation of anything positive that the procession would convey. Similarly, an onlooker may think of violence (such as armed robbery) at the sight of the musket-bearing guards when the intention is to represent the chief as a warrior defender of his chiefdom. Such confusion may lead to a disconnect between common sender-receiver signification with the consequence of no signification at all. For emphasis, a procession captures qualities, roles, responsibilities and ethical expectations, to project who the chief is, what is expected of him, and his preparedness to meet those expectations. It is all about the chief and his capabilities. The procession, thus, speaks to proactive public relations and political communication with less room for reactivity or negativity.

**Summary and conclusion**

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana has institutionalised a dual system of governance by creating structures for chieftaincy affairs as observed in some other parts of the world (Holzinger *et al.*, 2016). The implication is that the institution is still of relevance and is, therefore, needed for good governance. Unfortunately, the design is a parallel rather than a fused system suggesting two cultural entities and paradigms. However, by contextualising its dynamics, this article projects ɔhene tene as an indigenous constructed image typology, which has lessons on the power of signs and symbols for today’s political communication and public relations practitioners as it focuses on image construction and maintenance which are job roles for the two practices.
If nothing at all, the transformational or paradigm shift argument here finds roots in an observation made by the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana, whose chair carries various *adinkra* traditional signs and symbols to underscore their significance and importance in the hierarchy of western style power. He is reported to have said: “If the language is such that you cannot use it at the Otumfu’s \(^8\) palace or the palace of any respected Chief, please don’t use it in Parliament” (JFM/Ghana, 2017). This is a profound recognition that, indeed, “*tete wɔ bi*” (the rich past); and is a sound basis for “*sankɔfa*” (reclaiming and adoption) of the past for the present and the future.

The study attempted to present *ɔhene tene*, the Akan chiefly procession, with its signs, symbols and art forms as an exercise in image construction and projection which could offer lessons for modern public relations and political communication. What those who operate predominantly within the dominant western structures, such as the modern public relations practitioner and political communicator, could learn is that there are practices within the indigenous system as exemplified by *ɔhene tene* that can be adopted to enrich the westernised practice. Indeed, contemporary politicians usually announce themselves in processions at public gatherings. Perhaps, an infusion of some unifying symbols and art forms as *ɔhene tene* presents, such as assembling state rather than party paraphernalia, could enrich those appearances and provide a rallying point for the people.

The study has been bolstered by the idea that, in many instances, technology and inventions have been informed by the underpinning principles of previous or supposedly obsolete precursors. Therefore, just as today’s social media language of the emoji and avatar, among others, seems to be reinvented hieroglyphics and their types \(^9\); in some kind of return to the signs and

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\(^8\) *Otumfuo* is the title of the King of Asante. It means, the all-powerful.

\(^9\) Such other forms of writing in Africa include what Okoronkwo (n.d.) describes as the insibidi. The Vai syllabary and the Ghanaian adinkra symbols (Fianu, 2007) are others. The latter are widely adopted by the state, public institutions of higher learning such as the University of Ghana’s fern, and used even by private institutions. The Vai syllabary is the indigenous ideographic writing of the people of southeast Nigeria and southwest Cameroon with mention of Calabar and the like.
symbols of ideational scripting, so might image creation activities of public relations and political communication take some cues or lessons from ůhene tene. Overall, ůhene tene has been presented as an important activity in the Akan socio-cultural, traditional political system with recommendations for its adaptation, adoption and integration into modern attempts at image-making in public relations and political communication. The act and practice of ůhene tene may also be contemporarised within a paradigm of change and continuity assuming that political communication is most useful as a location-oriented activity.
References


Amoakohene, M. I. Contemporaising the Akan chief’s procession as political communication
Climate change and the mitigating tool of salvage archaeology: The case of the Fort Kongensten site at Ada Foah, Ghana

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Abstract
In the ongoing attempts at lessening the hydra-headed impacts of climate change, this paper explored the strategic use of salvage archaeology in the scientific retrieval and documentation of heritage remains and sites under the threat of climate change. In doing so, the research examined the effects of climate change and global warming on coastal heritage resources. Specifically, in Ghana, sea levels have been steadily rising over the centuries leading to the erosion of coastlines and the submergence of historic coastal settlements to about 110 metres inland. A historic Danish Fort Kongensten constructed in 1783 along the coast of Ada-Foah in Ghana, for example, has been totally eroded away by the rising sea water. This paper assesses how salvage archaeology was used to retrieve, document and conserve cultural materials associated with the fort. It also explored the extent to which salvage archaeology and anthropology can be used as tools in climate change mitigation projects in impacted zones.

Keywords: salvage archaeology, coastal heritage resources, climate change, Ada Foah, mitigation.
Aryee, V. A. and Apoh, W./ Climate change and the mitigating tool of salvage archaeology

Introduction

Although climate change is a global phenomenon that has been with humans since time immemorial, its increasing alarming proportion is now becoming a source of worry to all stakeholders. The scientific discourse on climate change often addresses issues of trend analysis and climate change modeling to foreground ongoing global impacts. However, the use of alternate approaches such as the salvage archaeology has been marginal in this discourse. Climate change impacts are being registered in local areas in the form of rising temperatures, melting of polar ice, rising sea levels, variations in the frequency and intensity of hurricane activity (Cooper & Peros, 2010, p.1), as well as altered and erratic rainfall patterns (Rudiak-Gould, 2011, p.11). Furthermore, water bodies are at risk of drying up, and most areas of lush greenery run the risk of becoming unattractive in the long run. This ongoing global climatic phenomenon (Hulme 2009, p.322) is also taking its toll along the eastern coast of Ghana (Aryee, 2013). A study conducted by Sagoe-Addy and Addo indicates that sea levels will rise at an average of 3.3 mm/year, while the shoreline will erode by as much as 0.86m/year. This research also predicts that the sea level along the shores of Ghana will rise by 10cm, 23.4 cm and 39.4 cm for the years 2020, 2060 and 2100, respectively. By their prediction, a total of thirteen historical heritage tourism facilities on the shoreline of Ghana will be at risk. Presumably these heritage resources include the key coastal forts and castles such as Elmina and Cape Coast castles. It is also estimated that 31% of these tourism facilities will not physically survive the effects of sea level rise (Sagoe-Addy & Addo, 2012, p.155). Another example is the erosion of important potential touristic coastal heritage resources at Keta (a town in the Volta Region of Ghana). More importantly, a large number of important monuments, ancient trade roads as well as the Danish Fort Kongensten on the eastern coastline of Ada Foah, have been gradually eroded by the ocean. Available records indicate that since the 1940’s, the ocean along the coast of Ada Foah has advanced approximately to about 110 meters inland (DEME records). Living
in a farming community, the people of Ada Foah are now adjusting their farming habits to adapt to the changing weather patterns.

Figure 1: Map of Ada Foah research area

In more aggressive practical terms, a number of measures are being advanced and executed to mitigate the rate of eroding coastlines and their important plantations, settlements, and heritage resources. One of the key structural approaches involves the building of capital intensive rocky sea defense structures. Anthropological observations indicate that sea defense walls solve such negative impacts at one venue. However, the phenomenon tends to redirect its currents to cause havoc on other coastal shorelines (Oteng-Ababio et al, 2011, p. 430). Furthermore, the construction process of such sea defenses most often also leads to the destruction of remaining
historical relics on such sites under the pretext of creating access roads. In the event that a sea defense structure cannot be built to preserve coastal heritage or if there is the need to destroy potential archaeological sites in some to make way for a sea defense structure, we advocate that salvage archaeology can be one of such effective mitigative tools.

What is known as salvage, development-led, preventive or commercial archaeology attests nowadays to the most widely practiced form of archaeology and CRM practices within Europe and the United States (Arazi, 2011, p.28). The practice seeks to salvage as much material culture as possible from archaeological sites under threat of either human-engineered situations or environmental disruptions; in this case, climate change and global warming. It can be used strategically to salvage, document and conserve important relics and coastline heritage resources. As a case study, this paper documents various aspects of a salvage archaeological project that was conducted at the former Fort Kongensten site of Ada Foah in Ghana. This approach was used to salvage remains at this historic coastal heritage site when the site was in the process of being totally destroyed to make way for the construction of a sea defense wall in the area.

**Addressing the effects of climate change on coastal heritage in Ghana.**

The cultural and natural heritage endowments in communities around the globe are not excluded from the effects of climate change. According to Neumann et al. (2000, p.3) “Climate change is likely to accelerate the historical rise in sea level through the warming of oceans and melting of ice, which in turn will affect coastal development, wetland resources, and recreation.” The UNESCO World Heritage Center has enumerated a number of such climate change induced impacts on heritage resources. These include corrosion of historic monuments and traditional material cultures, erosion of archaeological sites and cultural landscapes as well as the interruption and termination of traditional lifeways (Collette, 2007; Rockman, 2015, p.38). In Africa for example, it has
been noted that by the year 2020, between 75 and 250 million people are projected to be exposed to increased water stress...yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50 percent in some regions, agricultural production, including access to food, may be severely compromised (Climate change synthesis report, 2007). Notably, a study on climate change and theatre for development conducted by Asiama in Axim (a town in the Western Region of Ghana) revealed that farmlands were under threat of inundation due to heavy rains occurring in what was previously their dry seasons (Asiama, Personal communication, 2012).

The key issue here is not the inevitable change, but how the change impacts society and how new strategic ways can be established to deal with such impacts.

Figure 2: 20th century map of the Ada Foah coastline. Note the red pointer which marks the fort’s previous location. The remaining area leading from the south to that marker has been eroded by the ocean (source: Dredging, Environmental and Marine Engineering)
To enable the provision of a continuous monitoring of shorelines globally, remote sensing technology and the use of mapping techniques are being effectively used to identify, monitor and assess coastal changes in various places. The mapping methods adopt techniques that extract the shoreline positions from data sources such as historical maps, aerial photographs and repeated field measurements. These data are compared with current sources obtained from remote sensing technologies as well as airborne, space borne and land-based techniques. These mapping techniques enable information on the historic rate of change and estimated sea level rise for future shoreline positions to be estimated. The results obtained in 2011, for example, show that the global average rate of sea level rise for the past century was about 10 to 15 cm (Addo et al., 2011).

Expositions on the scientific and anthropological discourse on climate change (Strauss 2009, p.166) and the inimical local effects of this global environmental phenomenon (Byg & Salick, 2009, p.156; Marino & Schweitzer, 2009, p. 213), reveal how climate change anthropologists are focusing on ethnographic observation studies that look at local impacts of the global phenomenon and reception studies. Such studies tend to examine local views of climate change discourses and lived experiences. Environmental archaeologists and other scientists (Rockman, 2012, p.193) see the proposed Anthropocene as the current geological age which is characterized by the inimical impacts of the activities of human technological advances that are influencing such climatic and environmental perturbations. Increasing modernization, use of plastics and use of climate altering military armaments are the usual suspects in this regard (Revkin, 2015; Rockman, 2015, p. 42; Smith & Zeder, 2013).

To better understand past evidences of the Anthropocene, Rockman (2015) presents the combinations of archaeological and historical and landscape analyses as a strategic way of outlining the range of impacts humans have had on the environment over the course of millennia. In this regard, “cultural resources have important
information to add to the science of identifying and understanding the impacts and direction of climate change” (Rockman, 2015, p. 43). The archaeology of climate change (Cooper & Peros, 2010) is a growing genre. Its proponents try to integrate “archaeology with ongoing geographical and environmental discussions of human responses to the effects of climate change and various mitigation strategies that have been or are being implemented to lessen its impacts (Cassar & Pender, 2005).

Reconnaissance survey: Background of the Fort Kongensten site

Fort Kongensten site is located in Ada Foah a coastal town in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Ada serves as the capital of the Dangbe East District and can easily be referred to as one of the hubs of relaxation and tourism in the Greater Accra Region. During a reconnaissance survey of the Ada Foah area on Thursday 25th of April 2013, we noticed that plans were underway to demolish the remains of an 18th Century structure, Fort Kongensten, used as a prison. This was to make way for the construction of a much needed sea defense wall. The construction firm undertaking the sea defense project, Dredging, Environmental and Marine Engineering (DEME), was immediately contacted and they indicated that all administrative and traditional protocols had been adhered to and the demolition was to take place that very day. We suggested that the process for demolition be halted for a condition survey and possibly an excavation of the area to be conducted. This request was refused outright. This was because DEME project leaders had encountered and deliberated over several issues with the traditional council of Ada Foah throughout the year 2013. They claimed that there had been about four months delay on their construction activities due to the resistance of the traditional and religious rulers to the demolition of the forts’ prison, considered to be an intrinsic part of their heritage.

This brings to the fore a number of issues bedeviling the conservation of heritage sites in Ghana. A review of the Antiquities Law (NLCD 387) and the Environmental Protection Agency
regulations of Ghana, reveals that presently there is no law that compels contractors to consult with archaeologists before they embark on their construction and heritage destruction activities (Apoh et al., 2017). In this case, the destruction of this historic site came very late to the notice of the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies (DAHS) of the University of Ghana. As a result of this, there was no time to effectively document the monument or consider saving it. Deliberation with the DEME officials ended with the agreement that we could conduct an excavation after the demolition of the buildings. They agreed to grant us five working days to conduct salvage excavations on the project site as well as rummage through the debris on the site after which they would clear the site with heavy-duty machines. In the light of this, we had to conduct a salvage archaeological research to preserve and study as many material remains as possible.

Without a doubt, the sea defense wall is a necessary preventive mechanism for curbing sea erosion in Ada Foah. However, its construction came at a costly price that entailed the demolition of the priceless heritage remains of the people of Ada Foah. Evidently, the Fort Kongensten heritage monument that was once in existence at the site, had steadily been eroded by the ocean, leaving behind only the remnants of a concrete cistern; unfortunately, no archaeological work was done to record the details of the historic fort for the benefit of posterity before its total erosion.

The Ada Foah salvage archaeological project is worth highlighting here as one of the most recent salvage archaeological works conducted to mitigate the negative impact of rising ocean levels along the eastern shoreline of Ghana. The key research methods involved the integration of archival studies, ethnographic research and salvage excavations in the collection of data to understand the value of the impacted Fort Kongensten and associated abandoned colonial prison and school.

In the process, the archival research was conducted on Danish administrative documents and journals. The purpose of this
was to have a steady foundation and historical back drop for the research. It also facilitated a better understanding of the nature of the Danish fort before it was washed away by rising ocean currents. In order to have an emic perspective of the culture of the people of Ada Foah, we undertook an ethnographic research. Interviews and focus group discussions were held in order to gather oral accounts and cultural information about the inhabitants. In locating informants, we first spoke to some of the youth in the community to know whether they had any idea about the fort or whether they had learnt about it in school. Their responses showed that they had no clear knowledge of the fort while it was in existence. In actual fact, they had been prohibited by the elders from swimming in the area where the fort once stood. The reason given was that periodically the sea waves brought to the shore dangerous building parts such as large stones, bricks, and more recently a concrete cistern. Based on the responses from the youth, we decided to target the elderly (above 45 years of age) in the community as key informants and this proved fruitful. During the excavation, we also seized the opportunity to interact with passersby and onlookers who were mostly women.

**Ethno-historical Account of the People of Ada Foah and Fort Kongensten**

The ethno-historical data gathered revealed that the people of Ada, like most southern Ghanaian ethnic groups, trace their ancestry to Western Sudan. They also link their migratory history to that of the popular narrative of King Agorkoli of Notsie and his cruelty. It is generally believed that his inordinate ruling led his subjects to create an ingenious escape plan which included the watering of the mud walls of Notsie until they gave way for them to escape out of the so-called *agboghome* or fortification (Gayibor & Aguigah, 2005). This popular escape narrative has been heralded as a collective avenue for strengthening the bond that exists among people of Ewe origin. Greene (2002) asserts that this narrative is a German missionary orchestrated collective origin story for the Ewes. The history of the non-Ewe inhabitants of the fortification
like the Ada and Ga-Adangbe people have been silenced in this missionary orchestrated grand Ewe origin narrative (Apoh, 2008).

According to the narrative given by the elders in the palace of the Ada paramount chief, the people of Ada were proclaimed by King Agorkoli as “Adawolawo” which means a wild, furious, brave and warlike people. Thus, the short version, ‘Ada,’ has stuck with them until today. According to the narrative the four Ada clans that migrated from Notsie led by a ‘chief priest king’ called Adi, were the Adibiawe, Lomobiawe, Tekperbiawe and Dangbeiawe clans. They were accompanied by the Ga-Adangbe people of Krobo, Osudoku and the Shai. These clans crossed the Volta River mystically and settled at a place called Togologo. However, whilst there, conflicts arose among the Ada clans and the other groups of people. Adi refused to bury the differences between them and proclaimed in Ewe “Lolorvor” which means “the love cord binding us together is severed”. This resulted in the Krobos moving on to settle at areas within the Accra Plains.

The Ada people continued their stay at Togologo which was interspersed with raids by Akan warriors which threatened their peaceful existence. In the light of this threat, a scouting group was created with a hunter from each of the four clans, to search for a new settlement. It was during this scouting that one of the hunters, ‘Korley’, shot and wounded a wild beast. The beast scurried away. However Korley followed it only to realize that the beast was a mystical female being. This female being, according to the narrative, was the spiritual custodian of the Songoor Lagoon (a popular ecotourist attraction and major salt producing lagoon in Ghana). She gave custody of the Songoor Lagoon and its surrounding area to the people of Ada on the terms that the Songoor Lagoon be held sacred and protected from mining and misuse. Presently, a section of the lagoon known as Yomo Lagoon (translated as the lagoon of the Old Woman) is considered sacred and off limit to all invasive activities. The locals consider this place the meeting point of spirits and nature. The remaining portion of the lagoon is, however, accessible for mining and fishing activities.

Secondly, he (Korley) was to remain faithful to her, and
thirdly he was also to promise not to adorn himself or his family members with gold. Gold and salt are the two minerals obtained from the Songooor Lagoon. After these terms were agreed upon by Korley, he and the people of Ada settled at the Okor forest and were given custody of the Songooor Lagoon and its environs. Interestingly when the Ada forces became victorious after the 1826 Katamansu War, they exchanged their gold spoils, gained from the defeated Asantes, for food before marching back to base (Apoh, 2001; Apoh & Gavua, 2010). This was probably because of their covenant with the mystical lady of the Songooor Lagoon. By undergoing the main Dangbe ritual of circumcision, other clans were assimilated into the Dangbe group in the Okor forest overtime. These migrant clans are the Kabiawe (Akan group), Kudzragbe, Korgor, Ohuewem and Koreabor. The Ada people are ruled by priest-kings.

By the mid-seventeenth century, the Danes had set up outposts on the shores of the Gold coast. However, these outposts were not successful until the latter part of the seventeenth century when they established more substantial outposts (DeCorse, 1993, p.155). Specifically, in 1783 the Kongensten Fort was established by the Danes in Ada for trading and as a defense post. It was mainly built to protect Danish trade against African attack (Van Dantzig, 1980, p.58). Fort Kongensten was later used as a slave trading post. According to oral accounts, the word ‘Fort’ was corrupted into ‘Foah’, hence the name ‘Ada Foah’. In mid-nineteenth century, the fort was sold to the British. Since then it degraded over time. Fort Kongensten survived until the mid-twentieth century when it was washed away by tidal waves from the ocean. Towards the east of the fort site is an abandoned colonial primary school.

The school has also undergone a partial demolition, with parts of the foundation stripped off and pulled off to make way for the construction of a sea defense wall on the site. Governor Edward Carstensen whilst traveling the Coast of Guinea in 1842-1850 recorded in his journal that:

I spent the night in the ruins of the previous Fort Kongensten...Fort Kongensten consisted of four
Climate change is accompanied everywhere by other kinds of change in society (Barnes, 2013, p.541; Townsend, 2004). In the case of Ada Foah, it is reflected mainly in the inhabitants’ subsistence and migration patterns. Due to the current environmental issues that the town faces, the inhabitants have restructured their subsistence by taking a keen interest in onion farming. Although the soil is sandy, they mix it with adequate portions of manure to enable them plant the onion crop. They have also been pressured to relocate from their coastal homes to other non-permanent structures. Indeed, the fort and other important heritage resources on the Ada coastline have been swallowed up by the rising sea levels. Through the ethnographic study, we noted that the memory of the fort among the people of Ada Foah was almost nonexistent. The youth, between 18-30 years, that we interviewed were not aware of the significance of the fort. The respondents above 50 years, however, had a fair knowledge about the fort. Though not an in-depth understanding, there was an awareness of its existence and the presence of the Europeans on their side of the coast. Thus, it appears the knowledge of heritage and its relevance to the people of Ada Foah are seemingly the preserve of the traditional council and not the totality of its inhabitants.

According to Little (2016, p, 140), “the creation and development of heritage areas raise [a] number of critical issues related to the ways that we understand, study and commemorate the past.” This statement addresses the different perspectives of persons
in the communities as well as the government on what should be done concerning heritage loss. For example, the government has funded the construction of a sea defense wall that will involve the destruction of the remains of the fort along the coast of Ada Foah. The Ada traditional council, however, recognized the fort as a part of their heritage and refused to accept the final destruction of its associated sites. Ethnographic data collected revealed that the inhabitants of the town were not pleased at the interruption in the construction of the sea defense wall, and they did not agree to the delay in work for traditional protocol to be observed. This is because they had witnessed the erosion of homes and roads; some people had also lost their source of livelihood. They were apprehensive of the resistance being put up by the traditional council and feared they would be forced to move inland as the sea continued to get closer.

The scenario that played out at Ada Foah before the site of the fort was destroyed is revealing. It shows that different constituencies of people hold different views on the meaning of heritage, the control of heritage, the participation of each group in heritage, the funding of the preservation of heritage and also the economic developmental contribution of heritage. In this scenario, there was tension between the locals; specifically the traditional authority, the district assembly, the DEME construction firm and the youth on the demolition of the last standing shreds of the fort. Each group had a different perspective on heritage preservation and conservation and the interpretation and sentimental value of heritage. Such instances of conflict concerning heritage and the environment must be prevented from happening in other areas along the coast. In a country where there are no laws that will compel constructors to conduct archaeological surveys, archaeologists must take the initiative. More importantly, there are many heritage sites along the coast with tourism potential and high socio-economic values that need to be protected against destruction (Sagoe-Addy & Addo, 2012, p.163).

In the light of the fact that climatic change is impacting all
aspects of human systems, including cultural heritage, there is a need to protect and ensure sustainable management of threatened sites. One unique method of mitigating the effects of climatic change (e.g. sea level rise) on coastal heritage resources is to conduct detailed archaeological or salvage archaeological research on the sites. This must involve the use of comprehensive descriptive techniques, visual documentation and mapping of the heritage resources. In areas where there is a need for the construction of a sea defense wall, salvage archaeology must be one of the best approaches to adopt in saving some of the remains at these endangered sites. In this regard, our research shows that salvage archaeology can still be effectively applied in areas where heritage is under dire threat of climate change impacts and where mitigation methods are being contested.

The practice of salvage archaeology is not new in archaeological approaches or in cultural resource management (CRM) practices. However, its use in the anthropological (Crate and Nuttal 2009) and archaeological investigations of climate change is in its infancy in Africa. The methodology of salvage archaeology has been applied in several countries under different circumstances in most cases during construction works. Projects associated with the discovery of the Arizona Highway project of 1964 (Hammack, 1973), the Ghana Volta Basin Research Project in 1971; the New York African Burial ground in 1989 (Blakey, 2010, p.525), the Ghana Bui Hydroelectric Dam salvage archaeology project (Gavua & Apoh 2011; Apoh & Gavua, 2016) and the Tamale Airport Expansion Project (Apoh, 2018) are key examples.

The salvage archaeological process at the Fort Kongensten site

In carrying out the heritage mitigation intervention at Ada Foah, salvage archaeological processes were adapted. The primary aim was to salvage possible archaeological heritage from the remains of the Fort Kongensten and associated abandoned colonial prison and school on the Ada Foah coastline. The primary objective was also to understand the dynamic impact of the rising sea level on coastal heritage and how the use of salvage archaeology can aid
in aspects of heritage preservation. The secondary objective was to use this salvage approach as a form of public archaeology to educate the public about what to do at such heritage sites that are being threatened by inimical environmental forces. Since the site was being destroyed by both natural (sea level rise due to climate change) and cultural (construction of sea defense) means, salvage archaeology was the best approach to use in order to retrieve material remains in the shortest possible time to mitigate the dual impact on the heritage remains of the historic site.

The process began with a two-day surface survey on the site. This resulted in the location of surface scatter of historical materials (see figure 3) amid the remains of the fort on the coastline and the foundation of the colonial school situated to the north of the fort site.

![Figure 3: Surface scatter of archaeological remains](image)

Unfortunately, the surface scatter was found on a limited piece of land. The relationship between the fort, the fort’s prison and the colonial school is not yet certain. Their periods of existence vary extensively. The fort and its prison were in existence from an
earlier period in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The school, however, is a much later edifice built in the early twentieth century and abandoned in the 1970s. The surface cultural materials, e.g., fragments of bowls, plates, glass bottles and smoking pipes (Figure 4), recovered from the site indicate household materials which do not directly relate to formal education or school artefacts.

**Figure 4**: Map of work area

Based on the limited area we had to work with, we strategically excavated a 2m2 unit using 20cm intervals. Sterile level was encountered at a depth of 80cm below datum. An analysis of the excavated area revealed a distinct outline of a midden feature in the south wall, characterized by a distinct rusted metal underlining (Figure 5).
Figure 5: Photo of excavated unit two extension. Note the distinct markings on the southern wall, from which artifacts were retrieved

All artefacts recovered were from the feature. They included ceramics, shells, metal pieces, bottles, cowries, beads, local pottery, and smoking pipes. The soil color in the midden feature was dark sandy loam with specks of charcoal; as compared to the remainder of the unit which was mostly sandy. Due to the concentration of artefacts in the south wall we extended the unit into a 2x3m trench to recover similar kinds of artefacts. The third and fourth levels, however, revealed an increased amount of sea shells as well as a mix of charcoal pieces. Sterile level was also reached at 80 cm below datum.

The presence of the midden provides evidence of a discard practice among the people who once lived on the site. What is unclear is the specific agency involved in this discard practice. The midden is positioned in the center of three structures; the fort’s prison, the fort itself and the colonial school. Thus, it could have been accessed by occupants of all of these three structures. However, based on ethnographic information, we established that
since the school was built in the early 19th century and abandoned in the 1970s, its occupants might not be the agency involved in the use of the materials but rather, could have been involved in the making of the midden as a secondary form of discard.

![Figure 6: Juxtaposition of wall profiles from the south west quadrant of unit one and southeastern quadrant of unit two](image)

**LEGEND:**

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<td>STERILE AREA</td>
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<td>SANDY LOOSE SOIL</td>
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In the hope of revealing the entire midden we excavated the remaining portion of the unit towards the south (Figures 5 and 6). Excavation was done arbitrarily with a 20cm interval to the sterile level of 74 cm below datum. Similar artefacts were also recovered. A 1m2 unit was also excavated about ten meters to the east of the trench in order to test and explore the limited area for more associated data. Unfortunately, only a few material remains was recovered. They include ceramics, local pottery, metal, glass and shell.
Assessing the context and material remains of the salvaged site

The feature excavated in the trench was approximately situated in the center point of three colonial structures which have all been demolished. They are Fort Kongensten, the Fort Kongensten prison and a colonial school. The rusted metal outline revealed in the wall profile of the excavated feature suggests that there was a metal container embedded in the ground for refuse collection. After close examination of the nature of the wall profile of the trench excavated, we concluded that the feature excavated is a midden. The salvage archaeological excavations revealed that the midden resulted out of a deliberate action taken by the earlier inhabitants of the area for appropriate refuse disposal in such a sandy environment. The majority of material culture recovered was from the midden.

Figure 7: Unearthing the midden during the excavation

Analysis of the materials provided further insights into the lifeways on the site in the past. A total of 127 fragments of local pottery were recovered from the site and most of these had straight and everted rims. Such everted rims are unique to globular shallow
bowls, which are typical nineteenth century pottery (Boachie-Ansah, Personal communication, 2014). Methodical studies of these local pottery fragments revealed their decorative treatments and functions (see Figure 11). A total of 272 pieces of European ceramics were also recovered. This number forms 24% of the total assemblage of artefacts recovered. They were a mix of fragments of flat plates, deep bowls and soup plates. The assemblage is dominated by whitewares decorated with cut sponge designs. This technique is noted to have become common after about 1845 (DeCorse, 2001, p.157). The date range of the bulk of the excavated European ceramics is between the mid-eighteenth to twentieth centuries. This goes to support the view that the materials in the midden were likely utilised in the eighteenth century through to the twentieth century (see Figures 8 and 12).

Furthermore, none of the ceramic pieces had any form of makers mark on them. Mr. L.B Crossland (a ceramic expert; Personal communication 2014), came to the conclusion that the people of Ada Foah were receiving ‘seconds products’. Seconds are flawed manufactured goods or factory rejects from Europe. He arrived at this conclusion based on his elaborate research which revealed that the eastern frontier of which Ada falls under was not a major trade point in European goods. Thus, the majority of materials that made their way to this area were factory rejects that had no ‘maker’s mark’/manufacturer’s logo. Another likely reason for the lack of embossed goods could reflect the economic status of the Danes that settled along the eastern coastline. Flawed goods based on our findings could have been relatively cheaper to invest in for trading with some African indigenes as compared to goods of high quality.

A total of 260 pieces of glass fragments were recovered from the excavation. The diagnostic pieces were categorized into eight groups based on their primary functional properties. Notably, they may have served as vessels for mineral water, perfumery condiments, medications and alcoholic and non–alcoholic beverages (see Figure 13). The glass sherds are also parts of drinking glasses,
cups and plates. Evidence of glass stoppers and closures were also found in the midden. It is also likely that these bottles were reused as containers (DeCorse, 2001, p.161). The presence of seals and embossments make it easier for bottle identification. Unfortunately, just a single seal was discovered during the excavations. This was a Blankenhyem and Nolet seal being an early eighteenth-century distillery apparatus from Schiedam, Netherlands. In addition to the sherd, there were significant whole pieces of Schnapps bottles, or “Dutch case gin” bottles. According to Mcnulty (1971), the case gin bottles had become unstable by 1780/1790 leading to the refinement of the mold which ushered in the production of bottles with four pointed bases, instead of flat bottoms, to enable air circulation beneath the bottles

A total of 53 fragments of European kaolin pipes were discovered comprising 17 bowls and 36 stems (see Figure 10). Unfortunately, there were no significant decorations on them to make identification easy. There was, however, some form of incisions made on the bowls. According to Oswald (1975, p.96) decoration on bowls or stems is a considerable rarity in the seventeenth century since most of such decorations were initiated in the first half of the eighteenth century and became commonplace in the nineteenth century. There appears to be a general consensus that smoking pipes were introduced into Ghana and West Africa by the Portuguese. This data, however, is not based on solid evidence. It can also be attributed to the British, the Brandenburgers and the French as well (DeCorse, 2001, p.240).
Figure 8: Photo of white ware with spatter and sponged decorations

Figure 9: Photo of ginger stoneware bottle

Figure 10: Photo of smoking pipes
Figure 11: Profile of vertically everted rim of a shallow bowl

Figure 12: Photo of white wares with cut sponged decorations and spatter

Figure 13: Dutch case gin bottle
Other artefacts including cowries, beads, metal pieces and molluscs were recovered from the excavation. The people of Ada Foah have various uses for beads, such as for adornment, religious purposes and marking stages of life. The most significant function of beads is when it is used to mark stages of life. According to data gathered from the ethnographic research, a baby of eight days is adorned with beads, and at puberty a female child is required to wear beads for her rite of passage. The quality of beads represents the wealth of the family (Francis, 1993). The beads discovered from the excavation consisted of three plastic beads. These were polychrome (blue and yellow) spherically shaped beads with a hollow center. A total of forty-five pieces of cowry shells were discovered representing 4 % of the total finds discovered. Only six could be clearly identified as belonging to the Cypraea moneta species. The remainder belonged to the Cypraea annulus species. These shells were probably used as currency, or for aesthetic purposes. A large number of Bivalvia shells were recovered from the excavation. These aquatic fauna remains belonged to two edible varieties; Arca senilis (locally known as “Adod3”) and Ostreadenticulata (oysters). These fauna remains give an insight into the likely dietary pattern of the people who depended on ocean protein sources. The metallic finds from the site included both long and short nails. These appeared to be associated with construction practices.

After classification, analysis, and cross dating, the date range of the artefacts with the exception of the three pieces of plastic beads fell between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries period. These dates corroborate historical data on the construction and habitation of the site: the Danes in the late eighteenth century (1783-1850), and the British (1850- n.d). The evidence of the beads, although minimal, suggests a possible continuous use of the feature in the early 20th century. In total, the blend of “household” artefacts was 58 % of artefacts recovered.

On this basis, we are inclined to suggest that the materials retrieved from the ‘household’ midden reflect the lifestyle of the
Danes and the British on the coast. In the study of material culture, we conclude that the increased amount of European goods in the material culture recovered from the feature shows there was the need for such goods along the eastern coastline of the Gold Coast. They were either brought or used by the Danes and British on the site to support their lifestyle, or by the locals to mimic such western lifestyles of affluence. It is apparent that the lack of embossment on the goods was not a bother to the traders or the purchasers of the goods. The quality and quantity of the artefacts reflects the choices and taste of a section of the society that existed during that period on the site. With a high probability of the goods being ‘seconds,’ the society was probably not a high earning one. The ratio of European goods to local goods discovered in the excavations also suggests a dominance and high influence of European culture in that context. However, the associated indigenous pottery and fauna remains also reflect a form of cohabitation and a reciprocal influence of local lifeways on the Europeans on the site.

**Making salvage archaeology a strategic scientific and legal tool in mitigating heritage loss**

Considering the rapid transformation in Africa’s infrastructure which can be attributed to widespread globalization, industrialization and modernization, coupled with the ongoing climate change impact on coastal heritage resources, there is the need for cultural heritage to be taken into consideration and preserved. For such comprehensive preservation to happen, salvage archaeology has to be part of legislations in African countries similar to CRM legislations and practices in Europe and the United States. Currently, South Africa (1999), Namibia (2004) and Botswana (2001), have overhauled their heritage legislations (Arazi, 2011, p.28; Ndoro, 2009, pp.26-28) to include international CRM legislations in the legal protection of cultural resources. Such CRM legislations recognize salvage archaeology as a strategic approach. Nevertheless, countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Tanzania have provisions in their legislations, as well as other statutes and policy provisions which when interpreted
properly tend to serve a similar purpose of heritage preservation (Ndoro & Kiriama, 2009, p.59).

In Ghana, however, legislative instruments on heritage research, conservation and promotion are limited. The Ghana National Museums Act of 1969, (NLCD 387) is the only legal binding legislation that encapsulates heritage resources in Ghana, however the clauses are antiquated and do not meet the exigencies of current times (Apoh et al., 2017). The act extensively defines antiquity and objects of ‘archaeological’ interest, by using the term ‘archaeology’ as the foundation for the definitions (see N.L.C.D 387 section 29). However, the act makes no mention of the use of an archaeologist to aid in the retrieval of ‘antiquity’ that has been discovered by a ‘lay person’ or the application of archaeological methodologies in protecting endangered sites. The law clearly outlines all the administrative processes that should take place in the case of a discovery, and it further outlines the duty of the board of the museum concerning the antiquity discovered. However, it falls short in protecting heritage (the antiquity) as a whole, because it does not include expert knowledge from archaeologists or salvage archaeology as a form of strategic cultural resource management practice (Fardin et al., 2016).

The World Bank, unlike the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the African Development Bank (ADB) (Brandt, 2000; MacEachern, 2001, p. 869), has in theory put in place operational policies that safeguard cultural resources. These policies are mandatory and are to be complied with by necessary agencies overseeing projects funded by the World Bank. Its most recent policy is the ‘Operational Policy 4.11’ which explicitly states that cultural resources must be a component of environmental assessment (Arazi, 2011, p.31). In this respect, the World Bank defines physical cultural resources as movable or immovable objects, site structures, groups of structures, and natural features and landscapes that have archaeological, paleontological, historical, architectural, religious, aesthetic, or other cultural significance; This definition encompasses not only human made resources, but also natural resources. The definition also states that
physical cultural resources may be located in urban/rural settings, and may be above or below ground or underwater (World Bank Operational Manual OP 4.11- Physical Cultural Resources, 2006). Overall, this definition should ideally make it almost impossible for any cultural heritage in whatever form to be sidelined in an environmental impact assessment (EIA) and report for any World Bank sponsored project.

Notably, irrespective of the presence of these clear-cut international definitions and rigorous safeguard policies, there are still pertinent issues concerning non-compliance in Africa. Ideally, these issues have solutions yet on a more realistic note, the required CRM that should be done is absent. Arazi (2011, p. 28) notes that “until effective in-country legislation and monitoring systems have been established, the confrontation on issues of noncompliance between the various stakeholders will remain a great challenge”. Enforcing environmental and heritage impact assessment procedures in African countries is a must towards safeguarding archaeological cultural resources. Recent studies have shown that “18 African countries have EIA systems that they employ before the initiation of projects. Of these 18 countries, Ghana and Tunisia have functional and robust EIA systems” (Arazi, 2011, p. 30). Although this is a good start for Ghanaian cultural resources, it should be noted that these EIA systems put in place by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are environmentally biased. This is in the sense that, it appears the main concern of the EPA is on the study of the projects’ impact on water bodies, wild life, forests, noise pollution among others. Experts from such disciplines are more readily contacted and placed on EIA teams whereas cultural heritage experts are usually excluded.

Irrespective of these legislative shortfalls in CRM enforcement, there has been a number of successful salvage archaeological researches conducted in Ghana. In most of these cases, the researchers/archaeologist had to take the initiative by petitioning and convincing the development companies involved to implement CRM and cultural heritage impact assessment projects
on their construction sites. One of the most significant projects is the Volta Basin Research Project which was initiated after Ghana gained independence and has been ongoing until present. The salvage archaeological project was conducted over a 250×250 km² of land that was to be inundated due to the construction of the Akosombo Hydroelectric Dam. Altogether more than 600 sites in the flooded area were surveyed and recorded prior to their inundation (Davies, 1971, p.3). More significantly, Acheulian and late Acheulian-Sangoan tools recovered from sites such as Mpeasem, Angeta, Yapei and Keta Krachi, have contributed greatly to the data on the Early Stone Age. In addition to that, several significant artefacts were recovered that contribute to the study of Middle Stone Age sites, as well as Neolithic and Iron Age industries in West Africa (Davies, 1971, pp.12-20). Over time, this project has opened up various avenues of on-going research in the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana.

Furthermore, a salvage archaeological project was conducted at the Bui Hydroelectric Dam project site between 2009 and 2012 (Apoh et al., 2012; Apoh & Gavua, 2016; Gavua & Apoh, 2011). The “Kings City” salvage archaeological project in Asakai-Takoradi in the Western Region, and the ‘City of Light’ salvage archaeological project in Appolonia, located in the Greater Accra Region, were both completed in 2012 (Apoh, 2012a, b). Out of the four projects mentioned above, the Bui Dam project is the only one that has a video documentary that is periodically aired on national television (Documentary on the Bui Dam Salvage Archaeology Project 2013). This video aids in creating awareness about archaeological fieldwork and its relevance to the Ghanaian society. It also exemplifies the relevance of archaeology in documenting heritage resources before they are destroyed for other developmental projects.

Conclusion

Fortunately, the coast of Ada Foah has a sea defense wall now. However, if the government of Ghana does not embark on systematic mitigation projects, the case of the erosion of
Fort Kongensten will reoccur on the coast of Osu and Nungua, suburbs in the Greater Accra Region. The question however is about sustainability. How do we maintain an environment that will not contribute to climate change? We are of the opinion that salvage archaeology when combined with other reception methods in anthropology will enable researchers to be fully armed and prepared for the worst-case scenario in any coastal community. Anthropological methodology when applied to research affords the researcher an insight into the lives of the community being studied, and this information can lead to a better understanding of climatic change impacts and thereby inform adaptation policy (Barnes & Lahsen, 2013, p.541).

This brings us to the question of how to educate the Ghanaian populace on heritage in order to make archaeological research more meaningful. In our opinion, effective communication through public outreach is most likely the best approach to getting public archaeology done. Little (2016, p. 144), notes in her examination of issues on education and outreach that, “every sector of the archaeological profession considers public education and outreach to be important”. What needs to be considered is the methodology and theoretical approach to getting effective communication done. In our opinion, effective communication involves education, the media and a clear understanding of issues. The world is fast becoming a global village, if not already one. Notably, information flows and networks have spread across borders in ways that could not be imagined before the onset of the internet, the global adoption of mobile telephony and social networks, and the rapid growth of broadband (Global information Report, 2013, p. 3). It has become necessary for the avenues of data sharing created by technology to be exploited by archaeology in aid of effective communication. These avenues are not likely to come without obstacles but overall, the advantages should outweigh the disadvantages. Information technology is a growing market and accessibility of information for the Ghanaian populace is key for recognition of the discipline.

Unfortunately, this research was limited in terms of site
areas to work with thus restricting the material culture recovered. Nevertheless, with the data gathered, public archaeological methodology can be utilized to create awareness about the threat that coastal heritage faces. It is anticipated that the recent rise in sea level due to global warming will continue for centuries (Walkden & Mills, 2008, p. 2). Thus, the future decline of the shoreline of Ghana will be greater than what has already taken place in the past. Most of the coastal inhabitants ‘hope’ that the rocks placed in the ocean (referral to sea defense wall) will hold the sea away for a while. Some also strongly doubt it. Anthropological and archaeological methods must be used in other coastal areas at risk of destruction such as Fort Patience at Apam and Ussher Fort in Accra.

It is, however, apparent that the discipline of archaeology has a long way to go to improve its public image in Ghana (Gavua, 2006). It is our opinion that archaeologists need to invest more effort into integrating public archaeology into their conventional archaeological practices to enhance its social benefits. Little (2016, p. 136) writes that “public archaeology also includes archaeologists’ collaborations with and within communities, and their activities in support of civic engagement and civic renewal.” What we gather from this statement is that public archaeology takes a step into social aspects to fulfill the social responsibility of the discipline. Based on this project, it becomes clear that salvage archaeology is a strategic approach in salvaging materials in climate change impact zones and other areas that stand the risk of losing their cultural/historical heritage. It is alarming to perceive what the future of the coast of Ghana will be in the next twenty years if conscious mitigation plans are not put in place. Thus, there is a need for archaeologists--whilst there is still time --to partner with related specialists such as earth scientists, climatologists and environmental experts to initiate well-tailored mitigation methodologies. Such partnerships will be a true reflection of the eclectic nature of the discipline of archaeology and its relevance in conserving the past for use today and tomorrow.
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Figures

Figure 1: Map of Ada Foah, research area

Figure 2: A 20\textsuperscript{th} century topographic map of the Ada Foah coastline. Note the red pointer marking the fort’s original location. The remaining area leading from the south up to that marker has been eroded by the ocean (Map source: Dredging, Environmental and Marine Engineering)

Figure 3: Surface scatter of historical materials on the site

Figure 4: Map of the work area

Figure 5: View of south wall of unit one. Note the dark midden feature in wall

Figure 6: Unearthing the midden feature

Figure 7: Juxtaposition of wall profiles of the trench, to reveal outline of the midden: the south-west quadrant of unit one and south-eastern quadrant of unit two

Legend for Figure 7

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Y</th>
<th>Midden with metal outline</th>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Sterile area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>Sandy loose soil</td>
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Figure 8: Photo of white ware with spatter and sponged decorations

Figure 9: Photo of ginger beer bottle

Figure 10: Profile of vertically everted rim of a shallow bowl

Figure 11: Photo of smoking pipes

Figure 12: Photo of white wares with cut sponged decorations and spatter

Figure 13: Dutch case gin bottle
Commodification of the gospel and the socio-economics of neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana

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Abstract
In Africa, religion, generally, has often been used as a medium to assuage difficulties in life. The pragmatic-oriented function of religion, as found in Africa’s economy of faith, makes religion a kind of an economic good/service that can be harnessed to deal with existential needs and aspirations. Operating within this worldview, and with the help of the media, some Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic pastors-prophets have commodified the gospel by employing various means of marketing to advertise, brand, and package religion as a consumer or spiritual product that can be bought to solve life-debilitating issues. This article focuses on some of the contemporary practices of the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches that are symptomatic of the commercialization and the commodification of religion. In so doing, the article attempts to tease out the positive and negative socio-economic implications of these practices. The work demonstrates that though there are some deleterious implications of the commodification of the gospel, the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, through such practices, have been able to raise substantial amounts of money to fund numerous social intervention projects that are helping transform the lives of people. Data used in this article was gleaned from the radio, television, and relevant literature.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, charismatics, consumer, commodification, socio-economic development.
Introduction

Anatomy of the religious, social, and political context for the emergence and expansion of Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity in Ghana

In the last two decades, the number of people in Ghana who have joined Pentecostal and/or Charismatic churches appears to have grown rapidly. The 2000 Population and Housing Census in Ghana indicates that 24.1% (out of 61.2% of the Ghanaian population who claimed to be Christians) were affiliated to Pentecostal Churches (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005). This Christian population, however, increased in the 2010 Census by 10% (i.e. from 61.2% to 71.2%). Of this, 28.3% are Pentecostals, Catholics 13.1%, Protestants 18.4% and other Christians 11.4% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012, p. 40). This growth in Pentecostal denomination as indicative of the 2000 and 2010 Population and Housing Census is largely attributed to the Charismatic and/or the neo-Pentecostal strand of the Pentecostal Churches in Ghana. This upward growth of the Pentecostal movement is not peculiar to Ghana but consistent with global patterns (cf. Attanasi, 2012, pp. 3-4). This brand of Pentecostalism, which is mostly referred to as the third strand of the Pentecostal movement in Ghana proliferated between the 1970s and early 1990s and saw an exponential growth in the early 1990s (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Omenyo & Atiemo, 2006; Ojo, 2008).

To some extent, this growth pattern has been greatly influenced by the insistence on prosperity gospel and the adept use of modern media technologies. In this study, I use the term Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in reference to indigenous independent charismatic and neo-prophetic churches that emerged on the Ghanaian Christian scene between the late 1970s and early 1990s, often referred to as the third wave or neo-Pentecostal movement (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Omenyo & Atiemo, 2006; Omenyo & Arthur, 2013). Some of these churches include the Christian Action Faith Ministries (popularly known as the Action Chapel), International Central Gospel Church, Alive Chapel International, Perez Chapel International, and Life Ministry.
Worship Center. Apart from the neo-Pentecostals, there are also the traditional or classical Pentecostal churches which include the Apostolic Church, Church of Pentecost, Christ Apostolic Church, and Assemblies of God. While these broadly represent the second wave of Pentecostal churches in Ghana, the first generation is what scholars refer to as the African Independent Churches (AICs), generally perceived by Ghanaians as *Sunsum Sore* or spiritual churches. In this group are Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) and Apostle’s Continuation Church, etc. (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005; Omenyo & Atiemo, 2006; Omenyo & Arthur, 2013). The first two generations differ somehow from the neo-Pentecostal churches in terms of leadership and management style as well as emphasis on some doctrines, such as the prosperity gospel (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005, pp.23-28). Nonetheless, they all share common practices, such as healing, prophecy, speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*), and vision.

A distinctive and/or shared theological denominator among neo-Pentecostal churches is the insistence on the need for one to be “born again” and experience the blessings, transformation, empowerment, success, and prosperity concomitant with the “born again” experience – material salvation which is largely expressed and more evident in healing and deliverance. Healing and deliverance are aimed at rebuking and binding demons, castigating witches and defying them by the power of God through Jesus Christ (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005).

Remarkably, the emergence of the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in the early 1980s coincided with the rather aggravated socio-economic difficulties faced by citizens in sub-Saharan Africa. It will not be an overstatement to say that the context of socio-economic depravity and grime that most African countries witnessed during the 70s and 80s, for instance in Ghana and Nigeria, provided a context for the spread and growth of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. This is largely so because the messages of Africa’s neo-Pentecostals at the time centered on the precarious economic situation and the promises of God through
Jesus Christ to alleviate his children from such economic quagmire through salvation which they read in the scripture. The late Nigerian theologian and historian Kalu (2009, p. 179) states precisely that the production of prosperity teachings in Africa ensued within the context of austere environment of African political economy in the 1980s when, in his own inventive semantic, “the earth groaned”. Simply put, it was an era of brittle political systems that saw failing state resources, the commencement and implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs which brought in their wake enormous migration movements. In such a precarious context of economic deprivation and growing poverty rate, the prosperity gospel burgeoned as an immediate message to fill the “bowls of the poor” (Kalu, 2009, p. 186; see also Ogunbile, 2014, pp. 132-149). Significantly, the Pentecostal movement that has been at the margins of African Christianity became the carriers of the message and subsequently, exploded with enormous dynamism in the reshaping of the African religious landscape. “The competition for scarce resources intensified”, asserts Kalu, culminated in fierce “religious competition” (Kalu, 2009, p. 180). This religious competition, Heuser (2015, p. 18) argues, “forged a Pentecostal political theology of prosperity, as it were; a prosperity formula with political dispositions and hegemonial power in public sphere”. There was, as it were, an intense desire and incessant need to participate in and contribute to religious globalization from the African context of deprivation and socio-economic and political marginalization.

The messages of the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches at the time centered on motivating and encouraging people to have faith and survive even in the most unpropitious circumstances by harnessing the transcendent ends that come with salvation – a “redemptive uplift”, hinged on prosperity and transformation evidenced from pain and suffering. These messages seem to have appealed much to most people at the time because, as Karl Marx argues, religion has often been used to assuage the difficulties of people in modern work conditions. However, rather than viewing
religion as a seepage, there can be “fitting”, a reverberation, between religion and uncertainty; religion can serve to legitimate the inevitable choices individuals have to make (cf. Marti, 2012, p. 145). “So while it may be possible to see some forms of religion as an escape from modern conditions, it may be more fitting to see certain forms of religion as an embrace of these conditions, an implicit acknowledgement that the world has changed” (Marti, 2012, p. 145). Marti further argues, in this context, that Max Weber’s insight on the adaptation of religion to every generation is helpful. According to Marti (2012), Weber notes that religion is most concerned with the alleviation of suffering. The nature of suffering – the difficult conditions of life- experienced in particular places and times becomes the most important determinant in the development of religious orientations and the nature of their ideals. In other words, we best understand the ideals set by religious orientations when we connect them to the concrete conditions confronted by individuals as they face challenges in their lives. For example, as already argued, in sub-Saharan Africa, economic liberalization and rising social inequalities spurred the expansion and spread of the neo-Pentecostal movement. Religious innovation such as spiritual warfare, prosperity gospel, and the use of the mass media became the engine for the promotion and growth of Pentecostalism.

Similarly, Bernice Martin (1998, p. 130) links the growth of Latin American Pentecostalism to economic changes. She tells a similar narrative of how individuals who were increasingly dissipated and disrupted both socially and economically relied on Pentecostal promises to alleviate their situation. This Pentecostal philosophy that enjoins conversion to upward mobility resonates with David Martin’s (2002, p. 17) argument that Pentecostalism, generally fits into a new scheme of work that “requires a mobile self and indeed a powerful persona constantly redeployed to meet constantly changing situations and exigencies”. Yong (2012, p. 28) contends precisely, from the prosperity angle, that one can see how in the last decades or so, particularly with the shift of the center of gravity of world Christianity toward the “global south”, a religious
economy of global renewal. According to Yong (2012, p. 28), this presupposes that we can use economic indices to quantify how religious movements compete for their market share of consumers. He also extrapolates how such indices and/or matrices involve actual economic scales that reflect how socio-economic factors are one important domain overlapping with the religious dimension that brings in coverts. In other words, he argues, “people are converting to Christianity at least in part because they are experiencing types of economic betterment” (p. 28).

Evidently, in the Ghanaian or African context, the connection between success in life, measured by conspicuous consumption and material worldviews, and divine grace thrives on the prosperity gospel and is inherently embedded within the consumeristic ethos of religion. In Africa, religion, is oriented towards everyday life. For the African, the manifest function of religion to control the powers of life and vitality is pivotal. The pragmatic-oriented function of religion is to make life possible and maintain it (food supply, human fertility, good life, and mutual relationships) and to safeguard it against all illnesses, misfortunes, enemies (devil, witchcraft) and death. For Pentecostals, especially, “this-worldly” ascetic and frugal lifestyle which was embedded in “escapist motive to build up counter-societies” in order to “immunize believers against the vicious operations of the devil in society”, saw a redefinition in the 1980s (Heuser, 2015, p. 20). The burgeoning of the Pentecostal movement in Africa in the 80s “redirected Pentecostal moral economy on the inner purity of a believer, who needs to be protected and saved from external temptations” by claiming a “practical relevance of born-again belief …and considered inner worldly success as a legitimate desire and material blessings” (Heuser 2015, p. 20). Thus, these new doctrines, much influenced by American word-of-faith preachers, capture succinctly, the attempt by African Pentecostal preachers to retool Christian theology to legitimate wealth and create new social spaces that are not controlled by “norms of religious piety that reside in traditional Christianity and African traditional religions but within the material realities of adherents” (Bonsu & Belk, 2010,
The turn to affluence (wealth and good health) as an indicator of a “born again” belief has implications for religious consumerism and the subsequent commoditization of the gospel. The promotion of prosperity-oriented theology, to some extent, views religion as an economic product and reinforces an economic perspective on human life as it considers individual believers to be “human capital” and “human resources” whose economic value and potential must be realized. As argued by Gauthier, Woodhead and Martikainen (2013, p. 3), “consumer culture is the means of expression and actualisation of the modern project of the individualized self, as it provides a very particular set of material circumstances in which individuals come to acquire a reflexive relation to identity.” The Canadian philosopher Taylor (2002, pp. 79-80) argues that, one way to explain the appeal of consumerism and its motivation, is to see how it provides a formidable vehicle for the massification and radicalization of the modern individualistic culture of authenticity and expressivity. For Pentecostals/Charismatics, material prosperity is enamored by a repertoire of success epitomized in the conspicuous consumption of modern products and persistent grandiosity, especially in the media. The emphasis on the prosperity gospel is to become more modern in outlook, sophisticated, and powerful as a symbolizing feature of one’s right standing with God in terms of payment of tithes and offerings.

Further, the prosperity gospel is frequently accompanied by a discourse of deliverance from the enemy, Satan, and malevolent spirits, which are thought to attack believers and prevent them from enjoying the goods and blessings of God concomitant with salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Folarin (2007, p. 16) has defined prosperity gospel as “the teaching that solutions to people’s problems of sin, sickness, poverty, and demon oppression are in Jesus Christ.” As such, banishing these forces and subverting their schemes will enable believers to prosper; this is what Wariboko (2012, p. 45) docket as the “spiritualist paradigm” in his categorization of the prosperity gospel. Simply put, salvation must be evident in both the

spiritual and material realms and must become tangible (Volff, 1989, pp. 447-467). This supposed “redemptive uplift” as a consequence of one’s salvation and belief in the Lord, when elusive, forces individuals to resort to religious functionaries with a reputation for spiritual power such as prophets, ministers, pastors, and malams\(^1\) to help diagnose their problems, mediate on their behalf between the physical and metaphysical and thereby, invoke divine blessings or offer possible solution or direction (\textit{akwankyere}) in dealing with such situations. As Kalu (2003, p. 233) has noted, for example, African Pentecostals “reinforce the causality pattern in the African worldview before providing a solution beyond the purviews of indigenous cosmology” (see also Golo 2013, p. 373). Thus, childlessness, unemployment, illness, poverty, etc. are interpreted as satanic attacks, “and never as ‘crosses’ that God might give someone to bear, or as God-given experiences that might serve to deepen one’s faith” (Währisch-Oblau, 2011, p. 65).

Anchoring and legitimatizing their major source of answers to life-debilitating issues from the Bible, Pentecostal/Charismatic hermeneutics on the prosperity gospel allows for more liberal interpretations that become a vanguard for supporting significant individual customization of religious practice (Meyer, 1999; Gifford 2004). These hermeneutics are usually produced, promulgated, and promoted by religious entrepreneurs’ salespeople who create value for adherents, through the use of marketing techniques that facilitate and induce religious products or services as commodities, and place a heuristic value on religious message built on hope for those whose lives are otherwise heading nowhere. The leaning towards this kind of theology of the gospel that largely appeals to the transcendental orientation of the African particularly the Ghanaian Christian, engenders, a pathway for smooth commodification of the gospel. This is because, in an attempt by people to deal with their anxieties and vulnerabilities, they sometimes become gullible to religious entrepreneur salespeople (pastors-prophets) who sort of commoditize, abuse, and sell religious products or services as

\(^1\) Spiritualists from the Islamic tradition believed to possess some supernatural powers that allow them to diagnose and offer solutions to people’s problems: poverty, sickness, unemployment, difficult marriages/relationships, etc.
means of dealing with one’s problems in life. Nonetheless, this does not suggest that individuals that patronize the services of these pastors-prophets are unable, or lack the ability, to make rational choices based on their prevailing circumstances. Rather, it evinces how religion and the worldview of mystical causality, by default, influence people to resort to religious providence to assuage their problems in life. Despite the criticisms that are mounted to some of the practices relating to religious commercialization and commodification, there is no doubt that religion, in some instances, has produced the very kind of results or solutions people want to their problems. As a result, religion continues to remain an optimal course of action in responding to people’s problems in life.

The commercialization and commodification of the gospel take place in the broader spectrum of neo-liberalism. Arguably, neo-liberalism advocates free market systems and creates space for individual choices and freedoms. The free market system is created by neo-liberalism due to its emphasis on liberalization of state-owned enterprises. In a market society or consumer society, the tendency is that almost anything can be commodified, and the gospel cannot be an exception. In the consumer society, the gospel becomes increasingly understood as a product that can be marketed. As argued by Martikainen, Gauthier and Woodhead (2013, p. 15), “the social acceptance of neo-liberalism depends on a wider shift within western societies, one which has to do with the rise of consumerism as dominant cultural ethos.” Thus, “consumption, consumerism, and hyper-mediatisation participate in a wider phenomenon which is characterized by the ever-increasing pull of economics on all aspects of social and cultural life, along with the rapid rise of ‘new’ political economy of neo-liberalism, and the spreading of management and governance ideologies and practices” (Gauthier, Woodhead & Martikainen, 2013, p. 2). The consequences are that, “consumerism as an ethos and matrix of lifestyle is inextricably tied to the development and democratization of communication technologies [and] together, they act as vectors for cultural globalization” (Gauthier, Martikainen & Woodhead,
In this article, I present an example of the commodification of the gospel and its socioeconomic implications in Ghana. It is hoped that this article will contribute to existing literature on contemporary discourses on consumer culture and religion with a focus on neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches in Ghana. It attempts to take further the discussion by examining the positive and negative implications of the commodification of the gospel. Methodologically, I have relied extensively on the radio and television, and leveraged literature on the subject under discussion for most of the issues discussed in this article.

**Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches and the commodification of the gospel**

In recent times, various forms of Pentecostal practices have grown rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa, including Ghana. These practices range from the sale of anointing oils, car stickers, wristbands to the charging of fees for counselling services, otherwise known as “consultation fees”. Ultimately, the popularity of these services can be linked to an expansive interest in the personal well-being of individuals, and its relationship to religious and spiritual matters. Essentially, on an everyday basis, the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches are finding new market techniques by utilizing the mass media, especially the radio, television and the print media to advertise their services and create a niche for themselves. Contrary to the assumptions of the modernization theories which predict a decline of the public role of religion, the free media space has had a profound impact on the public role of religion in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa. The opening up of radio and television stations in Ghana as a result of the free media space has given impetus to those who have the money to purchase airtime and mediate their programs to the public. Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, taking advantage of the liberalization of the media that accompanied Ghana’s democratization, have inundated the media landscape with a host of religious programs (de Witte, 2005).

Religious practices among Pentecostals are purposely
aimed at mediating the anointing of God and invoking the divine blessings and miracles of God for people and/or adherents to be delivered from material poverty. The promise of the Pentecostal movement in helping people to deal with their socio-economic situation through the transformative role of the Holy Spirit appeals very much to the situation of the ordinary Ghanaian/African. In a context where poverty and weak state welfare services mean a majority of the people are often left without any social intervention by the government, religion often becomes the alternative route to hope. Thus, a strong belief in God as one who can transform and assuage one’s difficulties in life through the power of the Holy Spirit often yields good dividends for individuals and in the community of faith (Daswani. 2010, pp. 442-474). For most individuals, “religion constitutes a useful resource to improve their life. Often, individuals become affiliated with a religious congregation as a result of discontentment with their current life” (Köhrsen, 2015, p. 49). According to Köhrsen (2015, p. 49), “Pentecostalism in particular is notorious for attracting people, searching for a solution to a specific difficulty or looking for a general change in their life”. He argues further that life-debilitating issues such as “diseases and health deficiencies, alcoholism, drug-dependency, poverty, unemployment, lack of direction in one’s life, and depression are problems that are frequently mentioned by those converting to Pentecostalism” (Köhrsen, 2015, p. 49).

In helping to provide a ritual context and some interventionist strategies to deal with most of these problems, Pentecostal pastors-prophets engage in the commercialization of religious products (“salvation goods”) that are meant to bring relief to frustrated individuals. In Africa (Ghana included), the expansive interest in personal well-being and health and its nexus of religious and spiritual matters remain ambivalent. For instance, the use of the mass media for marketing can be understood in the broader sense of its relatedness to the processes of commercialization and commodification of religious products. Religious products are complex and multifaceted phenomena which can be explained to include both tangible (books, stickers, wristbands, church
paraphernalia’s and/or religious objects) and intangible items often interpreted as “salvation goods” or “goods of pure belief” which include but not limited to religious services such as healing and deliverance, or others related to the promise of a reward for a better future (Usunier, 2016). Stolz (2008, pp. 59-60) attempts an integrated definition of religious products as “salvation goods”:

an end or means to an end which is offered by a religion, embedded in a specific world-view and a system of life practices, and which may be aspired to or used by an individual or a social group. Salvation goods may be confined to certain points in time or lasting: set in the future or the present; transcendent or immanent. Individual or collective; ascetic or contemplative; aspired to actively or given to the individual by an external power.

In the marketing of intangible goods, the Pentecostal/Charismatic church pastors-prophets are aware of the pragmatic-oriented views of clients on the intersection of African religiosity and material realities. They are aware that in the worldview of their constituents lies the assumptions that “going through life is like a spiritual warfare and religious ardour may appear very materialistic as people strive to preserve their material sustenance in the midst of the machinations of pervasive evil forces” (Kalu, 2003, p. 230). This worldview is impinged with consumeristic tendencies along with its connections to marketing strategies that invigorate religious expression. The Pentecostal/Charismatic promise of freedom from demonic encumbrances and economic well-being for people allows them to facilitate the exploitation of the masses who are economically disgruntled and perplexed by life realities. Thus, as argued by Bonsu and Belk (2010, p. 312), “Pentecostal message appeals to a large number of people who have no alternative pathway to economic and social mobility.” The Pentecostal view, as they argue, “blends the poor’s reality into the realm of the spiritual cleverly using consumption as a salvation oriented religious tool for conversion” (p. 312).
For instance, even though the use of anointing oil in the church is biblical, the commercialization of the religious substance in some neo-Pentecostal churches in Ghana by charging exorbitant prices for the product beyond its market value, makes the church a kind of business entity that is aimed at generating profit at the expense of the vulnerable consumer. Beyond the sale of anointing oil, products that are also commercialized in some neo-Pentecostal churches include water or “holy water”, handkerchiefs, soaps, wristbands, and (car) stickers etc. The use of these items is expected to bring deliverance and God’s favor upon those who buy them. In his article “Prosperity and poverty in the Bible: Search for balance”, Asamoah-Gyadu (2015) bemoans how Christianity in Africa has become economically expensive due to the excesses emanating from prosperity gospelling. Focusing on the Pentecostal prosperity gospel and its ramifications for the economically disadvantaged individual, Asamoah-Gyadu highlights the recent initiatives of Bishop Eric Kwapong, one of Ghana’s renowned charismatic worship leaders. As a professional consultant on Pentecostal/Charismatic worship in Ghana, Kwapong organizes periodic gender-based worship services for professionals at the plush Holiday Inn Hotel, near the Kotota International Airport, Accra. The worship services are advertised either for professional men or professional women and are held on Friday evenings. According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2015), though there are no gate fees paid, “the specified target groups and the location means the worship services automatically rule out any underprivileged and materially poor participants”. This is because “they simply would not have the requisite outfits expected and the levels of offerings required” (p.1). This, he argues, has made Christianity, and in this case corporate worship expensive and tailored to reach a certain privileged class in Ghana. This development, he forcefully contends, is “symptomatic of the commercialization or commodification of Christianity that comes with the prosperity Gospel” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2015, p.1). Generally, the issue described by Asamoah-Gyadu is not peculiar to the ministry of Kwapong. In Ghana, we have Charismatic churches
which hold their church services in hotel conference rooms, the National Theater, and other equally expensive conference centers where huge sums of monies are paid as rent. In the long run, the cost incurred in renting these facilities is passed on directly or indirectly to the people who attend these programs, in the payment of huge sums of offering and seed sowings.

In the following sub-section, I describe another development that also fits into the categorization of the commercialization or commodification of the gospel.

**The church as a marketplace**

In Ghana today, all the agents of commercialization of religion utilize the media (both print and electronic) to sell their wares of good health, prosperity, and financial breakthrough, offer security to people with an uncertain future, and promise deliverance from sickness and evil manipulations. Kalu (2010, p. 381) has argued that one of the issues that dominates the discourses on the use of media by Pentecostals in Africa is the issue of commercialization honed in the concept of market theory. The concept of market theory is built around the rational choice concept that profiles the religious space as being similar to a marketplace, and examines the commercialization of religion as a commodity, because messages are packaged as products in a competitive marketplace. He argues that marketing strategies enable religious businessmen to dupe gullible consumers by selling their books, videos, and audiotapes, and all manner of wares, using the sales techniques honed in the secular marketplace (Kalu, 2010, p. 382).

Some of the activities associated with the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches today are no less than the features that show an outright display of the market theory and the contemporary consumeristic nature of religion, where religious services or products have been commodified, packaged and sold to passive consumers who stand in constant need of such products or services. This heightened nature of the culture of consumerism, which is exacerbated by neo-liberal capitalist ideologies and tendencies, has hitherto influenced the way religion and religious lifestyles are
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Thus, individual Christians tend to look for the common good of religion with little or no attachment to godly values and good characters that ensure the growth in the Lord Jesus Christ. Religious practices among Pentecostals are purposely aimed at invoking the miracles or blessings of God for deliverance from material poverty. Religion is assumed as a finished product for passive consumers. The result is that messages are not created for the edification of the believer but for the success and economic well-being of the individual.

Within African cultures, concepts of illness and health are usually interpreted more in social and cultural terms than biological causation. Etiology and diagnosis in the context of traditional African thought, as Masamba ma Mpolo (1985, p. 9) rightly points out, pose the following basic question “‘who is the cause of my illness?’”. He adds that in this context of spiritual causality, “organically manifested symptoms are always the result of some external aggression” (p. 9). In the world of the traditional African, there is no chance-free incident, and the “unseen powers are held to be active also in the natural order” (Dickson, 1984, p. 49). In Africa, and also in Ghana, people usually associate misfortunes such as sickness or mysterious deaths with evil forces. When one loses hope due to failure or the inability to find solutions to such life-threatening problems, people resort to churches, and at times to spiritualists and other mediums through whom these problems could be averted or solved completely. Since most of these problems are believed to be spiritually instigated, religion (most often the church) becomes the only avenue which people turn to and rely upon to avert such calamities or seek a solution to their problems. It is not just any church, but usually churches where there is visible display of practices/features, such as prophecy, “word of knowledge”, “word of wisdom”, visions, healing, deliverance which are considered to be charismatic, more spiritual and can offer pragmatic solutions to people’s pernicious problems. In Ghana, people mostly gravitate towards churches where the manifestation of these signs or spiritual gifts are visible. It is believed that with the operation of such gifts, the man of God will be able to diagnose their problems and offer
possible solutions or directions (akwankyere) that one can employ in solving such troubles or problems in life.

It has become quite obvious that some “men of God” who claim to possess such gifts, or who claim to operate in the healing power of God’s anointing, have become very popular, especially through their use of the media, and consequently, many people run to them/ their churches to seek solutions to their problems. In a religiously charged environment such as that of Ghana, one cannot prevent the masses from employing religious means in seeking solutions to perceived or real life-threatening issues. What is most striking, however, is the huge sums of money that are paid by clientele as “consultation fee” in order to have a personal contact with the “man of God” to help solve or deal with a situation. A telling example is when recently, while trying to search for a TV channel to watch at home after a day’s work, and patiently waiting till I was able to catch some sleep, I chanced on a TV channel with the name Fire TV and I heard “the man of God”, the General Overseer of Life Assembly Worship Centre, Pastor Christian Kwabena Andrews, popularly known as Osofo Kyiri Abosom, personally announce the increment of his consultation fee from 200 Ghana cedis (about $50) to 300 Ghana cedis (about $72). He announced that if people wanted to receive their “number” early, they had to send the money (consultation fee of 300 Ghana cedis) via a mobile money account number. This supposed acclaimed number is what one then will use to queue in order to get to see “the man of God”.

In addition, the “man of God” announces that he now charges 500 Ghana cedis ($120) for special appointments. However, if one wants to see “the man of God” for any special reason that can also be arranged through the payment of an undisclosed amount. The name, Osofo Kyiri Abosom, literally means “Pastor who detests traditional gods”. It connotes an entanglement of the conflict between traditional religion and the consistent demonization of indigenous cultures by Pentecostals/Charismatics who constantly accuse traditional beliefs of being the instrument of, and/or being responsible for the retardation and misfortune of the local people.
Deliverance, witchcraft cleansing, witchcraft eradication, land cleansing, and exorcism constitute Pentecostals’ usual response to such traditional systems. All these are promoted in the full glare of the television, because healing is one of the main concerns in Africa. *Osofo Kyiri Abosom* claims to have a solution to most of the problems that are encountered by people on a daily basis and hence, he offers them hope to alleviate their fears by burning traditional shrines as well as by selling different kinds of anointing oil purposely made to solve various problems believed to be instigated by the devil. The setting ablaze of the shrines and the sale of the anointing oils are all shown and marketed on the digital television station, Fire TV owned and operated by the Life Assembly Worship Center. Arguably, the practice of commercializing religious services and/or charging of consultation fee before seeing a “man of God” are not peculiar to the ministry of *Osofo Kyiri Abosom*. There are many such practices that currently occur in many churches in Ghana. In effect, there are many church services in which clients are asked to pay for the services rendered to them by the “men of God”. Also practiced and popularized on a daily basis is the sale of anointed car stickers, anointed oils, wristbands, etc., as channels of supernatural powers that can prevent any attack from the devil.

The charging of fees for services rendered by pastors to their church members is what has been interpreted by Asamoah-Gyadu (2013, p. 80) as “transactional giving”. According to him, transactional giving “stimulates divine responses to human desires” and is mainly reciprocal. He cites the example of a “man of God”, by name Prophet Ewusi-Brookman who, after an anointing service at an International Central Gospel Church in Takoradi, announced that it was the turn of the worshippers to “bless the man of God” for his prophetic impartation during a week-long service (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p. 80). In such a context, “blessing the man of God” meant giving a special “prophetic offering” (p. 81) to the prophet. I have also personally witnessed the same approach from “men of God” in most of the charismatic church services I have visited in Ghana. According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2013),
although transactional giving occurs on the basis of scripture interpretation, it takes on added significance within the African context because giving is an important part of religious negotiations in traditional shrines. In African traditional religions generally, ancestors and deities are fed periodically as a way of sustaining cultic relationship that enable the benefits of health, abundance, longevity, and various forms of prosperity to flow from the transcendent realm towards the human realm. (p. 81)

So often, in Africa, personal and communal misfortune is explained as/to be the non-fulfilment of religious obligations, such as not performing appropriate sacrificial rituals or neglecting ancestors and deities. Thus, transactional giving (payment of “consultation fees”) among Pentecostal/Charismatic churches resonates largely with the primal imagination in Africa, by which people give to benevolent transcendent helpers with the aim of creating auspicious circumstances and the realization of material blessings (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2013, p. 81). However, this does not defeat the grip of neo-liberal ideologies by neo-Pentecostals since even though, they tend to be more modern in their outlook by embedding and integrating into their practice, modernist and economic ideas in the society through a representation of a radical break from local cosmologies, Pentecostal/Charismatic churches are caught up in the cultural web of replicating or re-enforcing certain traditional worldviews or religiosities thereby creating a kind of both continuity and discontinuity in their practices (Meyer, 1998; Robbins, 2003).

**Commodification of the gospel and its socio-economic implications**

It is in the attempt by neo-Pentecostals to address, in a variety of ways, the socio-economic challenges that the faithful face in life, that the commercialization and the commodification of the gospel become evident. Individuals who, despite the promises of God in the scriptures find their life dreams elusive or shattered due
to economic depravity and bad leadership, often become gullible. As a result, most of these individuals in the haste to “turnaround” a life of squalor that is heading nowhere become gullible to the dictates of “men of God” who present themselves as agents of God with solutions to life challenges. By so doing, some take advantage of the vulnerability and the gullibility of such individuals by selling their religious wares and charging exorbitant prices for services rendered to them all in the name of helping them solve their unwanted problems and challenges in life.

However deleterious some of these practices may be, the Pentecostal promise as a source of hope to individuals dislocated by present economic challenges that they, too, will in time, become partakers of God’s divine blessings and engage in the contemporary globalization and its associated material trappings (Maxwell, 1998; Gifford, 2004) allows adherent to build individual religious capital (Innaccone, 1990), that is employed to gain economic capital with implications for socio-economic development. As argued by Brouwer, Gifford, and Rose (1996),

this religious tradition helps people exercise control in a seemingly uncontrollable world through strict standards of ‘right living.’ Incomprehensible cycles of poverty and violence are made comprehensible through an all-encompassing theology and by the personal authority of the pastor. And, access to an everyday miracle religion empowers people; it gives them hope of negotiating insurmountable obstacles of an unknown future. (p. 179).

In this section, I present some of the positive and negative effects of the commodification of the gospel and tease out their implications for socio-economic development. I do so because though the commercialization and the commodification of the gospel have some deleterious implications on the materially poor, they, nonetheless, serve as conduits through which funds are raised to support socio-economic policies and initiatives by Pentecostal/ Charismatic churches. In the first subsection, I discuss some of the
positive initiatives undertaken by Pentecostal/Charismatic churches that support and foster socio-economic development. The second subsection will concentrate on some of the negative implications of the commodification of the gospel.

**Positive impact**

First, in Ghana, neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, since their emergence over the last three decades, have sought not only to be recognized in the proclamation of the gospel of Christ Jesus but also, to help cater for the needs of the people in the society by providing certain basic essential amenities. Neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have over the last years been lambasted for promoting lavish lifestyles and not contributing to the welfare of the poor. Though there might be criticisms on the adherence to the doctrine of prosperity gospel and its subsequent commercialization and commodification, it is evident that Pentecostals are, to some extent, redirecting their wealth into social welfare initiatives in a broader context for the improvement of lives in the society. Thus, as argued by Miller and Yamamori (2007, p. 32), Pentecostal/Charismatics are being “progressive” in that they work to address “the social needs of people” and they do not restrict their social service provision only to their members.

The Pentecostal churches, through their ingenuity and innovativeness, have provided social amenities such as schools (kindergarten up to University), hospitals or clinics, opened up businesses, dug water boreholes aimed at addressing societal challenges and also, complemented government effort in providing such services. Some examples of the provision of social services or amenities in Ghana will throw more light on this. In Ghana, for example, almost all the leading Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have established private universities and health centers. Notable ones include Central University funded by Mensa Otabil’s International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), Dominion University College funded by Archbishop Duncan Williams’ Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFM) and Perez University College by Bishop Agyinsare’s Perez Chapel International (PCI).
These investments by Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have become necessary, since successive governments have had difficulties in managing the economy over the years due to internal issues like corruption and other external shocks like increases in the world prices of crude oil and the fluctuations in export commodities. Despite various policy interventions like the International Monetary Fund’s Structural Adjustment Programs, the Economic Recovery Programme, and the signing up for the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) status, the Ghanaian economy is still challenged, thus making the provision of social services and infrastructural development, extremely difficult tasks for an elected government to grapple alone with (Meyer, 2004; Bawumia, 2014). Pentecostals are thus filling the gaps seemingly created by governments’ failure to meet the basic needs of the populace just as mainline churches, and para-church groups, and civil societies have been doing over the years (Meyer 2004; Bawumia, 2014). Conversely, Pentecostals, just like the mainline churches, are now stakeholders in the national economy and development. This means that inasmuch as governments still hold power, local movements, such as the Pentecostal churches are also asserting their place in civic affairs (Wuthnow, 2007).

Second, the commodification of the gospel, which takes place in the broader context of healing and deliverance, success, and prosperity from a theological perspective provides a window to “render meaningful the individual’s experience of unpredictable changes in personal economic well-being” (Isabelle, 2007, p. 421). The prosperity gospel, a subset of the deliverance ministry, projects the church as a category of non-state actor of enlightenment to people as it is believed that God rewards faithful Christians with good health, financial success, and material wealth. Thus, adherents of the Pentecostal movement approach their religious responsibilities with the view to blending the material and the spiritual through the giving of offerings and seed sowing to create the auspicious atmosphere for the trapping of divine blessings. The deliverance and/or the religious products that people pay for (commodification)
are associated with the promise of an escape from life’s constraints and burdens. As Onyinah (2004, p. 337) contends, the real sources of the problems in Africa are the controlling powers of various territorial spirits such as poverty and idolatry. He maintains that within this post-modern world, where “homogenous plurality with fragmentation of cultures, traditions, ideologies, forms of life, language games, or life worlds” is a key feature, deliverance is amenably received. The linkages of the consumption of religious services and/or product purchased to individual faith and personal salvation (deliverance) through the Spirit of God inherent in such religious wares filter economic experiences through the lens of faith and miracles touching the lives of those who consume the spiritualized commodified goods. The consumption of the religious goods and/or services is embedded within the view that the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit that comes with the consumption of such religious goods effects happiness, prosperity, and a breakthrough, and so, provides the theological basis for “an often astonishing level of self-confidence, persistence against all odds, energy and ingenuity and a willingness to try anything – and then call the result the Lord’s miracle” (Martin, 1995, p. 111)

**Deleterious implications**

First, the marketization and sale of religious wares such as handkerchiefs, water, and anointing oil as therapeutic substances for healing exemplify spiritual materialism since these products become spiritual commodities that one can purchase for the purpose of healing or deliverance from demonic bondage. The sale of these religious products is completely out of keeping with New Testament theology. This is because, God’s gift of healing is available for any child of God who diligently prays to Him and seeks His face for his or her healing. It is clear from Acts 18:14-24 that one cannot purchase the gift of God with money. It is rather the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and contrite heart with God and faith that bring healing and deliverance to the needy and afflicted. People who arduously pray and seek the face of God will receive their healing. The Holy Spirit gives the ability to heal the righteous
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people through their faith in God’s word. It is faith in God that brings the healing anointing and not the mere payment of money for these items. The effect of these practices is that churches are likely to become too materialistic and not hold in high esteem the power of God in their lives to heal or solve life-threatening situations. This is not, however, to speak against material success. Nonetheless, materialism could be abhorred. Materialism means the unbridled crave for material things as if they were an end in themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke much against materialism. Of the lot, the following text reveals what the notions of Christ are on materialism:

  Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. …No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (Matthew 6:19-21, 24)

This might lead people to become material-oriented and passive consumers rather than seekers of God’s word that will forever abide in them, heal their diseases, and transform their lives through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Second, the commodification of religious services does not engender any promise of economic blessings. That is, in one way or the other, the attempt by Pentecostal pastors-prophets to always convince people via aggressive advertisement and marketing in the media to trade in or purchase their religious wares for a breakthrough, does not always result in the socio-economic transformation of consumers or adherents. As rightly noted by Iannaccone (1992, p. 126), most religious commodities stand beyond the range of human evaluation. In this case, one would ask, whether or not there can be a *modus operandi* for measuring the supposed socio-economic
well-being or transformation that is expected in individual’s life after the consumption of religious products or services. The obvious answer, which is no, is predicated on the fact that when goods and services are being purchased, they “divulge the information about their characteristics to a differing extent” (Britnitzer, 2003, p. 160 cited in Hero, 2016, p. 76).

Revealingly, information economics differentiates between goods and services of three categories: first, those whose quality the consumer can check before buying them (“inspection goods”), second, those whose quality is only revealed to the consumer during consumption (“experience goods”), and finally, the goods whose quality largely remains in the dark even after consumption (“credence goods”) (cf. Ekelund, Mixon & Ressler 1995; Richardson 1999; Dulleck & Kerschbamer, 2006). Since, in the arena of religious goods or spiritual commodities, there are “as good as no legal guarantees or equivalent securities as to the ‘quality’ or the ‘benefit’, potential interested parties find themselves in a situation of uncertainty” (Hero, 2016, p. 76). In this case, it means that the uncertainty surrounding the religious goods or products and their effect can only be built on trust (Martín 2015, p. 310). However, the lack of specific criteria to judge the “quality” or the supposed breakthrough for transformation inherent in the commoditized religious objects or services portends the collapse of trust in the services. This means that in the long run, people will no longer trust in the efficacy of religion as a means of solving their unwanted problems or difficulties in life. Since, there might not be any clear obvious benefits to be reaped from offerings, adherents might have difficulty assessing their breakthrough and prayer for economic transformation and societal well-being. This obfuscates the socio-economic and transformation agenda attached to the consumption of the religiously commoditized goods or services because it lacks the capacity to produce any sustained economic transformation.

Third, the commodification of the gospel has the tendency to inculcate in adherents a certain kind of contractual relationship that only makes one’s relationship with God “conceived of in purely
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instrumentalist, impersonal and economic cost/benefits terms”. Thus, to borrow the exacts words of Lindhart (2015, p. 311), “to put it in an admittedly extreme way, there is a certain danger of divine blessings turning into simple commodities that can be advertised and (supposedly) purchased in much the same way as goods on a supermarket shelf”. In this situation, the church primarily becomes an avenue to improve people’s lives, enhance their self-esteem, and give them a sense of purpose and direction. From the perspective of Conradie (2010, p. 105), consumeristic religion becomes “more passive, more individual and more private. It follows the patterns of self-gratification rather than service” (p. 105). Thus, the emphasis on “religious experience”, “inwardness and feeling (and thus on spirituality) as opposed to religious institutions.” This oft-times makes religion assume “a narcissistic self-centered therapeutic exercise in order to fathom the depths of the inner self –far removed from concern for justice” (Conradie, 2010, p. 105). This builds a kind of individual spiritual capitalism that takes away communal and personal values needed to build social capital and social cohesion for collective socio-economic development.

Conclusion

The discussion made in this article features prominently the practices of contemporary Pentecostal/Charismatic churches that are symptomatic of the commercialization and commodification of religion. The article has demonstrated how some Pentecostal/Charismatic churches with their theology of prosperity gospel – material wealth and well-being evidenced in salvation, embed aggressive advertisement and branding strategies to make religion appealing to the masses whose hope is lost in an austere economic environment. Such Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, with their doctrine of salvation and ritual praxis (healing and deliverance), provide adherents tools to respond to the vagaries of harsh socio-economic situation and life challenges. By so doing, they emphasize a post-modern conception of religion that favors religious customization characterized by individual selection of doctrine and practice.
Again, although the extensive emphasis on the ability of religion to assuage life difficulties makes religion a kind of a commodified product, it, nonetheless, has some socio-economic implications. An important aspect is that through such means, the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches have been able to raise huge sums of money and engaged in the re-distribution of their wealth in areas, such as education and healthcare. However, the capitalistic practices of some of the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches also have very negative implications for the practice of religion and Christianity, in general. This is because, it devalues Christian commitment and makes one’s relationship with God a mere contractual market relationship. As Horsfield (1984, p. 84) suggests from a North American context, the insistence that people might purchase religious goods or sow a seed in order to be blessed, saved, or prosperous may very easily lead to a “return to the purchasing of indulgencies, with the only proviso being one’s willingness to pay the required amount in order to set the mechanisms of miracle-working in motion”. The result is that the poor, outcasts, marginalized, and the socially disadvantaged or helpless, who were actually at the center of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, are ignored because they may not have the finances to purchase their healing and also, may be disregarded because they do not show the symbols and good images of the gospel of prosperity. This means they will also lose any kind of social capital, social cohesion, and reproduction that are necessary ingredients for socio-economic well-being, development, and transformation.
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References


The dilemmas of bilingual education in rural Ghana: A case study of the Nkwanta North District

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Abstract
This paper relates to the broader purview of educational language policy in an African setting. It makes a contribution to the policy research and dialogue component of a National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP), which is currently the school language policy strategy in Ghana. Through the use of structured questionnaires and a statistical analysis, the study assesses how the NALAP is being implemented in a scarcely referenced rural Nkwanta North District. A conclusion is reached that the NALAP is reduced to a mere ideological notion rather than an effectively run language policy in the Nkwanta North. The study also contends that any hope of the NALAP succeeding with its educational agenda in the Nkwanta North requires critical reforms in the local implementation framework, with some support from relevant central bodies.

Keywords: bilingual education, NALAP, medium of instruction, Twi, Likpakpaln ‘Konkomba’

1My sincere appreciation goes to the three anonymous reviewers for their invaluable guidance in bringing this paper to the required standard. May I also acknowledge the assistance of Gideon Bisilki, a student at the Ghana School of Law, and Kwasi Enoch Ulorb in the process of writing this paper. Nevertheless, I remain solely responsible for any lapses, should there be any.
Introduction

To find an all-embracing definition for bilingual education is as complicated as defining bilingualism itself (Močinić, 2011, p. 175). However, from a pedagogical perspective, bilingual education refers to a situation where education is provided in two languages, usually with the two languages serving as media of instruction (Močinić, 2011, p. 176). From the preceding point of view, I assume the position that a country can be said to have a bilingual language policy of education when there is a legitimisation of two languages as media of instruction in the formal school system. The sense of two languages can be considered from any of a number of possible combinations: native versus non-native, majority versus minority or two majority languages used in the school system.

Bilingual education, again, delineates into several sub-models, including types as the early exit transitional and the late exit transitional forms. The former case is the trajectory of Ghana’s current bilingual education that was rolled out under a new National Literacy Acceleration Programme (NALAP) that came into force in September, 2009 through the partnership of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Ghana, Ghana Education Service (GES) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In an early exit transitional bilingual education, learners receive instruction in their L1 and in another language, usually up to two years of the early grades of school, after which the L1 is dropped as a medium of instruction (Baker, 2001; Močinić, 2011, p. 178). In the late exit system, however, around 40% of classroom instruction is allowed in the child’s mother tongue until the 6th grade of school (Močinić, 2011, p. 178). Under the NALAP dispensation in Ghana, learners in the early grades of school (kindergarten 1 [KG1] to Primary 3 [P3]) have the opportunity to receive instruction, literacy and numeracy skills in indigenous Ghanaian languages and the English language (see Leherr, 2009, p. i; Hartwell, 2010, p. iv). However, from primary 4 (P4) upwards, English alone becomes the medium of instruction, but a learner still has the opportunity to take a Ghanaian language as a subject of study (Dako & Quarcoo, 2017,
The NALAP, as an educational language policy instrument, aimed at improving literacy rates in Ghana, has a tri-thematic focus stated as follows: That all children, from KG1 to P3 have access to quality literacy materials, effective instruction and public support to learn to read and write in their mother-tongue and English. A baseline assessment (Leherr, 2009) heralding the commencement of the NALAP confirmed comparatively high levels of real time as well as anticipated convulsions in the provision of language education in rural communities generally and in disadvantaged regions, such as the Northern and Upper Regions of Ghana. No wonder, similar challenges were again soon confirmed, following a NALAP implementation study by Hartwell (2010, pp. 44-45). As pointed out by Hartwell, there were hindrances related to the exclusion of native linguistic repertoires of a majority of pupils and teachers from the 11 NALAP approved Ghanaian languages, large numbers of untrained and transient teachers, late and uneven delivery of NALAP Teacher Guides and other NALAP instructional materials, etc. Although these problems are common to Ghana, they were projected as particularly more intense in the rural and in the northern sectors of the country. For instance, in the Sissala East District of the Upper West Region, neither teachers nor pupils could speak any of the 11 NALAP approved Ghanaian languages. Also, it is recorded (Hartwell, 2010, p. 44) that at the time of the implementation study, as many as 64% of the teachers present in the schools that were part of the implementation survey in the Northern Region were untrained/‘pupil’ teachers. It is, however, important to state clearly that the NALAP baseline assessment and the implementation study were not intended to be doomsayers. Rather, these were essentially to provide early warning signs and suggest precautionary mechanisms that would make the NALAP as successful as possible in meeting its functional targets. Indeed, both the baseline assessment and the implementation study proffered a comprehensive list of recommendations touching on all observed issues as well as anticipated challenges in the implementation of the NALAP. These recommendations, if followed, would help to
ensure that the NALAP maximally realises its educational and literacy objectives.

The present study broadly investigates the issues of instructional effectiveness, instructional materials and the social marketing/public support dimensions of the NALAP in the Nkwanta North District in (Northern) Volta Region. In addition, attention is given to the extent to which the sociolinguistic phenomenon of language variation (barriers posed by the linguistic differences between the approved language of the school, the teachers’ linguistic proficiencies and the language of the pupils or the community) affect the implementation of the NALAP in a scarcely researched community context like the Nkwanta North District. I used two sets of questionnaires (one for teachers of the lower grade classes-KG 1 to P 3 and another for headteachers). The questionnaires comprised the Likert scale, the purely close-ended (yes/no) as well as open-ended response item types. Following a statistical analysis of responses, I argue that the NALAP, in its current state of implementation, remains only a plan rather than a practically implemented instrument in the context of a rural Nkwanta North District. Any expectation(s) or hope of rising above this challenge in the Nkwanta North requires very significant reforms in the local implementation framework, with some support from relevant central bodies. Questionnaires for the study are attached in separate files as appendixes I and II.

The problem

The central role of language in the provision and delivery of quality, functional education cannot be over-emphasised. However, language can only be a true asset for the education in a country if there is the right or suitable school language policy, backed by requisite resources and desirable implementation practices. It has been formally observed that Ghana’s language policy of education has had a checkered history (Owu-Ewie, 2006, p. 76). It is also true to say, on a general note, that the task of couching and implementing language policies has proved frighteningly thorny for many countries in Africa and beyond (Azasu, 2012;
Bamgbose, 2000; Das, 2002). It has, thus, been observed that even though most countries in Africa, including Ghana, have churned out educational language policies that stress the use of the child’s L1 (a native language) as medium of instruction (MOI), little effort has been made in practically ensuring that such policies are well implemented (Mose, 2017, p. 217; Owu-Ewie, 2017, p. 152).

Tanzania has been cited as probably the only example of an African polity where the policy of education in mother tongue has been successfully implemented. In Tanzania, Kiswahili is well used as a MOI throughout the primary school level (Mose, 2017, p. 216).

Indeed, the challenges and wrangling in managing Ghana’s educational language policy are partly reflected in the unstable switches between emphasised and de-emphasised Ghanaian language MOI regimes in the policy models. These changes, from the year 2000 till present can be represented as shown in the table below:

Table 1: A representation of the changes in Ghana’s school language policy (from the year 2000 to present)\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4 onwards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2007</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2009</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 2009</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key to table 1: (+) = the inclusion of Ghanaian language as medium of instruction in the early years of school

(-) = the exclusion of Ghanaian language as medium of instruction in the early years of school.

Table 1 represents the early years of school beginning from primary 1. This is because until more recently, many basic schools, especially in the interior and rural communities of Ghana did not

\(^1\) Table 1 is with a cue from Ansah and Agyeman (2015, p. 92), also after Owu-Ewie (2006).
have kindergarten units. This situation has not changed completely as there are still a few cases of basic schools without KGs, meaning some children start school in primary 1. An instance that typifies this is that of the Nkwanta North. A look at the 2017/2018 Annual District Performance Report of GES, Nkwanta North reveals that whereas there are 63 public primary schools in the district, the corresponding number of KGs in the public primary schools is 57. Probably, this phenomenon further resonates with the currently prevailing reality whereby government owned or public basic schools in Ghana do not mandatorily have the nursery levels (Ansah & Agyeman, 2015, p. 90).

The present language-in-education approach, the NALAP, was started in September, 2009. Related investigations and assessments preceding the start of the NALAP consistently revealed that Ghana had been neck-deep in a national literacy and numeracy crisis. In more concrete terms, it was shown, for instance, that only 26% of pupils reaching primary 6 (P6) became literate in the English language whilst only a further lower 11% became numerate by P6 (Leherr, 2009). Improving Education Quality (2000, p. 1) also earlier attested to the low literacy level that bedeviled Ghanaian pupils and students. One can conclude, based on these gloomy accounts, that Ghana’s school language policy epochs succeeded by the NALAP left much to be desired, if weighed in the light of the very reasons for their formulation and implementation.

With a full consciousness of the challenges that beset the successful implementation of previous school language policies in Ghana, the NALAP was planned and programmed to be implemented in a way that should make it a successful language programme. For instance, the NALAP is particularly fashioned to be unique as it purportedly gives a learner the opportunity for the use and development of literacy skills in English (a foreign, but Ghana’s official language) and a Ghanaian language concurrently:
In NALAP, pupils learn how to read and write in a Ghanaian language, with English introduced gradually, and initially orally only. By P2, pupils also start to read and write in English, and by P3 pupils should be able to read with fluency and understanding in both a Ghanaian language and English. (Hartwell, 2010, p. iv).

This educational language policy strategy, more importantly, has the often desirable recourse to compelling research findings cross-globally that mother tongues are the ideal vehicles for knowledge delivery, particularly during early child education (Cummins, 2000; Maalim, 2015; UNESCO, 1953). It must also be acknowledged that this mode of bilingual education espoused under the NALAP, to some extent, takes due cognisance of the learner’s Linguistic Human Right (LHR) as has been enshrined in a United Nations’ 1992 charter (Owu-Ewie, 2017; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1994; UNHCR, 2010). Consistent with the United Nations’ declaration on LHR, all persons, irrespective of which group they belong to, should have the opportunity to learn in their mother-tongue or have instruction in their mother-tongue (UNHCR, 2010, p. 27).

Somehow, several years down the line, the NALAP appears not to be developing for itself a story different from that of earlier school language policy regimes implemented in Ghana. As hinted by Dako and Quarcoo (2017, pp. 24-25), the elite schools (mostly private) that resort to English only as MOI have advantage over the public schools that comply with the official educational language policy (the NALAP). Informal interactions with some stakeholders about the state of the NALAP in the Nkwanta North District suggest that the NALAP has not lived up to expectation with regard to its implementation. This study is meant to evaluate the state of implementation of the educational language policy in the Nkwanta North, with the view to bringing to light whether or not the policy is being successful in this area. By so doing, the study also contributes to the policy research and dialogue component of the NALAP. An equally important motivation for this study is that
although a number of scholarly works (e.g., Andoh-Kumi, 1997; Anyidoho & Anyidoho, 2009; Ansah, 2014; Awedoba, 2009) have, over the years, been undertaken into aspects of Ghana’s language policy in education, it seems that none of these directly focuses on the Nkwanta North or on any of the areas contiguous to it. The following sections will deal with the sociolinguistic situation in the Nkwanta North, the educational profile of the Nkwanta North, research methodology, respondent demographics, presentation of data and analysis, summary of findings, implications and, then, the conclusion of the study.

The sociolinguistic situation in the Nkwanta North District

The Nkwanta North District is located between 7º30’N and 8º45’N and 0º10’W and 0º45’E. The district was carved out of the then Nkwanta District (now Nkwanta South) and commissioned on the 29th of February, 2008 under the establishment of Legislative Instrument (LI) 1846 of 2008. It is one of the 25 districts in the Volta Region and has Kpassa as its district capital (Nkwanta North District Assembly [NNDA], 2015). The Nkwanta North has an estimated total population of 64,553, of which the male and female populations stand at 32,394 and 32,159, respectively (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2012, p. 6). The district has 85 communities and 78% of the people dwell in rural areas. Agriculture engages about 80% of the labour force and there is no single tarred road in the district (NNDA, 2015, p. 4). Interestingly, the Nkwanta North is the northernmost district in the northern part of the Volta Region that is also sometimes referred to as ‘Northern Volta’. Damanko, which is both administratively and geographically a border community between the Northern Region and the Volta Region is located in the Nkwanta North District.

Linguistically, the Nkwanta North District is a highly multilingual area. The list of Ghanaian indigenous languages spoken in the district is certainly long and the exact number of such languages is indeterminate for now. However, one can mention the following Ghanaian languages: Likpakpaln (Konkomba), Bassari, Kotokoli, Chakosi (a variety of Anufo), Ewe, Nawuri, Challa and
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*Kabre* as some of those languages used in the District. A variety of Twi is also evident in the Nkwanta North as it, to some extent, serves as a lingua franca for the area. However, this Twi remains only as a second language the people get to speak later after acquiring their respective L1s. Although *Likpakpaln* is clearly the major native language of the Nkwanta North (see Bisilki, 2017, p. 36), not many people from the other ethnic groups or language groups learn to speak it fluently, except that a majority of them still attain some minimal level of comprehension of *Likpakpaln* and the ability to say a few words in it. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to note that even those who speak *Likpakpaln* fluently as a second language still keep to their own mother tongue in interactions with their children and families at home. The present observation is not far from that of the GSS (2014, p. 4) when it indicates that the ethnic groups in the Nkwanta North include the Konkombas, Bassaris, Ewes, Akans and others hailing from the Northern Region, but that the dominant group is the Konkomba, followed by Bassari.

The use of the English language in communication is very much circumscribed in the Nkwanta North District. In offices and other formal work places, people prefer to use Twi or another Ghanaian language as may be suitable for the interactants. This is especially the case when officers or staff are attending to members of the public (most of whom cannot speak the English language). The only context where the English language is more regularly used is the school setting, although this is also not totally without code-switches to other native languages as may be possible between the interactants.

**The educational profile of the Nkwanta North District**

The Nkwanta North District has a total of 74 educational institutions. These include 2 second cycle institutions (1 senior high/technical school and 1 technical/vocational institute) and 72 basic schools. The district is divided into 7 educational administrative circuits (GES, Nkwanta North, 2017). As of June, 2014, the number of trained teachers stood at 165 as against 214 untrained teachers. Similarly, only 47% of the junior high school (JHS) pupils obtained
qualifying aggregates for entry into the senior high school (SHS), (NNDA, 2015, p. 5). The literacy rate in the district is very low. 69.4% of persons 11 years and older in the district are non-literate and 62.6% of persons 3 years and older in the district have never attended school (GSS, 2014, pp. 36-8). There are also general educational infrastructural shortfalls, with many of the schools lacking important facilities such as a school library.

**Research methodology**

This study is basically a descriptive survey. A descriptive research may describe a natural or a man-made educational phenomenon that is of interest to educators and policy makers. A descriptive study can generate rich data that provide the basis for important recommendation as exemplified in Galloway (1992).

I used two sets of written questionnaire (one for lower primary school class teachers and the other for headteachers). These questionnaires were administered in-person by me (with the assistance of one voluntary field assistant) in the Nkwanta North District. The data collection was carried out in October, 2017. The face-to-face mode of questionnaire administration made it possible to verify respondents’ self-characterisation and to also ask or answer clarification questions where necessary (see Schilling, 2013, p. 99 for the advantages of face-to-face administration of surveys). A majority of the question items in these questionnaires were modelled after a USAID [GH] School Language Mapping Project that was carried out in February-April, 2017 across parts of all the 10 regions of Ghana, which did not include the Nkwanta North District. Before analysing the administered questionnaires, the questions and responses were first coded and entered onto two separate grids (one for the class teacher questionnaire and the other for the headteacher questionnaire). The data collated onto the simple grids were further analysed into descriptive statistics, mainly of frequencies and percentages.

The study involved a total of 98 respondents (81 lower primary school teachers and 17 headteachers) drawn from 16 randomly selected basic schools. Once a school was selected, its
headteacher and the lower grade class teachers became automatic respondents, although each respondent still participated only voluntarily.

Respondent demographics

Tables 2 and 3 below show the age and gender distribution of the headteacher and the class teacher respondents respectively. Table 4, on its part, shows teacher and class level distribution.

Table 2: Age and gender distribution of headteacher respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution (years)</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>1 (5.9%)</td>
<td>1 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>2 (11.8%)</td>
<td>2 (11.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>12 (70.6%)</td>
<td>9 (52.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>2 (11.8%)</td>
<td>2 (11.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 60</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (100.1%)</td>
<td>14 (82.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results in Table 2, it can be noted that a total of 17 headteachers participated in this survey. Out of the 17 headteachers, 14 (82.4%) were males while only 3 (17.6%) were females. Also, a majority (12 (70.6%)) of the headteachers were found to be within the age range of 31-40.
Table 3: Age and gender distribution of class teacher respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age distribution (years)</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>2 (2.5%)</td>
<td>2 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>43 (53.1%)</td>
<td>13 (16.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 (2.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>23 (28.4%)</td>
<td>11 (13.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>5 (6.2%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 60</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No age indicated</td>
<td>5 (6.2%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81 (100%)</td>
<td>28 (34.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 3, 81 lower primary class teachers served as respondents to the questionnaire. A majority (being 43 (53.1%) of the lower primary school teacher respondents fell within the age range of 21-30. 28 (34.5%) and 51 (62.8%) out of the 81 respondents were males and females respectively. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that two of the class teacher respondents (in the age range 21-30) did not indicate their gender in answering the questionnaire. It is, however, intriguing to observe that although the female class teacher population far outweighs that of the male (as can be seen in Table 3), the majority of school heads were found to be males as can be noted in Table 2. On the other hand, the imbalance between male and female class teacher populations at the lower primary could inure to the benefit of the NALAP in the Nkwanta North. This is because of the observation that female teachers are better at teaching reading than their male counterparts (Leherr, 2009, p. 35).
Table 4: Teacher respondent and classes taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender of teacher</th>
<th>Distribution of teachers and class levels taught</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KG 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No gender indicated</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals per class level</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From table 4, it can be observed that out of the 81 class teachers, there were 14 KG 1 teachers, 14 KG 2 teachers, 14 P1 teachers, 17 P2 teachers and 22 P3 teachers. Two of the teachers (i.e., 1 KG 1 teacher and 1 P1 teacher) did not indicate their gender on the questionnaire. This is earlier pointed out in table 3.

Presentation of data and analysis

In this presentation of results, questions that were asked in the questionnaire are organised into thematic areas. These are then analysed by providing the response options and the corresponding distribution of responses by the class teachers and the headteachers as in the following tables:
Table 5: Frequency distributions on the dominant language spoken in the communities where respondents’ schools are located.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages mentioned by respondents as dominant in the communities</th>
<th>Distribution of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class teachers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likpakpaln (Konkomba)</td>
<td>76 (93.83%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twi</td>
<td>4 (4.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotokoli</td>
<td>1 (1.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that the languages that were identified by respondents as dominant in their school environs included Likpakpaln, Twi and Kotokoli. 76 (93.83%) of the class teachers mentioned Likpakpaln as the language predominantly used in the local communities where their schools are located as 4 (4.94%) and 1 (1.23%) identified Twi and Kotokoli, respectively as the dominant languages of the communities where their schools are located. On the part of the head teachers, 15 (88.24%), 2 (11.76%) and 0 (0%) indicated that Likpakpaln, Twi and Kotokoli, respectively are dominant in the communities of their schools. From the above results, it is clear that a majority of the lower primary school teachers and the headteachers recognise Likpakpaln as the majority language in the environments where their schools are situated. From the data gathered, Twi is the next in that regard and Kotokoli ranks least. This finding matches with the report of GSS (2014, p. 4) that Konkomba is the dominant ethno-linguistic group in the Nkwanta North.
Table 6: Frequency distributions on the Ghanaian language spoken as L1 by the majority of pupils in lower primary classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Ghanaian languages identified by respondents as spoken by the majority of pupils in the lower primary grades</th>
<th>Distribution of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class teachers: Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likpakpaln</td>
<td>74 (91.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twi</td>
<td>3 (3.70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kotokoli</td>
<td>4 (4.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the results presented in Table 6 above, it is evident that a greater number of the class teachers (74[91.36%]) and headteachers (13[76.47%]) are of the view that the Ghanaian language spoken by a majority of the lower grade primary pupils is Likpakpaln. We also discover from the results that 3 (3.70%) of the class teachers consider Twi to be the Ghanaian language spoken by most of their pupils in the lower grades of primary school. 4 (4.94) of these class teachers also hold the view that Kotokoli is the majority language among their pupils in lower primary. On the part of the headteachers, 3 (17.65%) hold that Twi is the Ghanaian language used by a majority of their lower grade pupils whilst 1 (5.88%) of these headteachers also state that Kotokoli remain the dominant language for a majority of the pupils concerned.

However, an intriguing development on this question lies with the contrast in opinion between the class teachers and the headteachers regarding Twi and Kotokoli. The number of class teachers (4[4.94%]) who mention Kotokoli as dominant among the pupils is slightly higher than those (3[3.70%]) who say so for Twi. In contrast, the number of headteachers (3[17.65%]) who declare Twi as the more dominant variety among pupils in lower primary is higher than those (1[5.88%]) who say so for Kotokoli. Nonetheless, the critical point here is that whilst Likpakpaln is the
L1 of a majority of the pupils, it is Twi that is used as the Ghanaian language MOI in their classrooms. The consequence, then, is that this majority of pupils are deprived of the great advantages that come with receiving education/knowledge in one’s own mother tongue.

**Table 7:** The NALAP approved Ghanaian language of instruction/teaching at the lower primary level in the Nkwanta North District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The GES approved Ghanaian language for instruction/teaching at the lower primary in Nkwanta North</th>
<th>Distribution of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class teachers: Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likpakpaln</td>
<td>7 (8.64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twi</td>
<td>66 (81.48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likpakpaln and Twi</td>
<td>4 (4.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4 (4.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses of both the class teachers (66[81.48%]) and the headteachers (16[94.12%]) give a strong confirmation that Twi is the NALAP approved Ghanaian language of instruction and teaching at the lower primary level in the Nkwanta North District. This was further corroborated by my own verification with the Nkwanta North District Directorate of the GES.

Nonetheless, other Ghanaian languages were mentioned by some respondents as the approved media of instruction for the educational level concerned in the district. As the statistics in table 7 show, 7 class teachers, representing 8.64% mentioned Likpakpaln as the approved Ghanaian language of instruction in the district and 4 (4.94%) said that both Likpakpaln and Twi are approved, under the NALAP, for instruction and teaching in the grades concerned. In the case of the headteachers, only 1 (5.88%) gave the option that both Likpakpaln and Twi were GES approved Ghanaian languages for instruction and teaching at the lower primary level in
the Nkwanta North. The incidence of some respondents mentioning other languages other than Twi as the NALAP approved language(s) of instruction, most likely, betrays their unfamiliarity with the tenets of the NALAP. This becomes especially remarkable when one considers the fact that the question posed was very straightforward in asking the respondents to indicate the ‘NALAP approved’ language of instruction and not just any other language(s) that teachers may tend to use in the classroom in the Nkwanta North. Class teachers and headteachers are key stakeholders in the execution of a school language programme such as the NALAP. As such, their being poorly informed on the basic provisions of the policy is nothing, but the misinterpretation and improper implementation as was the case in Kenya (Mose, 2017).

**Table 8:** Frequency distributions on which Ghanaian language will best serve as the medium of instruction and teaching at the lower primary level in the Nkwanta North

| The most suitable Ghanaian language option to be adopted for instruction/teaching at the lower primary in Nkwanta North | Distribution of responses |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Class teachers: Frequency | Headteachers: Frequency |
| Likpapaln | 60 (74.07%) | 14 (82.85%) |
| Twi | 14 (17.28%) | 1 (5.88%) |
| Likpapaln and Twi | 4 (4.94%) | 1 (5.88%) |
| Kotokoli | 1 (1.23%) | 1 (5.88%) |
| No response | 2 (2.47%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total | 81 (100%) | 17 (100%) |

As can be seen from Table 8, 60 (74.07%) of the class teachers share the view that Likpapaln will be the most appropriate Ghanaian language to serve as the medium of instruction and learning at the lower primary level in the Nkwanta North District.
Apart from the preceding response foregrounding Likpakpaln as the L1 of majority of the school children and their teachers, it also serves as evidence of strong support by stakeholders for mother tongue-based bilingual education. 14 (17.28%) of the class teachers also proposed that Twi will be the best Ghanaian language for instruction and learning at the lower grades of school in the Nkwanta North, meaning Twi should be maintained in use as currently being done. 4 (4.94%) of these class teachers hold the view that adopting both Likpakpaln and Twi as media of instruction and teaching will be the best way to go. Similarly, 1 (1.23%) of the class teachers are of the view that Kotokoli will be the best language for education at the lower grades of school in the Nkwanta North. Nevertheless, 2 (2.47%) of the class teachers did not indicate at all which Ghanaian language they think will be most beneficial if adopted for education at the lower grades in the Nkwanta North District.

Turning to the views of the headteachers on this issue, 14 (82.85%) of them state that Likpakpaln will be the best Ghanaian language for education at the lower grades in the Nkwanta North District. Also, the Ghanaian language options: Twi, both Likpakpaln and Twi and Kotokoli each has 1 (5.8%) headteacher endorsing them as the best to be used for instruction and teaching at the lower primary school in the Nkwanta North. Furthermore, the fact that Twi is the NALAP chosen Ghanaian language MOI as against the stance of the class teachers and the headteachers that Likpakpaln would have been the best Ghanaian language MOI marks a disagreement between the NALAP and its implementers in the Nkwanta North. Differences in beliefs and ideologies can lead implementers to contravening and contesting a school language policy (Spolsky, 2009).
Table 9: Frequency distributions on teacher mother-tongue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1 of class teacher respondents</th>
<th>Distribution of teachers (frequency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twi</td>
<td>13 (16.04%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likpakpaln</td>
<td>37 (45.68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassari</td>
<td>5 (6.17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challa</td>
<td>1 (1.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>4 (4.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewe</td>
<td>13 (16.04%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adele</td>
<td>1 (1.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawuri</td>
<td>2 (2.47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sissali</td>
<td>1 (1.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chumburu</td>
<td>1 (1.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krachi</td>
<td>1 (1.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangme</td>
<td>1 (1.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1 (1.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses analysed in Table 9 were elicited to ascertain the L1 backgrounds of the lower primary school teachers. Here, each respondent class teacher was asked to mention which Ghanaian language was his or her mother tongue. It was found that the lower primary class teachers involved came from as varied as 12 different mother-tongues, namely, Twi, Likpakpaln, Bassari, Challa, Hausa, Ewe, Adele, Nawuri, Sissali, Chumburu, Krachi and Dangme. In an ascending order, the first five L1 groups with higher class teacher representations at the lower grades included: Hausa 4 (4.94%), Bassari 5 (6.17%), Ewe 13 (16.04%) and Twi 13 (16.04%) and Likpakpaln 37 (45.68%). Coincidentally, the number of class teachers who spoke Twi as their L1 and those who have Ewe as their mother tongue stood at the same figure of 13 (16.04%).
**Table 10:** Frequency distribution on whether or not the class teachers have received in-service training on language/literacy teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>Frequency distribution of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31 (38.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>50 (61.73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the results in Table 10 above, 50 (61.73%) of the class teacher respondents said that they had not attended any workshop or training on language/literacy teaching since they became teachers. 31 (38.27) of the class teachers, however, indicated that they had had the opportunity to attend training programmes on language/literacy teaching while in service. The finding under this theme suggests a severe indictment of the system. The implementation of any bilingual education policy is bound to be ineffective if teachers are not regularly re-trained in and updated on modern trends and methodologies.

**Table 11:** Frequency distribution on how many years ago since the class teachers attended any workshop/training related to language pedagogy while in teaching service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>5 (16.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>13 (41.94%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 years</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8 years</td>
<td>9 (29.03%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 8 years</td>
<td>3 (9.68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1 (3.23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A follow-up question was posed to the 31 class teachers who responded Yes to the question analysed in Table 10 to indicate how long it had been since they attended the last training/workshop on language/literacy teaching. The result is as presented in Table 11. A majority of 13 (41.94%) of the teachers stated that they attended a training programme 3-4 years ago. 9 (29.03%) of the teachers, which is next to the majority attended such a workshop/training since 7-8 years ago. The most recent time any of the class teachers benefitted from any such training was 1-2 years ago, but only 5 (16.03%) of the class teachers had the opportunity to participate in a training programme within that period.

**Table 12:** Frequency distribution on whether or not the class teachers are aware of the NALAP in Ghana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62 (76.54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17 (20.99%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2 (2.47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data presented in Table 12, it can be seen that 62 (76.54%) of the teachers affirmed that they were aware of the NALAP. On the contrary, 17 (20.99%) said they did not know of the NALAP while 2 (2.47%) did not indicate a Yes or No to the question.

**Table 13:** Frequency distribution on availability of NALAP policy document in schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 (23.53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13 (76.47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The headteacher respondents were asked to indicate by a *Yes* or *No* to show if their respective schools had copies of the NALAP programme document. From their responses as shown in table 13, only 4 (23.53%) of the headteachers had copies of the NALAP document in their schools as against 13 (76.47%) who said their schools had no copies of the document. This situation, obviously, means that opportunity for reference to the language policy documented is grossly limited, leading to a poorly informed educator phenomenon.

**Table 14:** Frequency distribution on availability of NALAP teaching learning materials (TLMs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>2 (11.76%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>9 (52.92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>6 (35.29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The headteachers were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that their respective schools had enough copies of the NALAP teacher guide and other NALAP TLMs. From the responses as represented in Table 14, a greater number of the headteachers (9 [52.92% and 6 [35.29%]) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the afore-statement. Only 2 (11.76%) of them were in agreement with the statement.
Table 15: Frequency distributions on public awareness of the NALAP in the Nkwanta North

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response options</th>
<th>Distribution of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class teachers: Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 (17.28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17 (20.99%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not sure</td>
<td>50 (61.73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be observed from Table 15, 14 (17.28%) of the class teachers responded Yes to indicate that a majority of parents and members in their school communities knew about the NALAP. Nonetheless, 17 (20.99%) and 50 (61.73%) of them chose No and I am not sure, respectively in response to the same statement (see questions 11 and 17 of the class teacher and headteacher questionnaires in the appendixes). On the part of the headteachers, 4 (23.53%) affirmed that a majority of the members in the communities where their schools are located were aware of the NALAP. On the obverse side, 2 (11.76%) and 11 (64.71%) responded by No and I am not sure respectively. To further verify the level of community awareness of the NALAP, 20 parents were purposively selected and interviewed on whether or not they knew about the NALAP. Only 3 (15%) said they had heard about the NALAP whilst the remaining 17 (85%) said they had no idea of any existing school language programme called the NALAP. Again, the issue of a poorly informed public can have negative consequences for the NALAP in the Nkwanta North. This is premised on the fact that parents and the general community play such an important role in children’s literacy development and learning in general. Keeping parents/the public well informed on the NALAP could have offered the opportunity for their more positive participation and support for their children’s learning under the NALAP.
Summary of findings

Firstly, results of the study suggest that there is a problem of linguistic disaggregation between the approved Ghanaian language MOI for the school on one hand and the L1 of the pupils and the local community on the other hand. This is because while Twi serves as the approved Ghanaian language MOI (66[81.48%] and 16[94.12%] of responses indicating this) as revealed in table 7, respondents still maintained that a majority of pupils have Likpakpaln as their L1 and also that the dominant Ghanaian language of the Nkwanta North area is Likpakpaln. Thus, from table 5, 76 (93.83%) and 15 (88.24%) of class teachers and headteachers, respectively said that Likpakpaln is the majority language in the linguistic environs of their schools. Similarly, 74 (91.36%) and 13 (76.47%) of the class teachers and the headteacher respondents, as can be seen in table 6, identify Likpakpaln to be the L1 of a majority of the pupils. Relatedly, it was also found that a majority of the lower primary class teachers (37[45.68%]) are mother-tongue speakers of Likpakpaln. Twi and Ewe ran neck and neck in this regard as the number of class teachers who spoke Twi as L1 is the same as the number that spoke Ewe as L1, that is, 13 (16.04%) in each case. Given the preceding sociolinguistic dynamics uncovered by the study, one can say that the use of Twi as the Ghanaian language MOI in the Nkwanta North defeats the very purpose and tenets of the NALAP. As has been pointed out (Leherr, 2009; Hartwell, 2010), a central quest of the NALAP is to provide Ghanaian children education through their mother-tongue and also doing so using the dominant native language in the locality of the school. Additionally, the present situation where the majority of pupils in the Nkwanta North lose the opportunity of education in their own mother-tongue clearly contravenes the famous pedagogical aphorism that children learn best when taught in their L1 (Owu-Ewie, 2006; UNESCO, 1953, p. 6, etc.). Again, Cummins and Genzuk (1991) argue that the greater use of a child’s L1 in education makes it possible for parents to participate in and support their children’s learning. It is true that Twi has a kind of lingua franca status in the Nkwanta North as in many other parts of Ghana, but for the majority of children in the
Nkwanta North, Twi is acquired as a second language (L2) only later in life. This naturally makes it difficult, if not impossible, for such children to follow classroom instruction in Twi. One may also presume that teachers who do not speak Twi as an L1 may still have an L2 proficiency in it. Nonetheless, any such presumption further raises the question of whether or not such teachers’ L2 proficiency in Twi will be sufficient to make them effectively deliver lessons using Twi. Then again, one has to be mindful of the issue of cultural attitude and satisfaction in the teacher having to use another’s mother-tongue to teach, instead of his or her own mother tongue. As has been argued, the desire to use and to preserve one’s own mother-tongue is universal and emotive (Azasu, 2012, p. 4). This view is also in congruence with the UNESCO (1953, p. 5) position that many millions in the world are interested and concerned with how they can employ their own native tongue both in their education and in their daily lives.

Further, another important finding made by this survey has to do with the provision of refresher courses or continual in-service training on language teaching for teachers. It was found that a significant 50 (61.73%) of the lower primary teachers never attended any workshop relevant to language teaching. Again, out of the 31 (38.27%) who ever benefitted from such in-service training, it is intriguing to learn that 3 (9.68%) ever had that opportunity over 8 years ago and 9 (29.03%) 7-8 years ago. This situation strongly suggests that the teachers’ language/literacy teaching skills are not being updated to make them competent enough to give quality instruction to the learners at their (teachers’) feet. If considered vis-à-vis the implementation stipulations and recommendations of the NALAP, one can unequivocally say that the Nkwanta North situation presents a paradox of the NALAP. As clearly articulated in Hartwell (2010), an integral part of the NALAP implementation agenda is the periodic rolling out of language-related training/workshops for teachers.

On the issue of availability of the NALAP teacher guide and other NALAP related TLMs, only 2, representing 11.76% of the
headteachers agreed with the view that their schools had enough of these materials. A clear majority of 9 (52.92%) and 6 (35.29%), respectively, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the view that their schools had enough of such materials. Even more worrying is the reality that most of the schools did not seem to have a copy of the NALAP programme document in itself. As per the responses of the headteachers 13 (76.47%) of them indicated that there were no copies of the NALAP policy document for reference in their various schools. A circumstance of this nature where the basic NALAP materials are lacking in the schools certainly amounts to nothing else, but an impediment to the implementation and realisation of the educational intents of this otherwise promising educational language programme in the district.

Finally, the survey also discovered that the level of public or stakeholder awareness of the NALAP in the Nkwanta North District rates so low. Neither the responses of teachers nor those of parents affirmed that members of the public knew about the NALAP. The low level of awareness of the NALAP is to the extent that some of the teachers themselves do not even know about it. As many as 17, representing 20.99% of the teachers bluntly said that they did not know about the NALAP in Ghana. Following the prevailing phenomenon, one is tempted to proceed with the claim that the social marketing/public support component of the NALAP is not being attended to or, at best, is only being poorly catered for at present. A situation such as this can hold dire ramifications for the overall success of the NALAP. As it is known, an educational language policy as any other policy cannot properly succeed without a reasonably informed and supportive relevant stakeholder base.

**Implications of study**

In broader terms, the implications arising out of this study, as by others (Ansah & Agyeman, 2015; Owu-Ewie, 2017, p. 167, etc.) hold that the government of Ghana needs to consider widening the school language net so that many more of the Ghanaian indigenous languages can be accommodated under the NALAP dispensation. This further means a turn away from the proto-typical practice
in Ghana where government(s) hand-pick only a few (so-called government sponsored languages) or rely on the already developed languages as the qualified linguistic media for formal education. Simons and Fennig (eds.) (2017) in *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* estimate that 81 languages exist in Ghana. In such a highly multilingual state, many linguistic groups are bound to suffer undue educational disadvantages, if many of the local mother-tongues are not allowed for use as MOI in the school system. Since the Ghanaian officialdom has hardly ever systematically sought to inquire into who speaks what where in the country (Dako & Quarcoo, 2017, p. 22), it is absolutely necessary that stakeholders in the various local areas are well consulted to know which language will best suit which local area, in case of adding to the list of Ghanaian languages in education.

As regards the Nkwanta North specifically, findings of this survey appear to glaringly suggest that it will be educationally more beneficial to approve (or add Likpakpaln to NALAP approved Ghanaian languages) and to use Likpakpaln for teaching and learning purposes in schools within the area. This is partly affirmed in the data in Table 8 where respondents indicate that Likpakpaln will serve as the preferable Ghanaian language medium in schools in the Nkwanta North. Once adopted, Likpakpaln can be made to replace Twi or be used concurrently with Twi. For the preceding suggestion to be implemented successfully in the Nkwanta North, a viable possibility will be that the District Education Directorate (DED), in collaboration with the national institutions such as the GES and MoE, can identify from the locality native speakers who have the potential to train as resource persons on NALAP. The role of these trained personnel will, in turn, be the provision of NALAP-oriented training/refresher courses and the development of associated TLMs in Likpakpaln.

Again, with the anticipation that there will be building of local capacity for NALAP-based training, it might be appropriate that the DED be given the charge to hold NALAP workshops for lower primary teachers at the beginning of every academic year.
This way, the teachers can keep pace with standard classroom practices that foster the educational goals of the NALAP. Also, a poorly informed NALAP stakeholder phenomenon in the Nkwanta North can be tackled by entrusting the DED with some more of the NALAP social marketing responsibility. With the requisite resource generation and allocation, the DED can, from time to time, organise community durbars and town hall sessions, rely on community media channels such as community radios as well as use Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) fora to enlighten the local publics on the NALAP.

Additionally, the DED ought to be utterly critical of the mother tongue or the linguistic proficiencies of a teacher when assigning him/her to any of the classes within the lower primary. That way, there can be some hope of a cessation to the current rate of violation of the educational and linguistic human rights of the school child in the Nkwanta North.

**Conclusion**

This study is an investigative survey into the prevailing implementation challenges faced by the NALAP in the Nkwanta North District of the Volta Region, Ghana. Findings of the survey point to the fact that the NALAP is in a quagmire in this area. This is premised on the fact that the prevailing realities in the Nkwanta North run contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the NALAP as a school language programme. To improve upon this situation, a clarion call is made for a recalibration in the local implementation scheme as contained in the course of action stipulated under implications of study above (section 9). This is particularly important, given that the entire terrain of Ghana’s educational system (from the basic level up to the tertiary level) is already grappling with deleterious effects of policy-related challenges (Asaah, 2009, p. 66). Although this study is situated in the Nkwanta North District, its findings are also likely to have implications for the implementation of the NALAP in other parts of Ghana that have characteristics similar to those of the Nkwanta North.
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UNHCR. (2010). *Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities*. Geneva: UNHCR
Promoting Ghana’s traditional cultural aesthetics in Ghana’s most beautiful reality television show

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Abstract
In recent times, the mass media in Ghana have come under heavy attack for what is often considered to be their suffocating antisocial content. Cultural nationalists in Ghana have expressed their aversion to the hegemonic representation of Western and other non-Ghanaian cultures, much to the detriment of local ones. However, there are a few mass media programmes that attempt to promote aspects of Ghanaian culture. Using Ghana’s most beautiful (GMB), a reality show produced by a privately-owned Ghanaian television channel, TV3, this paper attempts a critique of the representational motives of the programme vis-à-vis the nexus of foreign content and locally relevant ones. The paper undertakes an analysis of the 2013 edition of the programme and argues that, whilst GMB can be commended for offering a fair playing field for all the contestants in the show, it still exhibits traits of cultural hegemony and consumerism.

Keywords: culture, pageantry, hegemony, mass media, reality show

Introduction
Globalisation and technological advancements in the twentieth and twenty first centuries have brought radical transformations into people’s cultures and traditions (Mott, 2004; Panopio & Santico-Rolda, 2006; Ferraro, 2008) and dictated a lopsided transfer of culture in favour of hegemonic global relationships that often promote Western culture against other ways of life. These transformations have often only satisfied contemporary hegemonic and consumerist lifestyles. Some modifications of

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1 This work has been possible by the kind courtesy of management of TV3, organizers of Ghana’s most beautiful. I am also grateful to the contestants of the 2013 edition of Ghana’s most beautiful.
culture can improve social habits and living standards, yet the same transformations can also promote lifestyles which can be perceived as offensive, precarious and licentious and therefore likely to impact negatively the cultural sensibilities of many and portray a false representation of culture. Undoubtedly, every community is unique, and what is considered a taboo in one may be the norm in other. However, in Ghana, as in many other countries particularly in Africa, the beauty of the national society can be experienced in the diversity of cultural expression and traditional practices. In Ghana, every ethnic group strives to uphold its rich indigenous culture and represent what is the best of its existence. This is in spite of the undeniable influences of foreign cultures, instituted through many years of colonial governance and education, whose legacy has persisted after over half a century of national independence. This colonial and neo-colonial legacy combines with the unfair distribution of information and culture across the globe to maintain a hegemonic cultural imperialist system of global relationships that favours the Euro-American civilisation.

The result of this relationship is the gradual erosion of local traditions, and their replacement by television programmes, video games, social ways of dressing, speaking and relating, which are alien to the cultures of most communities. For example, nowadays, one hardly sees Ghanaian children enjoying traditional games, such as *pempenaa*¹, *ampe*² and *kabadzim*³. These were games that had meaning and inconspicuously taught the children the moral values of their societies. Such values included tolerance, forgiveness, team spirit, alertness and social harmony. In the traditional Ghanaian society it was not customarily acceptable to use one’s left hand in waving to people or in performing some vital activities in public

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¹ *pempenaa* is a traditional Akan game where a number of children sit together with their legs stretched forward with a leader. The leader passes his/her hands over their legs and says *pempenaa* as the rest respond *nanaa*. The leader points the figures at the legs of the children as he/she (leader) sings along. The one on whose legs the song ends becomes free and exits.

² *ampe* is a traditional Akan game which involves two or more females. In its simplest term, members clap their hands to a particular rhythm as they jump simultaneously and bring a leg forward before placing both feet on the ground. Each person selects a particular leg that will score points for him or her as they play accordingly and count their points aloud.

³ *kabadzim* is a traditional Akan game performed in a big rectangular space.
when the right hand was free. Whilst the Euro-modernist would perceive this as superstitious, most Ghanaian cultures saw that as disrespect for various reasons, including religion and hygiene.

Similarly, many Ghanaian societies have lost the beauty and richness of the ceremonies and rituals that accompanied events such as naming ceremonies and marriage rites. These were events that had history, the essence of being and the values of the society embedded in them. These have largely been replaced by so-called modern fads, practices and styles which are mostly Eurocentric.

It was the seeming national need to refocus attention on indigenous culture, albeit in its modernist and syncretic form, that GMB was created and institutionalised (Akuoku, 2015). To understand the context within which this programme operates and to undertake a contextualized analysis of the programme, one needs to clarify certain key concepts, which can serve as guiding posts for better comprehension.

**Theoretical and conceptual framework**

The term ‘culture’ is often used to refer to the way a group of people lives and that which makes them distinct from others. The *Cultural policy of Ghana* (2004) defines culture as;

> the totality of the way of life evolved by our people through experience and reflection in the attempt to fashion a harmonious co-existence with our environment. This culture is dynamic and gives order and meaning to the social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious practices of our people. Our culture also gives us our distinct identity as a people. (pp. 2-3).

This definition presents a homogeneous view of culture in Ghana, and describes it, not in abstract terms, but as related to a real and meaningful existence. Similarly, Gyekye (1998) defines culture as “the entire life of a people: their morals, religious beliefs, social structures, political and educational system, form of music and dance and all other products of their creative spirit” (p. xiii). Gyekye’s illumination of culture seeks to unearth the constituents
of culture and outlines the ingredients which make one community unique from the other. One element which Gyekye’s definition of culture encapsulates and is very relevant in this essay is the educational system. This is because an educational system based on a curriculum which reflects the culture of the people ultimately helps to transmit their customs from one generation to the other. We will see later how GMB attempts to offer cultural education on the platform of a television reality show, and demonstrate a sense of national cohesion in spite of diversity.

Once a people identify themselves with a particular lifestyle, they tend to protect it and coin moral values aimed at making them more united and nationalistic. Botchway (2008) observes that, “people belonging to diverse ethnic and national groups have always, in one way or the other, tended to be nationalistic as they try to protect the cultural, economic, political and social interest of their ethnicity and culture” (p. 169). Without a doubt, when a people become nationalistic, they foster development for the reason that they all share in the same norms of the community, and share a common understanding of their practices that promote development. This stems from a shared ideological orientation that allows for common aspirations and actions.

Ideology is an important concept for appreciating the ways in which GMB tries to represent the general in a unified and communal sense. Hall (1996) has described ideology as “the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – with different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, examine and render intelligible the way society works” (Hall, cited in Morley & Chen ed., 1996, p. 26).

Hall (1996) problematises ideology as different ideas gripping the minds of masses, and by so doing becomes “a ‘material force’” (p. 27). He argues that ideology, from a political perspective, reveals how a set of ideas may come to dominate the social thinking of a people at a point in their history, in a Gramscian approach. This domineering set of ideas tends to unite from within
and holds society together. However, Hall (1996) has also noted that there is a problem of hegemony in which a dominant cultural order imposes itself on the rest and constantly rearticulates certain dominant structures of meaning. For example, it will be seen that in GMB, the contestant who garners the most votes by the public, through arbitrary commercial system of SMS messaging, is the most beautiful, physically fit and intellectually sophisticated.

In the words of Schirato and Yell (2000), culture is “the totality of … practices and systems” (p. 1), while, Maison (2007) argues, when appreciated within a Ghanaian context, that it embodies the means, the “vehicles designed to bring out the best of an individual’s humanity within a cultural space” (p. 29). It will be seen, in this paper, how GMB positions itself to serve as a vehicle for practicing a wide variety of cultures for uplifting the cultural values of both individuals and societies.

Moreover, GMB presents itself as a museum or repository for intangible culture. Over the years, various approaches were employed to salvage, preserve and pass on Ghanaian culture from one generation to the other. Notable among such interventions was the setting up of museums and the recognition of traditional festivals and durbars. The mass media, such as radio and television were also used to document, transmit, project and protect various aspects of culture in the country, and to “reinforce and support values, habits, traditions, and systems.” (Shafeek, cited in Adesi and Odi, 2013, p. 392). GMB appears to complement these efforts, most of which have fallen by the wayside and replaced by foreign content productions, such as Latin-American telenovelas and Asian soap operas.

The paper attempts a cultural reading of GMB in order to explore the practices and systems that are often on display through pageantry, clothes, performance, music and dance, and rhetoric. It will be interesting to observe how GMB offers a representation of the heterogeneous cultures of Ghana and presents them as if they were one and the same thing. However, the argument will be that GMB is informed by the same cultural and economic hegemonies
that it seeks to contest, as the entire competition is framed within a modernist setting and dictated largely by the commercial interests of sponsors whose names and logos are widely displayed during the performance of GMB.

Pageantry and Ghanaian culture

Pageantry is an integral part of Ghana’s popular culture. Beauty pageants form a significant part of many traditional festivities celebrations. Oral traditions about traditional festivals in some communities reveal that maidens often volunteered to dramatize some aspects of their society’s culture and traditions. This did not only enhance the beauty and entertainment value of the occasion, but also served as a knowledge test of the moral values and cultural practices of the society. The most knowledgeable contestant was usually adjudged the most ‘beautiful’ woman and celebrated. The beauty that was celebrated was therefore not merely physiological but also intellectual. Many annual customary festivals in Ghana now have beauty pageants as part of the celebrations.

Other longstanding cultural ceremonies such as puberty rites, for example bragoro⁴ among the Akans and dipo⁵ among the Krobos, also allow young women to demonstrate their physical and intellectual qualities, and exhibit the best of their traditions. It can be argued that a contemporary beauty pageant like the GMB draws inspiration from these old and traditional showpieces.

Methodology

The 2013 edition of GMB was selected for analysis in this work. This was because the spectacle at the launch of this edition in Kumasi suggested that the 2013 edition of the reality show would be full of cultural aesthetics of the Ghanaian tradition. This was evident in the rich cultural display of dances, clothing and the large number of chiefs who attended the launch. This was different from the 2012 launch of the show hence the selection of the 2013 edition for analysis. The researcher watched the entire telecast of

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⁴ bragoro is the name of initiatory puberty rites among the Akans of Ghana.
⁵ dipo is the name of rites of passage puberty rites among the Krobos of Ghana.
the 2013 edition of GMB for the thirteen weeks that it was telecast and obtained some information relevant to the development of this paper. He obtained the video recordings of the 2013 edition of GMB from TV3 for analysis.

The study involved the analysis of all the episodes of the 2013 edition of the show. Recorded versions of previous programmes of GMB were accessed from the archives of TV3 for additional analysis. Interviews were conducted with some key persons among the producers of GMB. It was difficult to reach all the contestants for the 2013 edition of GMB. However, five out of the ten contestants were interviewed. Even though they provided relevant information of a general nature, this cannot be representative of the rest.

**Background to the 2013 edition of GMB**

The 2013 GMB started with auditions in all the ten administrative regions of Ghana. A female contestant was selected from each region to represent that area. The opening ceremony of the competition took place in Kumasi, Ghana’s second largest city. Many traditional rulers were at the ceremony to validate it as an important cultural event with the potential of heralding an important national competition. Nana Wiafe Akenten IV, the chief of Ofinso, chaired the ceremony. The thirteen-week competition itself was held at TV 3’s Studio B. The finale took place at the Accra International Conference Centre, and was telecast live on TV3.

For thirteen weeks the ten contestants displayed their knowledge and skills in traditional and contemporary Ghanaian culture through competitive speeches and performances. Two judges, a man and woman, commented on each contestant’s performance. Both live audiences and television viewers contributed to the judgment by voting for their preferred candidates through short message service (SMS) of MTN, Tigo, Airtel and Vodafone Telecommunication Companies.

As part of efforts to give GMB a national appeal, each contestant was expected, at a point in time, to perform a speech, dance or ritual from a region different from hers. The shortlisting of
contestants began after the preliminary stages and was based on the SMS count. The contestant, who had the lowest number of votes and did not impress the judges enough, was eliminated.

As was the norm, GMB 2013 started with the contestants offering an overview of their respective regions. This information usually included tourist sites, major festivals and the main occupations of the people. They also addressed key issues affecting development in their regions and, in some cases, dramatized them for audience appreciation. Among some of the key issues discussed in 2013 were the challenges of acquiring land in Ghana, the need to patronize made-in-Ghana products, the negative effects of illegal mining, violence against women and the quest for interregional cohesion. The ostensible idea was always to promote national unity. Ultimately, the one who was crowned Ghana’s most beautiful embarked on a sponsored social impact project of her choice.

The cultural context of GMB

There is a wide variety of cultural elements that are integral to GMB. Because the programme needs to pass off as a credible representation of the best of Ghanaian culture, albeit in its diverse forms, GMB strives to depict various cultural and aesthetic motifs that will be easily recognized by audiences. At the same time, GMB consciously depicts the dynamism of culture, particularly as it is influenced by so-called modern ways of living. One of the obvious Ghanaian traditional cultural aesthetics that GMB insists upon is the use of traditional names by contestants.

Traditional names in GMB

Names within the Ghanaian culture are not only intended for identification, but often carry social and moral meanings. In recent times, despite the fact that many Ghanaians carry non-Ghanaian names, for example European and Arabic names, some families have resorted to giving only Ghanaian names to their children. In recognition of the importance of indigenous names, the contestants in GMB dropped their so-called Christian or Islamic names in favour of traditional ones.
Ghanaian names, when given at birth, are often informed by circumstances surrounding the birth of the person. As Sarpong (1974) has noted, “the manner of giving or acquiring names is traditionally well regulated in the various societies of Ghana” (p. 88). He explains that names in the Ghanaian context can point to one’s ethnic origin, reveal some historical events, or reveal a person’s status or position.

For example, according to Mawulolo Gharbin, a lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies at the University of Cape Coast, in Ghana, his grandmother who was very sick miraculously got healed on the day that he was born. He was therefore named Mawulolo, which in the Ewe language (spoken mainly in Ghana and Togo), means God is great. Among the Akan-speaking communities, a child born on a particular day of the week normally assumes the name that comes with the day. For example, a girl born on Saturday is called Ama whilst a boy born on that same day is Kwame. Since the colonial period, the taste for Anglicized names has been seen as more appropriate and desirable because of their Eurocentric and Western identifications, and their assumption of a higher social status than traditional African names. When a traditional name is adopted by some Ghanaians, it is often a response to an Afrocentric perception of one’s personal identity.

Mary Akosua Serwaa Owusu, a senior lecturer in the Department of History, University of Cape Coast, recounts how her local Ghanaian name was modified by the addition of a “Christian” name. She writes that, “my headmistress, Sister Sollamen, being unhappy about my name, (Akosua Serwaa) decided that since I was a baptised Catholic I should add my baptismal name Mary to my name… before she registered me for “A” Levels” (Owusu, 2007, p. 97). This was contrary to her father’s wish to have his children known only by their African names.

In recognition of the importance of indigenous names, a famous Ghanaian dramatist, Mohammed Ben Abdallah, projects African culture by assigning local names to his Ghanaian characters in his Abibigoro (plays of Africans). For example, in The witch of
Mopti (1989), some of the characters are called Nii Sai, Nii Kwei and Osabutey, all representing the Ga ethnic group in Ghana. Others such as Adowa and Kofi Onny represent the Akans while Dzifa and Togbi represent the Ewes.

Similarly, GMB prefers that its contestants bear traditional names as a sign of cultural relevance, for national cohesion, and as a means of advocating for the popularization of traditional Ghanaian names in Ghana. Therefore, in 2013, the ladies had the following names: Deli from the Upper West region; Akua, Ashanti region; Poka, Upper East; Bubune, Volta region; Konadu, Brong Ahafo; Ama, Western region; Abena, Central region; Dede, Greater Accra; Safoa, Eastern region; and Kadi, Northern region. Whilst these names were interesting, particularly for the fact that they all seemed averagely short to allow for easy texting on SMS, each contestant also wore clothes that depicted their cultural origins or traditional affiliations as a complement to their names.

**Clothing in GMB**

Costumes generally convey information about the culture and identity of an individual in a non-verbal way (Lurie, 1981; Kwakye-Oppong, 2011; Dennis, 2014). In a lecture delivered in 2007, Anyaoku cited Robert Calderisi, a former International Monetary Fund official, who described the image of Africans at an international gathering, thus, “if not for their colourful national dress at conferences, Africans would scarcely be noted on the world’s stage” (Anyaoku, 2007, p. 6). I will argue that, whilst Calderisi’s statement was casual and condescending, it must have stemmed from his ignorance of the symbolism in traditional African attires.

My argument is informed by Sarpong’s (1974) observation that some “of the commonest media of expressing Ghanaian symbolic art is the cloth” (p. 102). A closer and more discerning observation of Africans at such international gatherings will reveal symbolic art within which are ingrained philosophical and moral messages.

In pursuant of this non-verbal and symbolic means of communication, the contestants of GMB used colourful Ghanaian
kente, wax prints, and other traditionally woven fabrics to construct their costumes in symbolic patterns and contemporary styles. Wax prints have particularly become important in this process. In spite of their foreign origins, they have been adopted as part of contemporary Ghanaian culture, and are used in various traditional contexts such as marriage, birth and funeral rites.

Gavor and Dennis (2013) have argued that many Ghanaians now perceive the wax print as “African cloth” and when used to construct garments, are branded “African wear”. This “African flavor” arises from the various artistic expressions or motifs printed onto the fabric. Additionally, the local names and inscriptions often printed at the selvedge of the cloth symbolize the Africanization of the wax print and portray the social and moral values of the society (p.3).

GMB makes an effort to promote the use of locally made garments that are designed in local flavours as a means of communicating “Ghanaianess”. In the 2013 edition of GMB, all the contestants wore various styles of dresses constructed with Africa wax print produced in Ghana for the launch in Kumasi. In all the episodes held at Studio B at TV 3, contestants were predominantly seen in the African wax print. It is of interest to note that in 2006 the President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kuffour, declared Fridays for the wearing of traditional made in Ghana clothes. He was trying to promote Ghanaian identity through the wearing of indigenous clothes. However, whilst this was a brave initiative, the author will argue that it did not go far enough to contest the Eurocentric fashion taste and appearance of most people in Ghana, especially government officials.

In his article ‘Our leaders must dress like Ghanaians’ Asare (2003) notes that, “the dressing of some… government functionaries at state and international functions does not advertise the country in any way” (p. 6). This is because many government officials prefer wearing imported European suits at the expense of locally made clothes. Asare cautions that “by the time our current
leaders realize the usefulness of the Ghanaian fugu\(^6\), batakari\(^7\) and kente\(^8\), they would have lost their significance (sic)” (p. 6).

It is to promote Ghanaian identity through clothes that GMB contestants are required to perform wearing decent traditional costumes. Unlike other beauty pageants, informed by Western concepts of beauty and feminine exhibitionism, where contestants were often required to appear semi-nude for the voyeuristic delight of audiences, GMB contestants were fully clothed in costumes designed in unique Ghanaian styles. This was based on the cultural sensibilities of Ghanaians which did not easily allow a woman to expose certain parts of her body for public view. Among the Akans, a young adult woman would usually be addressed as ‘akatasia’\(^9\). This is the message GMB attempts to communicate.

However, Western influences on contemporary Ghanaian youth have eroded this endogenous philosophy and outlook on life. It is now common to see men and women wearing clothes and intentionally exposing ample portions of their breasts, bellies and buttocks. Others wear very tight clothes in order to amplify their figure. Apart from the health hazards, for example the prevention of the human skin from breathing that is easily associated with this so-called modern way of dressing, it can be argued that it constitutes an affront to local cultural norms on decency and traditions of Ghanaians, and GMB appears opposed to this contemporary popular culture.

However, while GMB strives to be culturally relevant and correct, it also falters occasionally in the presentation of cultural elements, such as its incorporation of modernist trends that seem to conflict with the traditional, rather than complement it. The ways in which the contemporary and the traditional appear contradictory within the syncretic presentations, undermine the essence of promoting an Afrocentric identity.

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\(^{6}\) Fugu, as noted by Essel & Amisah (2015), refers to a variety of loose garments sewn from strips of cloth woven on traditional looms in Northern Ghana.

\(^{7}\) Batakari, as noted by Essel & Amisah (2015), consists of a flowing outer gown, long sleeve inner robe and a pair of trousers collectively referred to as a three-piece wear.

\(^{8}\) Kente is a rich colourful expensive cloth which is hand-woven and is worn during special occasions.

\(^{9}\) Akatasia refers to a virtuous young lady who is decently dressed and modest in her dispositions.
For example, in 2013, Konadu and Bubune who represented the Brong Ahafo and Volta regions respectively appeared at the grand finale dressed as Ohemmaa and Mamaga (female rulers) respectively but displayed long brightly nail attachments polished red. Their faces were also decked with pronounced make-up. These additions to the female ruler’s attire are alien to the real traditional practice, and would certainly have raised some eye-brows among members of royalty in the auditorium.

Moreover, during the thirteenth week of the programme, a short biographical documentary about each contestant was shown. In these short films, some of the ladies could be seen semi-nude, wearing non-African dresses suggesting that they appeared fully clothed only for the competition, while in real life, they did not abide by the same values that they promoted on stage. Such appearances have the potential to undermine all the efforts to reverse the perceived cultural alienation of many young Ghanaians, who mostly neglect their traditional arts for foreign ones, such as music and dance.

Music and dance in GMB

Music and dance were predominant in the performances because of the important role that they play in Ghanaian societies. Amlor (2008) has noted that, “Africans strongly believe that music and life are inseparable. Hardly would members of a traditional African society organize any social event without music”, (p. 141). Similarly, De Lerma (1970) has argued that, “nothing is done in an African society without music... one is born to music, cries to music, plays to music, works to music, is initiated in to music, is married to music and dies to music” ( p. 81).

GMB contestants usually sing indigenous songs such as lullabies, war songs, songs for puberty rites, and dirges. Each contestant would explain the rationale, historical background and the importance of their song and performance, based on research they would have conducted in their respective communities.

In Ghana, one would hardly find any kind of performance that is not accompanied by singing or some other form of music.
Activities such as communal weeding on farms, fishing and worshiping are often driven by songs. This is an integral part of most cultures in Ghana, and it is transmitted from generation to generation. This is because music, as Allan (1964) puts it, “is a vehicle of history, myth and legends. It points up the continuity of culture through its transmission of education…it contributes to the stability of culture” (p. 223).

Some Ghanaian musicians such as Agya Koo Nimo, Bob Cole, Paa Bobo and Kwasi Ampofo Adjei craft their songs around moral values, historical information and other socially educative elements. While acknowledging that some contemporary songs in Ghana are didactic in nature, it is regrettable to note that the most of contemporary popular music in Ghana is imitative and thrives on frivolity and profanity. No wonder Botchway (2007) argues that,

Observing the trend of life on our campuses, particularly the tertiary ones, there is the weird impression that Ghana is moving away from its own history and culture…. The songs mostly preferred and played by the present younger generation are American rap… indication of western cultural imperialism. (p. 225)

Apart from music, dance forms an integral part of people’s lives in Ghana. Various dance forms define the ethnicity of a people through the expression of shared history, experiences, their moral philosophies and outlook on life. Activities such as naming ceremonies, festivals, religious ceremonies, and marriage ceremonies are often replete with dancing. Often these dance performances are informed by the ideological and artistic tendencies of the people.

As Ufford (2010) has noted, “dance is shaped by the values, attitudes and beliefs of the people who compose its ‘host’ society: It depends on their feeling, thinking, and dynamics, in their combination and consequent form and style and do not exist apart from the human behaviour process which produces them” (p. 124). A variety of dance forms are regularly exhibited in GMB by contestants, exploring their aesthetic and utilitarian values.
The dimensions of creativity in the various dance movements are achieved as a result of a comprehensive research into the philosophical underpinnings embedded in them. Sunday (2010) notes that, “for a dance performance to achieve…emotional and auditory appreciation, the dancers and the dance performance must…display a high level of artistry in both dance movements in space and timing (sic)” (p. 111).

Beyond the entertainment and aesthetic components, dance also tells the history of a people through its movements in a non-verbal communicative way. As Flolu (2009) explains,

Dance is a physical manifestation of thinking and expression of ideas and feelings. It is a way of knowing and communicating…. Through dance it is possible for children to learn about the history and life of people of different ethnic origins, their customs, their music, their celebration, their world view, in fact their human endeavor. (p. 61)

The challenge that GMB faces in the performance of Ghanaian traditional dances, is that, technically, when a dance piece is taken from its original space to a different one, it loses its originality. In the case of GMB, once contestants performed a particular dance on the proscenium stage and not in the round within the community from which it originated, it tends to lose the philosophical underpinnings that shape its being. The proscenium stage also detracts from the aesthetics of the round space, because the dancer now has to face only one direction, that is, towards the audience. She is therefore restricted from engaging in some of the intricate indigenous movements dictated by audiences or other dancers in a circular formation.

The proscenium stage also offers excessive space for the single dancer. This is a challenge to the performers, since most Ghanaian dances are either performed in pairs or in groups. The single dancer is therefore not able to represent adequately the beauty of the dance. Contestants also have a limited time to be on stage, and are therefore unable to deliver the dances to their
fullest aesthetic values. This eventually requires a revised and choreographed version of the original dance. Some of the dances performed on the proscenium stage in the round include *bamaya* by Konadu and *adzogbo* by Akua. Moreover, there is only one set of drummers who are required to provide the drum music for all the dances. Unfortunately, the band often fails to render some of the dance music in their original finesse.

**Language in GMB**

The final cultural component of GMB that I wish to examine, which complements the preceding arguments, has to do with the use of language. Whilst clothes, music and dance can identify people according to their ethnicity, language goes beyond that to give people a sense of belonging, or of exclusion, whichever the case may be (Ekom, 2013). Language has always been the most important means through which people communicate their shared experiences. Ekom (2013) argues that the expression of the various values and aesthetics identity and social functions within a culture will not be possible without language. He posits that,

> cultural expression is incomplete without language. As a means of communicating values, beliefs and customs, language has an important social function which is to foster feelings of group identity and solidarity. It is a means by which culture and its traditions as well as shared values may be conveyed and preserved. Language is fundamental to cultural identity; it is a defining feature of a person’s identity contributing to how they see themselves and how other individuals or groups see and define them. (pp. 101-102)

Ekom’s position on language and culture confirms the view that for culture to thrive, language must serve as its vehicle. Within the context of this argument, one would have expected that the contestants in GMB delivered their presentations in local languages. However, the hegemonic presence of the English language as the lingua franca, allows it to dominate all the presentations, including
the verdicts of the judges. Occasionally, the contestants punctuated their performances with a few sentences in their local languages. The challenge here is the heterogeneity of languages and dialects within the country, which makes it impossible for most people to understand one another. Consequently, the intricate blending of local wisdom, contained in proverbs, with idiomatic expressions that make indigenous dialects beautiful, is lost through the use of a second language—English—that many contestants struggle to speak.

Even more worrying is the fact that there are many expressions in local languages that do not lend themselves easily to English translation. Consequently, the essence of contestants’ messages would often be lost, because they are unable to find the right words. Unfortunately, as Mahadi and Jafari (2012) have argued, “words are the most significant tools of cultural symbols” (p.232) hence the need for the contestants to have used local dialects because “particular languages are associated historically with particular cultures; the languages provide the key to the associated cultures,” (p.234). It is against the seeming need to encourage the teaching of local language that in her answer to a question asked by one of the judges on how Poka, the Upper East representative, in an answer to a question during the 2013 GMB, encouraged parents to teach their children their indigenous language because it preserves Ghanaian culture, depicts where they come from and who they are as specific ethnic groups.

**Conclusion**

Berger (1989) argues that “the mass media are powerful in shaping attitudes, beliefs and cultural behaviour” (pp. 152-153). The production and transmission of GMB are intended to serve not only as a repository of Ghana’s intangible culture, but also as a means of shaping the attitudes of future generations towards their ovarian cultures. In Ghana, in spite of the influences of foreign cultures, traditional forms continue to exert a great deal of influence on people’s sense of identity. However, there is a danger of indigenous cultural extinction if conscious efforts are not made to preserve, appreciate and practice these cultures in the future. Despite the
numerous challenges, GMB is one of the modest moves to offer a platform for the reassessment of Ghana’s heterogeneous mix of cultures, and for their sustainability into the future. In this paper, the author has identified the use of traditional names, clothing, music and dance and language as some of Ghana’s traditional cultural aesthetics in *Ghana’s most beautiful* reality television show. The use of these cultural aesthetics and artefacts has the potential to educate all Ghanaians about their culture and the philosophies embedded in them. While acknowledging that the reality show is didactic, it still represents a capitalistic system of cultural hegemony and consumerism that under the veil of cultural syncretism presents itself as a unique mode of preserving indigenous culture and unification in Ghana.
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Asymmetries in the phonological behaviour of Dagbani place features: Implications for markedness

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Abstract
It has been observed in phonological studies that phonological processes often apply to place features in asymmetrical ways. Certain processes may affect only one of the place features, others may affect all but one place feature. This paper analyses various asymmetrical phonological patterns in Dagbani, a Gur language of Ghana. It shows that while the dorsal place is the target of most processes that lead to the loss of underlying place features, the labial and coronal places are targets of processes that enhance underlying place specifications. Labial-dorsals [kp, gb, ŋm] also surface in patterns of neutralisation with dorsals. Evidence from both diachronic and synchronic sound patterns suggest active sound changes in progress with the labial-dorsals being preferred to plain dorsals. The paper discusses the implication of these findings for the understanding of the theory of markedness and questions the widely held view of segmental complexity as a markedness diagnostic.

Keywords: markedness, complex segments, place features, Dagbani, Gur language

Introduction
This paper studies the nature of place feature specifications in the phonology of Dagbani, a Gur language spoken natively by the Dagomba and Nanumba ethnic groups of Northern Ghana, and the markedness conclusions that can be drawn from various phonological processes that affect these place specifications. Dagbani consonants are categorised under four distinctive major
places of articulation: labial, coronal, dorsal and labial-dorsal. As in every natural language, a full understanding of the nature of these place specifications cannot be attained without examining their behaviour in various morpho-phonological contexts. When phonological processes occur, the place, manner, laryngeal or prosodic features of segments may be targeted. There are three ways in which underlying feature specifications of sounds may behave under phonological processes. First, certain processes serve the purpose of enhancing the presence of these specifications. This may take the form of introducing a place feature that does not exist underlyingly or enhancing the underlying presence of a feature that would otherwise exist in a weak form. Second, the phonological process may eliminate the presence or reduce the strength of an underlying feature specification. Finally, the underlying feature specification may be impervious to the effects of the phonological process. A phonological process applies asymmetrically when it affects certain feature specifications (especially leading to a loss or reduction) and enhances the presence of others or leaves them impervious to its effects.

The focus of this paper is on the effects of phonological processes on the place feature specifications of consonants in Dagbani and what these effects reveal about the relative markedness of these place specifications. The observed patterns show that of the four major place specifications, dorsals are the most often targeted by processes that lead to the loss of distinctive place specifications. In other words, forms with underlying dorsals surface without the dorsal place feature in many contexts. Dorsals are subject to some patterns of neutralisation that other place specifications are not subject to, some of which produce surface labial-dorsals. By contrast, coronals and labials are targets of processes that enhance their presence.

In presenting the various analyses, the paper discusses possible diachronic changes Dagbani may have undergone by comparing surface forms of words in Dagbani to same words in close Gur relatives such as Mampruli and Gurene. Even within native Dagbani vocabulary, certain processes apply optionally and
with clear biases among speakers of different generations, such that younger speakers are more likely to apply the processes than older ones. This suggests a language change still in progress. Some efforts are also made to draw on crosslinguistic observations to put these observations in a typological context.

In this respect, the paper discusses what these observations imply as far as the theory of phonological segmental markedness is concerned. The concept of markedness is based on the observation that there is some disparity in the overall prevalence of various linguistic units or structures due to varying levels of preference languages show for these units and structures. Certain units are preferred, and are, for that matter, common within and across languages. Such units or structures are referred to as unmarked or less marked units. Other units, on the other hand, are dispreferred, resulting in their relative rarity. Such units are marked. Linguists from all sub-fields and theoretical persuasions have used several criteria to determine markedness, including the ease of articulation, the relative ease and order of acquisition by children, their participation in patterns of neutralisation and their relative complexity among others. Of these diagnostics, the notion of complexity as a markedness diagnostic is of special interest to analysis in this paper. This is discussed further below. Of equal importance to the analysis is the issue of place feature markedness, discussed briefly in the next sub-section. This introductory section also presents the segment inventory and the basic word structure of Dagbani.

Most of the primary data used for the analyses are sourced from speakers of the Western/Tomosili and the Eastern/Nayahili dialects, two of the three major dialects of the language, spoken by the Dagomba ethnic group. The third major dialect is Nanuni, spoken by the Nanumba ethnic group. Thus, unless otherwise noted, the data are representative of the Eastern and Western dialects. There are certain processes unique to only one of the three dialects. The data and discussion of such processes are noted as such. As a native speaker, I generated some of the data myself and sought the

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2 See Haspelmath (2006), however, for arguments that the concept of markedness is dispensable.
intuitions of other native speakers regarding them. Tone marking reflects the Eastern Dialect, which I speak natively. All data were collected from or confirmed by native speakers whose ages ranged between 28 and 70 years. A Dagbani dictionary (Naden, 2014) and a Gurene dictionary (Dakubu et. al., 2007) were also consulted for lexical items, dialectal variants of words as well as for English translations of some words.

**Place feature markedness**

The question of which place feature is universally (un) marked is as controversial as that of what the most reliable diagnostic of markedness is. In many studies (e.g. Kean, 1976; Mohanan, 1993; Paradis & Prunet, 1991; Prince & Smolensky, 1993), the coronal is deemed the unmarked place. However, other studies view the dorsal as less marked than other places features (e.g. Williamson, 1977; Harris 1990). Trigo (1988) argues for the dorsal as the unmarked place in codas while Rice (1996) argues that both coronal and dorsal are unmarked places. Lombardi (2001, 2002), on the other hand, views the glottal as the unmarked place with the dorsal more marked than the labial and coronal places. Hume and Tserdanelis (2002) also argue for the labial as the unmarked segment in Sri Lankan Portuguese Creole. Hume and Tserdanelis (2002) and Hume (2003) argue against a single universally unmarked place feature. To them, markedness can only be determined on a language-specific basis.

This paper aims at providing a closer look at the dorsal place relative to the labial, coronal and labial-dorsal places from a markedness perspective and to contribute to the debate on the strength of structural complexity as a universal markedness diagnostic. The notion that complex structures are marked is discussed further below.

**Complexity as a markedness diagnostic**

A complex segment, according to Sagey (1986), has multiple unordered articulations. In this sense, a “labiovelar [kp] will behave phonologically as both a labial and velar with respect to processes both on the left and on the right” (Sagey, 1986, p.
Among the many references to complexity as a markedness diagnostic are Chomsky and Halle (1968), Greenberg (1969), Kaye et. al. (1985), Rice (1992), Dresher & van der Hulst (1993) and Givón (1995). Greenberg argues for complex sounds to be more marked because “the more complex sound involves an additional articulatory feature and, correspondingly, an additional acoustic feature which is not present in the less complex sound. This additional feature is often called a “mark” and hence the more complex, less favored alternative is called marked and the less complex, more favored alternative the unmarked” (Greenberg, 1969, p. 476). Other studies that view markedness along the lines of articulatory effort are Calabrese (1995) and Hamilton (1996). Givón (1995) includes complexity among three broad markedness diagnostics viz. structural complexity, frequency of distribution and cognitive complexity. On structural complexity, Givón argues that “the marked structure tends to be more complex (or larger) than the corresponding unmarked one”. Newmeyer (1992) also attributes relative complexity, including structural and semantic, to marked forms. Rice (1992) also claims that structure is tied to markedness when combined with absence of universally unmarked features at a node, “with more structure indicating a more marked segment and less structure a less marked segment” (Rice, 1992, p. 64). Assuming that neither labial nor dorsal is universally unmarked, a labial-dorsal consonant (e.g. kp, qb, ŋm), must be more marked than a plain labial consonant (p, b, m). Similarly, the labial-dorsal must be more marked than a plain dorsal consonant (k, ɡ, ŋ). Dresher and van der Hulst (1993) also define phonological complexity using branching nodes. A labial-dorsal is more complex, and for that matter more marked, than a plain dorsal or plain labial because it has two nodes: labial and dorsal. In other words, a labial-dorsal, may be the most marked place feature in a language that has it, if complexity is a dominant markedness diagnostic.

The notion that relative markedness implies relative complexity is also central to a number of phonological theories. In Chomsky and Halle (1968), relative markedness among elements
is determined in part using quantity, with complexity of a system being the aggregate of the marked features of its members. The theory of charm and government posits that “the greater the number of elements in a compound segment, the greater its degree of markedness” (Kaye et. al., 1985, p. 313). Within Optimality Theory, the relative markedness of complex segments is generally assumed, as complex segments more often violate markedness constraints than simpler ones. In some studies (e.g. Padgett, 1995), markedness constraints such as *COMPSEG, specifically banning the surfacing of complex segments, have been proposed. As Hume (2011) observes, the understanding that markedness correlates with quantity is at the centre of some theories of underspecification (e.g. Kiparsky, 1982; Archangeli, 1984; Pulleyblank, 1988; Archangeli & Pulleyblank, 1989) and most models of feature geometry (e.g. Clements, 1985; Avery & Rice, 1989; Clements & Hume, 1995). Within these theories of underspecification, the least marked element is understood to have the least amount of theoretical machinery. The equation of markedness with complexity is also central to the theory of charm and government which posits that “the greater the number of elements in a compound segment, the greater its degree of markedness” (Kaye et. al., 1985, p. 313).

Regardless of which of these place features (labial, coronal and dorsal) is assumed to be the most marked, all conceptualisations of the complexity diagnostic would predict that the most marked segment is one with more than one place specification when compared with segments with only one of the place features specified in the complex segments. In languages which have only labial-dorsals as contrastive complex segments, this class of segments is predicted to be more marked than simplex labials and simplex dorsals. Alternatively, under a conception of markedness within which complexity does not play a (major) role, labial-dorsals could potentially be less marked than labials, coronals or dorsals. Under such a conception of markedness, any of the hierarchies in (1)b–e could hold for a language with labial-dorsals, given the hierarchy in (1)a (de Lacy 2002, 2006) for a language without labial-dorsals.
(1) Place markedness hierarchy (‘≺’ means less marked):

a. Coronal ≺ Labial ≺ Dorsal.
b. Coronal ≺ Labial ≺ Dorsal ≺ **Labial-dorsal**
c. Coronal ≺ Labial ≺ **Labial-dorsal** ≺ Dorsal
d. Coronal ≺ **Labial-dorsal** ≺ Labial ≺ Dorsal
e. **Labial-dorsal** ≺ Coronal ≺ Labial ≺ Dorsal

While any of the hierarchies could hold, the hierarchy in (1)c would be the most likely for a language with labial-dorsals if structure is not a major markedness diagnostic. Given that a labial-dorsal has both labial and dorsal features, the labial node of a labial-dorsal would mitigate the markedness of the complex node, rendering the labial-dorsal less marked than the plain dorsal. On the other hand, the dorsal node in the labial-dorsal would aggravate its markedness and render it more marked than the plain labial. The evidence from Dagbani segmental asymmetric patterns and patterns of neutralisation lends more support to the hierarchy **Labial ≺ Labial-dorsal ≺ Dorsal**, than the hierarchy **Labial ≺ Dorsal ≺ Labial-dorsal**, suggesting that the complexity of the labial-dorsal does not affect its relative markedness. Such an enquiry is of interest to the general analysis of the phonology of the dorsal place feature in Dagbani.

**Dagbani sound inventory**

Dagbani has 22 phonemic consonants and 10 vowel phonemes. The language has phonemic vowel length as well as many surface forms of vowels and consonants. These are shown in (2) and (3) along with surface variants, shown in brackets.
Hudu, F. / Asymmetries in the phonological behaviour of Dagbani place features

(2) Consonant inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Labial-Cor.</th>
<th>Coronal</th>
<th>Labial-Dorsal</th>
<th>Dorsal</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>[tp]</td>
<td>[db]</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>[nm]</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>[ŋm]</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>[ʃ]</td>
<td>[ʒ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[ɾ]</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) Vowel inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short vowels</th>
<th>Long vowels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>i:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɨ</td>
<td>u:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>e:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>o:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ε</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʌ]</td>
<td>a:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The velar fricative [x] is unique to a rural subdialect of the Western Dialect. As already noted, only segments under the labial, coronal, labial-dorsal and dorsal place features are distinctive. The labial-coronals [tp, db, nm] are respective variants of the labial-dorsals / kp, ɡb, ŋm/ in the Eastern and Western Dialects, surfacing before front vowels (Ladefoged, 1968; Wilson & Bendor-Samuel, 1969; Hudu et al., 2009). The glottal stop is a variant of /k, ɡ/ after vowels, while [h] is a variant of /s/ between two vowels in the Western Dialect. For typical speakers of the Eastern Dialect, postvocalic /k, ɡ/ and intervocalic /s/ are all realised as a glottal stop. The coronals /s, z/ also surface as [ʃ, ʒ] before front vowels. Similarly, /d/ surfaces as a tap [ɾ] in intervocalic position. Vowel distribution is governed mainly by the rules of various patterns of harmony,
especially [ATR], backness and rounding, as discussed in extensive
detail by previous researchers (Olawsky, 1999; Hudu, 2010, 2013,
2014a, 2014b).

The analysis presented here assumes a theory of features that
sees a uniform application of place features to vowel and consonants
(Clements & Hume, 1995). Thus, in addition to the traditional
vowel features [high], [low] and [ATR] (e.g. Sagey, 1986; Odden,
1991, etc.), some of the vowels are also labial, coronal, dorsal or
labial-dorsal, as consonants are. This is indicated in (4).

(4) Vowel features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>i</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>ε</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>ø</th>
<th>i</th>
<th>o</th>
<th>u</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[high]</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[low]</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ATR]</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[LAB]</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[COR]</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[DOR]</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dagbani word structure

As in other Gur languages, the structure of the Dagbani
word is determined partly by its grammatical class (Olawsky,
The typical simplex noun/adjective consists of a root bound to
a nominal suffix. The suffix encodes number along with other
semantic properties. Verbs, on the other hand, are largely free forms
that may be inflected for aspecual or other markers. Given that the
morphemes in nominal and adjectival forms are mutually bound to
each other, segments in nominal roots often trigger phonological
processes (e.g. assimilation, harmony, lenition) affecting segments
in the suffix, and vice-versa. For this reason, determining the
underlying feature specifications of segments in a nominal root
or affix is often not straightforward. As discussed extensively in
Hudu (2005, 2010, 2014b), a more reliable morphological context
for determining the underlying forms of segments in nominal and adjectival roots is compound forms that consist of two or more nominal roots and one suffix. In such forms, the nominal roots that are non-adjacent to the nominal suffix typically surface in the underlying forms given that assimilatory processes are blocked when the trigger and target belong to different lexical roots. These details are illustrated with data in the sections that follow.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows. The next two sections look at various phonological processes that reveal the differing behaviour of place feature specifications. The first part discusses two phonological processes, lenition and fortition, that relate to the overall strength of segmental stricture but also affect the place specifications of sounds. The next part examines patterns of neutralisation resulting from assimilatory processes and coalescence. In both sections, the implication of these asymmetric observations for the theory of markedness is discussed. The discussion on patterns of neutralisation addresses the question of segmental complexity, demonstrating that in Dagbani, labial-dorsal are favoured in an active sound change that results in the loss of underlying plain dorsal sounds. The final section has the summary and conclusions.

**Segmental strength asymmetries in Dagbani**

Lenition and fortition are two broad categories of phonological processes that relate to the strength of segmental stricture and the place specifications of segments associated with these strictures. These are of relevance to the analyses in this paper because some patterns of lenition and fortition have the potential to trigger the loss of underlying place feature specifications. In this paper, only such patterns of lenition and fortition are discussed. A close study of lenition and fortition in Dagbani shows that while the dorsal place is targeted for loss in patterns of lenition, the labial and coronal places are the targets of enhancement in patterns of fortition. This accords with the widely held position of the dorsal as a more marked place than the labial and the coronal. These are discussed below.
Lenition

Lenition typically carries the notion of some reduction in the degree of constriction of a sound (Bauer 1988; Kirchner 1998 etc.). These include degemination, debuccalisation, spirantisation, flapping and deletion. Of these processes, only deletion, degemination, debuccalisation, and spirantisation result in the loss of underlying place specifications in Dagbani. I present each process and its asymmetrical application to the various place features.

In order to fully appreciate the patterns of alternation discussed here and the conclusions drawn from them, the loss of oral constriction for the dorsals /ɡ, k/ and the coronal /s/ needs further highlighting. In Dagbani phonology, [ʔ, h] are not phonemes. The glottal stop always surfaces as an allophone of /ɡ/ or /k/ in all dialects (and /s/ in the Eastern Dialect); [h] surfaces as a variant of /s/ in the Western Dialect. There are no minimal pairs or cases of contrastive distribution between [ʔ] and a velar stop nor between /s/ and [h] in the language. In the Western Dialect, [ʔ] exists as an optional variant of [k, ɡ] in weak positions (affixes, particles, bound roots) among other environments, as shown later in this paper. In homophonous free-standing lexical forms, the velar stops maintain their dorsal place feature, as shown in (5). This is part of a general pattern of positional asymmetry observed in several phonological processes in Dagbani, as discussed extensively by Hudu (2014b).

(5) Positional effects in optional velar debuccalisation (Western Dialect)

i. focus marker (ka)
   /jà ká ó bé/ [jà ʔó: bé]
   where foc. 3sg.anim. be “Where is s/he?”

ii. verb (ka)
   Àbú ká ó jíná *[Abu ʔá o jíná]
   Abu absent 3sg.poss home “Abu is not at his home”

3 Abbreviations in this paper are: Foc. = focus marker, imperf. = imperfective, N. = noun, Nom. = nominal affix, perf. = perfective marker, pl. = plural, sg. = singular, V. = verb
The same positional effects are observed in the realisation of underlying /s/ as [h] in the Eastern Dialect, notwithstanding the general pattern of intervocalic realisation of /s/ as [h] shown in the next section. This is shown in (6).

(6) Positional effects in /s/ debuccalisation (Western Dialect)
   i. Affix –si (pl. suffix)
      /pí-sí-tá/ [pí-hí-tá]
      ten-pl.-three “thirty”

   ii. Verb: sa (to plant)
      /bɨ̀ sà-já/ *[bɨ̀ hà já]
      3sg. plant-perf. “They planted”

Another synchronic evidence supporting the velar-glottal alternation comes from Dagbani place names which contain the glottal stop. Because there is no letter in the Roman alphabet to faithfully represent the glottal stop, a different consonant is used in the official spelling and pronunciation of names of towns and villages in Dagbon which feature surface glottal stops. In such names, [g] is always used, as shown in (7). Even educated native speakers of Dagbani typically pronounce these names with [g], especially in the course of speaking English.

(7) [g] in place of [ʔ] in official representation of Dagbon place name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official representation</th>
<th>Actual Dagbani pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a &lt;Zabzugu&gt;</td>
<td>[zábzóʔó] “name of a town”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b &lt;Gundogu&gt;</td>
<td>[gɔndóʔó] “name of a village close to Yendi”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c &lt;Gushegu&gt;</td>
<td>[ɡuʃɛʔó] “name of a town”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d &lt;Lamashegu&gt;</td>
<td>[lãmâʃɛʔó] “name of a suburb of Tamale”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e &lt;Bagabaga&gt;</td>
<td>[báʔábáʔá] “name of a suburb of Tamale”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Deletion**

Deletion is not a widespread phonological process in Dagbani. The only consonants discussed in the literature to show systematic deletion in Dagbani are /ɡ/ and /l/. For this reason, these are the only two consonants which can provide insight into the effects of deletion on the overall distribution of segments of different places of articulation. Hudu (2014b) has discussed lateral deletion in Dagbani, noting that it takes place both in suffix onset and root coda positions as a means of blocking the realisation of two adjacent coronals of different manner of articulation [l, j]. What is of interest to the discussion in this paper is the mere observation that the lateral, a coronal consonant does get deleted. In (8), the deletion of [l] in a nominal root is illustrated. Unlike the singular and compound forms of the words, the plural forms lack the coronal [l] ostensibly due to the presence of [j] as suffix onset.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UR</th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
<th>compound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a jíl-</td>
<td>jíl-ɨ</td>
<td>jí-jâ</td>
<td>jíl pɛl-î</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b gá-</td>
<td>gá-ɨ</td>
<td>gá-jâ</td>
<td>gá pɛl-î</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c ɡl-</td>
<td>ɡl-ɨ</td>
<td>ɡl-jâ</td>
<td>ɡl pɛl-î</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d gbál-</td>
<td>gbál-ɨ</td>
<td>gbá-jâ</td>
<td>gbál bil-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e nɛvîl-</td>
<td>nɛvîl-ɨ</td>
<td>nɛvîl-î</td>
<td>nɛvîl láná</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“white house”
“white thread”
“new moon (month)”
“small leg”
“owner of a soul”

However, the lateral and other coronals get preserved in other hetero-morphemic contexts, including sequences of coronals and non-coronals and geminate laterals, as shown in (9).

(9) Preservation of nominal coronals in other contexts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sg. form</th>
<th>pl. form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. kɔl-gó</td>
<td>kɔl-tí / kɔl-sí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. tɔl-gà</td>
<td>tɔl-sì</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. kɔl-gà</td>
<td>kɔl-sí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. kpɔl-gó</td>
<td>kpɔl-tí</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. kpɔɾ-gó</td>
<td>kpɔɾ-tí</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“a leather bag”
“pestle”
“river/dam”
“dawadawa spice”
“gawn”
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f. gbál-ɪ  gbál-á  “grave”
g. pál-ɪ  pál-á  “road”
h. kpàr-ɪ  kpàr-á  “baboon”
i. kpàr-á  kpàr-bá  “farmer”

The deletion of the plain dorsal is illustrated in (10) and (11). In (10), a [ɡ] in an underlying CVːɡi verb is deleted optionally in citation form and obligatorily in suffixed forms. It also deletes when followed by a CV clitic. In other words, in the citation form of these words, both the CVːɡi and CVːi forms are used.

(10) Plain dorsal deletion

a. /dáːɡi/ [dáːɡi /dáːi] “push” dáːɡ á “push you”, dáː li “push it”
b. /jòːɡi/ [jòːɡi / jòːi] “open” jòːɡ ó “open for him” jòː tí “open for us”
c. /tùːɡi/ [tùːɡi /tùːi] “stumble” tùː-ɾá “stumbling” tùːbû “the act of …”
d. /lóːɡi/ [lóːɡi /lóːi] “infect” lòː-ɾá “infecting” lóːbû “the process of infecting”
e. /mòːɡi/ [mòːɡi /mòːi] “ripen” mòː-ɾá “getting ripe” mòːsîm “state of being ripe”

In (11), underlying /ɡ/, which generally surfaces as a glottal stop, as discussed further below, gets deleted entirely, especially in the Eastern Dialect. The forms with surface glottal stop and those with deleted dorsals are considered variants of the same words in all dialects.
(11) Dorsal deletion (especially in the Eastern Dialect)

UR /g/ | Surface [ʔ] | UR /g/ deleted.

a. /zʊ́ɡ kóʔ-lí/ [zʊʔ kóʔ-lí] [zʊ kóʔ-lí] “a knock on the head with the knuckles”
b. /zʊ́ɡ pɪ̞l-gʊ́/ [zʊʔ pɪ̞l-gʊ́] [zɪ̞ pɪ̞l-gʊ́] “head cover (hat)”
c. /náɡ ŋɪ̞m-bá/ [náʔ ŋɪ̞m-bá] [ná ŋɪ̞m-bá] “young men”
d. /jíʔsɪ̞/ [jíʔsɪ̞] [jísɪ̞] “stand up”

The difference between lateral deletion and dorsal deletion is that, the former does not define the overall distributional pattern of the lateral or coronals in general. The lateral and other coronals surface in root-final and suffix-initial positions when the trigger of lateral deletion is lacking, as already illustrated in (9). The plain dorsal, on the other hand, is lost in intervocalic position (albeit optionally, when the first V is long) through various processes, one of which is deletion.

Degemination

Degemination, a process by which a geminate is reduced to a singleton, is illustrated in (12). Dorsal geminates are reduced to singletons, which further debuccalise and surface as glottal stops.

(12) Degemination (along with debuccalisation)\(^4\):


---

\(^4\) While there is no doubt that the underlying forms of surface [ʔ] has a dorsal place of articulation, determining whether it is /k/ or /g/ is not always easy. The most reliable source of evidence is sister Gur languages, especially Mampruli. The level of intelligibility of each language to speakers of the other is very high as they have 98% lexical similarity. Mampruli is considered by some Dagbani speakers a dialect, not a separate language. For instance, the underlying forms in (12) a-b are the surface forms of the same words in Mampruli. The use of Mampruli forms to determine the voicing of the underlying velar plosives is based on the assumption that some of these changes are diachronic in nature. Thus, it is very likely that the Mampruli forms were present in a common ancestor language.
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Each noun in (12)a-c contains an underlying ambi-morphemic geminate /ɡ/. The root has a dorsal as coda; the suffix also has a dorsal as onset. Evidence for this comes from the nouns in (12) d and (13) below, which lack these geminates. The nouns in (12) a-b belong to the same nominal class as those in (12)d and (13). This sameness of nominal classification is determined using the sameness of singular and plural suffixes /-ɡʊ/ and [-ɾɨ] respectively (see Olawsky, 1999; Miehe, 2012; Hudu, 2005, 2014b). The only reason for deletion taking place in (12)a-b but not in (12)d or (13) is that, in the latter, there are no geminates in the underlying forms.

(13) Debuccalisation only: (/ɡ/ → [ʔ]/ V__, /k/ → [ʔ]/ V__ )

On the one hand, while the lexical roots in (12) have CVC structure, those in (13) have a CV structure. In the two datasets being compared, the compound forms provide evidence that the nouns in (12) have an underlying /CVɡ-ɡV/ structure, and that the surface [CVʔV] forms are due to a deletion of either the root coda or the suffix onset. On the other hand, having established sameness of the nominal classification between the two datasets, the singular and plural forms in (13) provide evidence that it is the root-final stop, not the suffix onset one, that is deleted. The forms in (13),
which also have surface [CVʔV] structure in singular forms have CV roots. The compounds provide the evidence.

Degemination in Dagbani applies asymmetrically because non-dorsal geminates in similar environments are not affected. Geminate coronals and labials are illustrated in (14) below.

(14) No degemination for coronal and labial geminates


b. wól-ˈli “branch” wól-ˈ “branch-pl.” wól ɖ Watching “short branch-pl.”


d. kpil-ˈli “(fruit) seed-sg.” kpil-ˈ “seed-pl.” kpil-sábɨn-ˈli “black seed-sg.”


f. kòb-bu “infect-nom.” kòb[i] “be infected” kòb ˈli “get infected with”


**Debuccalisation**

Debuccalisation is a term used to describe any phonological process that results in the loss of underlying oral constriction of a segment. In Dagbani and many languages, it targets coronals and dorsals, making them glottals. What makes the change a case of lenition is that, in the production of a glottal stop, the vocal cords are not able to assume a stricture that can produce fortis sounds. In addition to degemination, the data in (12) illustrate debuccalisation of dorsals, as do the data in (11), (13) and (15)a-b below. The debuccalisation of /s/ is also illustrated in (15), where it becomes [h] in underlying CV:sV words.
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(15) Debuccalisation (/g, k/ → [ʔ] /V__, /s/ → [h]/ V__V (light syllable)).

a /lóɡ-ɾí/ [lóʔ-łí] “side-sg.”
b /sàkị/ [sàʔị] “be sufficient”
c /máːsíli/ [máhĭlĭ] “cool weather after rain” (c.f. màːsím “the state of being cool”)
d /nèː-sí/ [nɛʔ-hí] “awaken-pl.” (c.f. nèː-sím “the state of being awake/clear”)
e /móːsɨ̂/ [mɔhɨ̂] “become reddish” (c.f. mòː-sím “reddishness”)
f /ánáːsɨ̂/ [ánáhɨ̂] “four”
g /bìsím/ [bìhím] “milk”
h /bíː-sí/ [bí-hí] “children”
i /boːsɨ/ [bɔh[i]] “ask”

In (15), coronal debuccalisation takes place along with the shortening of the preceding vowel. The related words in (15) c-e provide synchronic alternations that support the presence of underlying long vowels. Further evidence also comes from Mampruli, in which all the underlying forms in (15) surface. This loss in oral constriction is blocked when /s/ is an onset of a heavy syllable, in words with CVːsɨ̂m structure. Given that neither vowel shortening nor /s/ debuccalisation takes place without the other, in forms with the nominalising suffix -sɨ̂m, vowel shortening is also blocked. This is further illustrated in (16) d–e. This is not the case for dorsals, as they debuccalise in onset positions of CVC syllables as well, (16)a–c. Labials, on the other hand, maintain their stricture in intervocalic position, as already shown for geminate labials in (14). Further examples are shown in (16)f-j.

5 Analysis of why both /s/ debuccalisation and vowel shortening take place or fail to take place is beyond the scope of this paper. Given that the dorsals and labials do not follow a long vowel, this specific case does not present a perfect asymmetry between dorsals and the other place specifications. Unlike the coronal, there are no CVːbVC nor CVːgVC that would make it possible to explore a perfect asymmetry. When the dorsal occurs in a CVːgV, it deletes optionally, as already illustrated in (10).
(16) Asymmetric application of debuccalisation to dorsals, coronals and labials.

Underlying dorsals: debuccalisation applies.

a  dɔ́.ʔɨ́m  “relative”,
b  sà.ʔɨ́m  “spoil”,
c  là.ʔɨ́m  “gather”

Underlying coronal: debuccalisation fails.

d  biː-ːsɨ́m  “hot-nom. (heat)”
e  tòː-ːsɨ́m  “able-nom. (wherewithal)”

Underlying labial: debuccalisation fails.

f  dàbɛ́m  “fear”
g  taːbó  “timber”
h  nápɔ́n-á  “foot-pl.”
i  dàpál-bá  “offspring-pl.”
j  tàpáʔ-á  “cheek-sg.”

From a phonological perspective, the debuccalisation of /s/ → [h] may not be assumed to constitute lenition, both sounds being fricatives. From an articulatory perspective it does constitute lenition, given that [s] has a stronger stricture than [h]. Moreover, this change is of relevance to the discussion here because of the change in place specification that results from it. At the same time, the fact that /s/ and other coronals are preserved as coronals in some intervocalic positions means that the application of debuccalisation is asymmetrical. It always targets dorsals, it does not always target coronals and it never targets labials. What is more, unlike plain dorsals, debuccalisation does not define the overall distribution of coronals, as [s] and other coronals surface in intervocalic positions.
Spirantisation

Spirantisation also targets /k, ɡ/, and no other consonants, reducing them to affricates. This is more prevalent in loan words with the dorsal as an underlying final segment. The underlying forms of the Hausa words shown in (17) below are based on the dialect of Hausa spoken in Ghana, which is the source of the loans.

(17) Spirantisation (/ɡ, k/ → [ʤ, ʧ]/__front vowels).
   a. báːʤî “a bag for clothing” (< English)
   b. ɡándʒî “a gang” (< English)
   c. màlîʧî “A personal name” < [malik] “king” (Arabic)
   d. mólʧî “subjects” < [mulk] “Authority/sovereignty” (Arabic)
   e. ʔàlàhɨ̀ʧí “sin” < alhaki (Hausa) < ʔal haq “the right” (Arabic)
   f. ʤílɨ́má “respect” < [ɡirima] “respect” (Hausa)
   g. ʧíɾíʧî “valuable” < [kiriki] “worth” (Hausa)
   h. màʧélé “bicycle” < [makeri] “blacksmith” (Hausa)

It is important to note that the palatal articulation manifested in spirantisation shown here affects many consonants in Dagbani. It is not only triggered by a word-final epenthetic [i] in loans but front vowels in any context, as discussed in Hudu (2010, 2016). Other consonants affected include /ŋ, s, z/, which surface before front vowels respectively as [ɲ, ʃ, ʒ]. However, of the five consonants affected, the only consonants whose surface realisations constitute lenition are /ɡ, k/. The dorsals are also the only consonants which lose their place specification when palatalised. Indeed, the fact that front vowels are the triggers means that the surface form of any palatalised consonants is coronal, regardless of its underlying place specification.

Fortition

In stricture terms, fortition produces a result directly opposite that of lenition as far as the surface distribution of place features is concerned. While lenition may lead to the loss of place
features, fortition in Dagbani does not lead to the emergence of place features in contexts where they are absent underlyingly. However, the enhancement that is given to affected segments guarantees the presence of place features associated with these segments.

There are two observed patterns of fortition in Dagbani. In one process, we get an affricate from a fricative before back vowels in the Nanuni Dialect (/z/ → [ʤ]). For some speakers of Nanuni, [ʤ] surfaces in all contexts, ruling [z] out of the dialect entirely.

(18) Stopping in the Nanuni Dialect (/z/ → [ʤ] / ___[back vowels])

a. /zʊ-ɡ-/ [ʤʊʔ-ʊ] “head-sg.”
b. /zɔn-a/ [ʤɔn-a] “bat-pl.”
c. /zɔm/ [ʤɔm] “blind.sg”
d. /zo/ [ʤo] “move away”
e. /zɔ-ja/ [ʤɔ-ja] “mountain-pl.”

The other process of gemination targets labials. Gemination of [m] happens optionally in word-final positions and before the second or third person clitics /a, o/. When the nasal geminates, it becomes tone-bearing and syllabic, producing three syllables. When it does not geminate, it is realised as an onset to the following vowel, producing only two syllables. In (19), syllable boundaries are marked.

(19) Labial gemination

a. /làʔm/ [làʔ.m ː. ó] / [làʔ.m ó] “meet her (a euphemism for sexual intercourse)”
b. /sàʔm/ [sàʔ.m ː. á] / [sàʔ.m á] “spoil you”
c. /jóhm/ [jóhm. ː. á] / [jóhm. á] “deceive you”
d. /bɛhм/ [bɛhм. ː. ó] / [bɛhм. ó] “doubt him/her”
e. /ʧɪlm/ [ʧɪlm. ː. ó] / [ʧɪl.m ó] “delay him/her”

Gemination is also observed in other contexts. For instance,
/b/ becomes a geminate in the plural suffix “-ba” when the suffix attaches to the root for man (/dó-ó/ [dó-ó] “man-sg.” [dó-báb] “man-pl.” [dò ʧóʔíŋ-gó] “weak man-sg.” (Eastern Dialect)). There are also ambisyllabic coronal and labial geminates resulting from morphological concatenations, as already demonstrated in (14) and repeated in (20).

(20) Coronal and labial geminates

Coronal


c. jél-lí “issue-sg.” jél-á “issue-pl.” jél-bí-hí “small (minor) issue-pl

d. kpíl-lí “(fruit) seed-sg.” kpíl-á “seed-pl.” kpíl-sábín-lí “black seed-sg.”

Labial


f. kòb-bó “infect-nom.” kòb[ɨ] “be infected” kòb-lí “get infected with it”


In both patterns of fortition, the place specification of the underlying forms, coronal (18); (20)a-d or labial, (19); (20)e-g is maintained. The asymmetry observe is this: whereas phonological processes are triggered to block germinate dorsals in contexts where they would otherwise have occurred underlyingly, coronal and labial germinates are permitted to surface either as a product of the phonology proper or due to a morphological concatenation.
Summary on segmental strength phenomena and markedness generalisations

The observed patterns of fortition and lenition affect three of the distinctive place features: labials, coronals and dorsals. Every process of lenition that affects the place specification of consonants targets dorsals. It either replaces it with another place feature (as in debuccalisation and spirantisation) or eliminates it from surface form (as in deletion). The consequence is that the dorsal has a lesser number of contexts where it can surface. It is lost in intervocalic positions (e.g. /páká/ [páʔ-á] “woman-sg.”) and post-vocalic positions (e.g. /jáɡ-ľɨ/ [jáʔ-ľɨ] “side-sg.”). Its distribution is limited to initial position of lexical words, after consonants (e.g. dâmɡɨ “squat”, tábɡɨ “kick”) and non-lexical units that are preceded by consonants (e.g. tōl-ɡâ “pestle”). By contrast, not only do coronals and labials surface in the very contexts where dorsals are lost, their presence in those contexts is also enhanced through gemination.

The asymmetry provides a window for deriving a markedness conclusion given the observation that unmarked segments tend to occur in more positions than marked segments (Battistella, 1990; Waugh & Lafford, 1994; Trubetzkoy, 1939/1969; Hockett, 1955; Greenberg, 1966; Stemberger, 1992). If the goal of place-changing lenition processes is to regulate the overall distribution of sounds, a more marked place is likelier to be lost in many positions through lenition while a less marked place feature will only likely get lost through lenition in fewer positions. It is important to note that the loss of the place feature through lenition by itself does not produce evidence for a markedness distinction. The important markedness distinction is the result of that loss on the overall distribution of sounds with various place specifications.

When this distributional diagnostic of markedness is applied, we end up with the dorsal as the most marked place. Unlike plain dorsals, labial-dorsals do surface in intervocalic positions of simplex nouns.
(21) Labial-dorsals in intervocalic positions

a. dàgbán-â “A Dagomba person-sg”  dàgbán-lî “The Dagbani language”

b. àkpàʔlà “fever accompanied by rigor” (Western Dialect)

c. nàkpà-á “portion of farmland-sg.”

d. kpàkpî-jâ “tortoise-pl.”

e. sàgbò-ó “small calabash bottle-sg.” (Naden, 2014)

f. bʊ̀kpàhá “wizard”

**Contrast neutralisation and other phonological processes**

In addition to their asymmetrical behaviour with regard to the effects of stricture-changing phonological processes, place features are also at the heart of phonological neutralisation phenomena, harmony, assimilation and coalescence. In this section, these processes and their markedness implications are discussed.

When neutralisation is a product of phonological processes, it provides a markedness diagnostic, as noted by Trubetzkoy (1939/1969) and featured in many subsequent studies (e.g. Jakobson, 1941; Greenberg, 1966; Cairns, 1969; Paradis & Prunet, 1991; de Lacy, 2006). These studies present two views on the markedness conclusions that can be drawn using the output of neutralisation. On the one hand, in many patterns of neutralisation, the goal is to suppress the marked and allow only the unmarked to surface. On the other hand, due to the need to maintain contrast in language, surface forms of some patterns of neutralisation may be more marked than the forms that fail to surface. De Lacy’s formulation of the former observation is shown in (22).

(22) Neutralisation output as a markedness diagnostic

(de Lacy, 2006, p. 28)

If /α/ and /β/ undergo structurally conditioned neutralisation to output [α], then there is some markedness hierarchy in which [β] is more marked than [α].
The latter observation is known as the principle of markedness preservation or the submergence of the unmarked, (de Lacy, 2006; Rice, 2007), stated in (23).

(23) Preservation of the marked (de Lacy, 2006, p. 1)

There is a grammatical pressure to preserve marked elements. If x is more marked than y, x can be unaffected by a process while y is forced to undergo it.

The main observation behind the principle of “preservation of the marked” is that, marked units need to be preserved in some contexts to ensure contrast. If languages were to permit only unmarked segments in surface forms, there would be very few words in languages, which would make it difficult to realise differences between languages. Even within one language, there would be insufficient sub-lexical units to form words enough to express the wide variety of concepts that speakers need to express. Below, nasal place assimilation and its markedness implications are discussed.

**Nasal place assimilation**

Previous studies (Olawsky, 1999; Hudu, 2014b etc.) show that nasal place assimilation (NPA) is widespread in Dagbani and results in the neutralisation of the underlying contrast between the five phonemic nasals in the language /m, n, ŋm, ŋ, ñ/. Distributionally, /ŋ, ŋm/ are only contrastive in word-initial positions. There are no words with underlying palatal or labial-dorsal nasals in non-initial position. An important generalisation on NPA in Dagbani that is of interest to the discussion in this paper is that, NPA targets bound morphological units, including nominal roots, clitics and affixes. When a nasal surfaces in a final position of any of these units, it becomes a target of NPA, taking on the place specification of the trigger. This contrasts with free morphological units such as inflected nouns and verb roots. In (24)a, NPA is shown affecting a nasal cardinal prefix. In (24)b, it affects a reduplicant and pseudo-reduplicant prefix. In (24)c, it affects the possessive and infinitive nasal proclitics.
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(24) NPA in bound morphological categories: Affixes and clitics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular forms</th>
<th>Plural forms</th>
<th>Compound forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in (25) show the effects of NPA on final nasals of bound nominal and adjectival roots. In all these words, the underlying place specification of the nasal is determined when the root takes a vowel suffix, as shown in all the plural forms in (25) a-c and both singular and plural forms in (25)d-e. Where the nasal is followed by a CV suffix or another lexical root in a compound word, the nasal assumes the place of the following consonant.

(25) NPA in bound morphological categories: Bound nominal/ adjectival roots.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Compound forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
<td>ṣò-ì “two”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two aspects of NPA in Dagbani that have not been noted in previous studies. First, while an underlying coronal is always a target, an underlying dorsal place is never a target of NPA in Dagbani. The data in (26) illustrate the asymmetric behaviour of dorsals.
(26) No NPA with underlying dorsal nasals.\(^6\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sàŋ-lì</td>
<td>sàŋ-á</td>
<td>“span”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sàŋkan-lì</td>
<td>sàŋkan-á</td>
<td>“name of a plant-sg.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p ôn-lì</td>
<td>p ôn-á</td>
<td>“British Pound-sg”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>màŋ-lì</td>
<td>màŋ-á</td>
<td>“genuine-sg.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tîn-lì</td>
<td></td>
<td>“lower end”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second observation is that, unlike the coronal place, the labial place is not always a target. In contrast to the data in (25)a–b, those in (27) show that /m/ resists NPA. The lack of any obvious differences between (25)a-b and the data in (27) is at the heart of the analysis here. In other words, /m/ is not a systematic target of NPA. Sometimes it is targeted, sometimes it is not. There is no way to determine when it gets targeted and when it does not.

(27) No NPA with underlying labial nasals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sâm-lì</td>
<td>sâm-â</td>
<td>“debt”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sîm- lî</td>
<td>sîm-á</td>
<td>“groundnut”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kàm-lî</td>
<td>kàm-á</td>
<td>“garden egg”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɡàm-lî</td>
<td>ɡàm-á</td>
<td>“door”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nîm-dî</td>
<td>nîm-â</td>
<td>“meat”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nâm.dî-lî</td>
<td>nâm.d-a</td>
<td>“footwear”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ɡʊ̀m-dî</td>
<td></td>
<td>“cotton”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The failure of NPA in (26) presents a pattern that is the exact opposite of what has been noticed so far. Dorsals are preserved in a context where labials and coronals are lost to neutralisation. What

---

\(^6\) I do not have data with suffix-initial [t] or [d] to include in (26) and (27). I do have such examples in verb morphology, (e.g. mɔn-dì “deny-ing”). However, in verbs, all root-final nasals maintain their underlying place specification because, unlike nouns, the verb roots are free forms. Thus, verbs are not the right examples for the analysis. Nominal suffixes with initial [d] seem relatively rare in Dagbani.
is more, it suggests a gradient asymmetric pattern: with dorsal never targeted, labials sometimes targeted, and coronals always targeted. The implication of this for markedness is discussed shortly. The next section looks at coalescence.

**Coalescence**

In a subdialect of the Western Dialect, spoken mainly in a village called Tolon, /ɡ/ coalesces with a /s/ to produce [x]. The dorsal loses its stricture but maintains its place specification. The coronal maintains its stricture but loses its place specification.

(28) Dorsal-coronal coalescence in Tolon subdialect. (/ɡ + s/ → [x]).

- a. /tɔ̀ɡsɨ/ [tɔ̀xɨ]  “speak”
- b. /ɲàɡsɨm/ [ɲàxìm]  “delight/sweetness”
- c. /zàɡsɨ/ [zàxɨ]  “refuse”

A sequence of a [b] and /s/ does not coalesce into one segment, (29). Thus, no place specification triggers a change in the place of a contiguous segment in a non-assimilatory way except the dorsal.

(29) No labial-coronal coalescence.

- a. sàbsɨʔʊ́ “wall gecko-sg.”
- b. ɡàbsɨ “stain”
- c. tɨb-sîm “heavy-Nom. (weight)”
- d. pɔbsɨ “blow air with the mouth”

**Implications for markedness**

From a markedness perspective, the asymmetry in the application of NPA to place features is interesting, considering previous observations on preservation of the marked which applies mainly in patterns of assimilation that result in contrast neutralisation. For instance, studies on Korean (Iverson & Kim, 1987; Cho, 1988; Avery & Rice, 1989; Rice, 1994) show that Korean coronals are targets of regressive place assimilation and labials assimilate to velars, but labials and dorsals do not assimilate
to coronals. Thus, while coronals are always targets when any other place feature is the trigger, dorsals are never targets of assimilation. Labials lie between these two poles, as they are only targets when the trigger is a dorsal. While every place node can trigger NPA in Dagbani, the asymmetry bears some resemblance with the Korean pattern with respect to which place feature can be a target. In both languages, dorsals are never targets, coronals are always targets, labials are only targeted sometimes, not always.

The (/ɡ + s/ → [x] coalescence is a case of preservation of the marked, similar to the resistance of the dorsal to NPA. It points solely to the dorsal as more marked than the coronal. An alternative surface form such as [d] is not realised. The emergence of [d] would be predicted given that such an outcome would have resulted in maintaining the existing sounds in Dagbani phonology. Unlike /d/, [x] only surfaces in this subdialect and only as a product of coalescence between /ɡ/ and /s/.

**Backness harmony and the emergence of labial-dorsals**

There are two patterns of backness harmony triggered by the high central vowel /ɨ/ and targeting only back vowels. In the first pattern, back vowels lose their backness in harmony with a derivational suffix /ɨ/. This is shown in (30), where the surface forms of the singular nouns on the left column result from nasal place assimilation and deletion of the final vowels.

\[(30)\] Back vowels harmonise with suffix /ɨ/.

b. /dɔm-gâ/ [dɔmˈɔŋ] “enmity-N” dîm-dî “mutual enmity”
c. /fɔn-gâ/ [fɔnˈɔŋ] “neighbourhood-sg.” fîn-dî “go in different directions”

In the second pattern, back vowels surface as [i] in grammaticalised forms such as those in (31). In such words, which are unique to the Eastern Dialect, lexical roots are reduced to prefixes. In addition to the loss of backness, onset dorsals also
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become labial-dorsals through labial insertion or spreading from the vowel.

(31) /u, ʊ/ reduction in grammaticalised forms (Eastern Dialect)

   (A village name)

b. kól-gá “river-sg.” /kʷöl-kpínî/ [kpil-kpínî] River Dakar (a river in Yendi)

c. kól-gá “river-sg.” /kʷöl-dźînî/ [kpil-dźînî] (Name of a village)

d. gòn-gá “kapok tree-sg.” /gʷòn-tîŋlî/ [gbîn-tîŋlî] “down a kapok tree” (A suburb of Yendi)

e. dù-ú “room-sg.” /dʷû-kpîn-i/ [dî-kpîn-i] “wall of a room”


In similar compound forms that are neither grammaticalised nor lack the central vowel in the second syllable, the back vowel in the first syllable does not lose its backness.

(32) No /u, ʊ/ reduction in grammaticalised forms

a. kól-gá /kʷól-nó-ô/ *-[kpîl- nó-ô] “river chicken” (black cuckoo)

b. kól-gá /kʷól-nó-lî/ *-[kpîl- nó-lî] “river mouth” (river bank)

c. zóg-gó /zʷû kóʔ-lî/ *-[zî-kóʔ-lî] “a knock on the head with the knuckle”

d. zóg-gó /zʷûʔ bêʔ-û/ *-[zîʔ- bêʔ-û] “a bad head” (bad lack)

e. gòn-gá /gʷòn-dôʔ-û/ *-[gbîn-dôʔ-û] “Name of a village”

f. gòn-gá /gʷôn-káʔ-á/ *-[gbîn-káʔ-á] “kapok-leaf soup”

The processes in (31) relate to the reference in previous discussion relating to positional effects in phonological patterns and illustrated in (5) and (6). Having been reduced to prefixes, the roots in the words on the left column in (31) become weak positions, making
them a domain for possible neutralisation of underlying segmental contrast. Under the feature theory assumed here, any [+back] → [-back] change constitutes a loss in dorsal place given that back vowels are [+dorsal], as back vowels are featurally complex labial-dorsals (Ohala & Lorentz, 1977). Of the two contrastive place features, [dorsal] and [labial-dorsal], that are potential targets of neutralisation in the two datasets, only underlying labial-dorsals /ɔ, ʊ/ are simplified into placeless central vowel /ɨ/ in both (30) and (31). This may serve as the basis to tentatively conclude that the harmony is a case of structure simplification where [ʊ, ɔ] become simple with the loss of both dorsal and labial features. It is also a case of the emergence of the unmarked (McCarthy & Prince, 1994), as previous researchers (e.g. Hudu (2010) show the vowel [ɨ] to be the default, unmarked vowel in Dagbani).

Of overriding interest to the discussion in this paper is the fact that the data in (30) and those in (31) present two patterns of neutralisation: one between two contrastive vowels (/ʊ/ and /ɨ/) and another between two pairs of contrastive consonants (/k/, /kp/) and (/ɡ/, /ɡb/). In both (30) and (31), a structurally complex back vowel is simplified as /ɨ/. In (31), there is an apparent pattern that is the exact opposite of what may be taking place in (30): simplex plain dorsals (/k/, /ɡ/), surface as complex labial-dorsals (/kp, /ɡb/). This raises a question about analysing the harmony as a case of simplification of a complex segment. If the /ʊ/ → [ɨ] change is merely a case of complex structure simplification, why should the same change in (31) be accompanied by the surfacing of a complex labial-dorsal consonant?

What is consistent in both (30) and (31) is an apparent avoidance of a dorsal feature, not the labial or labial-dorsal. In (30), the labial feature is only an accidental target along with the targeted [+back/dorsal] feature. This is because the loss of backness/dorsality alone in the back vowels would have resulted in the surfacing of the front rounded vowel [y], which is not part of Dagbani sounds. Thus, to preserve the structure of Dagbani sounds, the deletion of the [+back] also results in that of the [+labial] feature. The vowel
that is left behind is neither back nor front. It is a central vowel.

The change from /ʊ/ → [ɨ] in (31) is also dictated by the need to preserve the underlying inventory of Dagbani sounds. Thus, [y] is blocked from surfacing. However, there is also the emergence of a labial in the onset to the vowel, producing a complex labial-dorsal. This is the most crucial part of the data, as it shows a clear disparity between what is seen in (30) and what takes place in (31). While the [Labial] is lost in both datasets, it is only in (31) that the loss of the labial feature also results in a concomitant gain in a labial feature in the onset. Such a compensatory gain in (30) would have produced labial coronals [db] and [sp]. Of these, only [db] is attested in Dagbani, and that too only as a variant of /ɡb/ before front vowels. Thus, the failure of [db] and [sp] to surface in (30) is dictated by the same consideration blocking the surfacing of [y] in both (30) and (31): structure preservation.

The two processes observed here, viz the surfacing of a labial feature in the onset and the loss of same in the back vowels in (31) are not expected to take place under an analysis that the simplex labial or complex labial-dorsal is the target of the neutralisation. If it were the case that the language treats [ʊ] as a marked sound due to its complexity as a labial-dorsal, and for that reason forces it to neutralise with [ɨ], the /ʊ/ → [ɨ] change would not have taken place at the same time as another change resulting in the surfacing of a labial-dorsal. The only alternative viable explanation is that, it is only the dorsal feature that is the target for loss in the /ʊ/ → [ɨ] change and this happens because the dorsal is more marked. In the same way, the underlying plain dorsals surface as labial-dorsals because the dorsal feature is relatively more marked than the surface labial-dorsal.

It is also important to note that the surfacing of [kp] and [ɡb] in (31) is unlike the failed emergence of [y], which is dictated by structure preservation. The loss of a labial feature in the back vowels with no surface labial-dorsal would produce licit [ɡɨ] and [kɨ] sequences. Just as the underlying coronals in (30) remain coronal when the /ʊ, ɔ/ become [ɨ], the dorsals in (31) could also remain...
plain dorsals as onsets of [i] in the surface forms. The surface forms would resemble existing words such as gîlî “go around”, and kîmsî “tighten”. These two words have minimal pairs goîlî “wait” and kîmsî “cause someone to cry”. This means that there is nothing in the phonology of Dagbani compelling the change from plain dorsal to labial-dorsal.

It is worth noting that two processes in (31) resulting in the surfacing of [kp, ɡb] are also confirmed in Dagbani loanwords, some of which are noted below.

(33) /k, ɡ/ → [kp, ɡb] in loans

a. kpîŋmkpá:mbá  < Konkomba  “people of Konkomba ethnicity”
b. kpà:kpíló  < ka:kulo  “fried mashed plantain” (Ga)
c. àtàkpá:má  < Ata Kwame  “mud house” (Akan)
d. kpákpâ  < kʷakʷa  “coconut/palm nut” (Hausa)
e. gbí dʒɔ́:  < gʊd dʒɔ́b  “good job” (English)

The phrase in (33)c contains the names Atta and Kwame, which are regular personal names in Akan. The Akans reportedly nicknamed mud houses after an Ivorian called Atta Kwame, reputed to have invented or popularised that style of building in Ghana. Borrowed into Dagbani, the [kʷ] in Kwame has changed into a labial-dorsal, in spite of the fact that labialised [k] preceding round vowels is the norm in Dagbani (e.g. kʷɔ́-ʊ́ “antelope-sg.”). In fact, the name Kwame itself is pronounced in Dagbani (as a loan from Akan) without a surface [kp]. The /kʷ/ → [kp] change is also observed in (33)d. The phrase in (33)e is the only one that is not part of the regular lexicon of Dagbani. It is a funny repetition of the English phrase “good job” made by a girl under two years (with virtually no exposure to English) who was being praised for following instructions well. It may not be an indication that the child could not articulate the dorsal. It is a confirmation of the observation made about adult phonology to the effect that a CV sequence in which both consonant and vowel are dorsal is very marked and becomes a target of asymmetrical neutralisation. In this girl’s phonology, the
[kpi/gbi] sequence was definitely acquired before a dorsal [ko/go] sequence.

It is also worth noting that [ko/go] and [kpi/gbi] are contrastive sequences in the Western Dialect, but not always so in the Eastern and Nanuni dialects. Thus, many words with underlying [ko/go] sequences are pronounced as [kpi/gbi], especially in the Eastern and Nanuni dialects. This is yet another indication of the marked position of the dorsal place feature. The words in (34)b-f are sourced from Naden (2014).

(34) Dialectal differences in (labial)-dorsal onsets with back vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Dialect</th>
<th>Eastern Dialect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. kʷóɭw'oŋkʷóʔó</td>
<td>kpílŋkőpíʔó “hiccups”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. kʷólkpár-gá</td>
<td>kpílkpá r-gá “fairy, bush sprite”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. kʷókpál-gá</td>
<td>kpíkpál-gá “the fan palm”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. kʷólɪŋbʷóɭw'ónŋ</td>
<td>kpílɪŋbínlŋ “dried ground leaves put on sore for healing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. kpʷóŋkàná</td>
<td>kpíŋkpäná “forearm.sg.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. tikʷóblá:kʷóm</td>
<td>tikpiblá:kpím “Cassia occidentalis.sg.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, this does not mean that the [ko] and [go] sequences are illicit syllables in any dialect. In all dialects, there are words with [ko] and [go] sequences where the dorsals remain plain dorsals. Examples are shown in (35).

(35) Underlying [ko] and [go] sequences surfacing as such in all dialects

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. kólóŋkó-ā</td>
<td>“name of a beetle-like insect-sg.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. kőŋkón-ā</td>
<td>“a hillock-pl.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. gölóŋgóm-ā</td>
<td>“Nauclea latifolia tree-pl.” (Naden, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. gömánŋjóʔó</td>
<td>“chameleon-sg.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. gö-jâ</td>
<td>“cola nut-pl.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the realisation of back vowels as [ɨ] being a dialectal tendency and not a strict rule in any dialect, it also seems to point to an active language change in progress that favours labial-dorsals, against plain dorsals, particularly so because the surfacing of labial-coronals shown in (31) is more prevalent among younger speakers. While the labial-dorsal forms are produced and accepted by speakers of all generations, one speaker in her late 60s refused to accept [ɡbɨ́n-tɨ́ŋlɨ́] and [kpìl-kpìńi], insisting that [ɡòn-tɨ́ŋlɨ́] and [kòl-kpìńi] are the only accurate forms. By contrast, there are many young speakers who find it surprising when it is pointed out to them that the underlying forms are actually [ɡòn-tɨ́ŋlɨ́] and [kòl-kpìńi].

There is also the possibility that the surfacing of labial dorsal before back vowels is part of the diachronic changes that distinguish Dagbani from its closest Gur relatives, with languages like Gurenɛ maintaining what may have been underlying plain dorsals in a common ancestor. For instance, the Mampruli word kɔlin “remain/left over” is kpàlim in Dagbani. Gurenɛ, in particular, differs markedly from Dagbani in this respect, as the data in (36) show. The Gurenɛ data are from Dakubu et. al. (2007).

(36) Dorsal onsets in Gurenɛ and their corresponding labial-dorsals in Dagbani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gurenɛ</th>
<th>Dagbani</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.  kʊʔʊŋɔ</td>
<td>kpáŋ  “guinea fowl.sg”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.  kɔləɡɔ</td>
<td>kpáł-gô “dawadawa spice-sg.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.  kɔɔreŋɔ</td>
<td>gbáɾ-gû “crippled person-sg.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.  gɔgɛse</td>
<td>gbáʔîsî “nod head in agreement”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.  ɡɔŋɔ</td>
<td>gbàŋ/gbàŋ “skin/animal hide.sg.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.  ɡɒɡɛ</td>
<td>gbáʔi “shiver/shake (esp. due to cold)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.  kɔlekɔka</td>
<td>kpíkpá-ʔó/kpûkpò-ʔó “catfish-sg.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the generalisation that when two contrastive segments neutralise in a certain context the output is the unmarked one, (22), labial-dorsals should not surface as they do in (31) - (34) if complex [kp, ɡb] are more marked than simplex [k, ɡ]. Given what is attested, the only alternative conclusion is the exact opposite: that the plain dorsals [k, ɡ] are more marked than the labial-dorsals [kp, ɡb]. In effect, we would conclude that a simplex segment (with one place of articulation) is more marked than a complex segment that combines the place feature in the simplex segment with another feature. Such a conclusion runs contrary to an overwhelming body of literature from diverse theoretical persuasions which argue that complex segments are more marked than simplex ones, as already discussed.

It is important to note that the position of Dagbani plain dorsals as more marked than labial-dorsals is by no means the only case of complex segments being less marked than simplex ones. The vocoids [u, w] are complex labial-dorsals. Yet they are less marked than their respective simplex labial and dorsal variants [ɯ, ɰ]. Similarly, syllables with onsets are less marked than onsetless syllables, in spite of onsets constituting more structure. At the word level, monomoraic content words are highly marked, in spite of being structurally simpler. However, labial-dorsal plosives differ from these complex structures when evaluated using other markedness diagnostics, especially those that are not uniquely phonological (see Rice, 2007, p. 80). Labial-dorsal plosives are less common, appear in fewer grammars, are harder to articulate and their presence implies that of plain labial and plain dorsal plosives but not vice versa. By contrast, labial-dorsal vocoids, syllables with onsets and words with a greater number of moras are more common, appear in more grammars and their presence is implied by that of their more marked variants. Thus, unlike labial-dorsals, whose markedness is predicted by many criteria, including complexity, these units are predicted by other criteria to be unmarked except their complexity.

7 I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this observation and the examples of complex unmarked units.
Why the emergence of labial-dorsals is not a case of assimilation or coalescence

Two potential alternative analyses to the data on the emergence of labial-dorsals presented above, and which are rejected here, are assimilation and coalescence. There are a number of fundamental properties characteristic of an assimilatory process that are lacking in the data. First, phonetically, assimilation is driven by the desire to minimise articulatory effort by coarticulating adjacent segments with one articulatory gesture instead of two potentially contradictory gestures. The surface forms of the data under discussion cannot be said to achieve that goal. Changing a /kʷU/ sequence into [kpɨ] does not lead to the loss in an articulatory gesture neither does it result in any ease of articulation. In fact, as far as the relative ease of articulation is concerned, the surface form is more difficult than the underlying form, considering the extra consonantal stop gesture employed. Second, the trigger of assimilation maintains the feature it spreads to the adjacent target segment. The result of assimilation is that, in the surface form, both trigger and target share one feature. That is clearly not what is going on here, as the output forms are dissimilar.

Third, in an assimilatory pattern, the spreading of the feature from the trigger is conditioned by the presence of an eligible target. Where an eligible target does not exist, a potential trigger cannot perform the function of triggering assimilation. For instance, in English vowel nasalisation, a nasal coda spreads nasality to its nucleus (e.g. /sʌdən/ \rightarrow [sʌdən]). However, when the schwa is not part of the word, and the nasal is syllabic, no nasal spreading can take place. Thus, the surface form will be (sʌdə). This is contrary to what we see in Dagbani. The loss of the [+labial, +dorsal] features in the putative trigger [u] is independent of the presence of the putative target [k, g]. In the cases driven by backness harmony, the loss of the feature itself is a requirement of a regressive vowel harmony triggered by a distant segment. In no case is the loss triggered by the need to assimilate a preceding adjacent segment. That is why this loss is observed in environments where there are no preceding
[k] or [g]. Finally, the loss of the [+labial, +dorsal] features in the back vowel cannot be said to be driven by assimilation because the default surface form is always assimilatory without that loss: /kU, gU/ → [kʷU, gʷU]. A process that bleeds the realisation of these assimilatory forms and produces dissimilar surface forms cannot be said to be assimilatory. What is consistent in all cases, where the emergence of [i] also results in that of [kp, gb] and where it does not, is that, the dorsal feature is dis-preferred. In some cases, it results in a surface harmony. In others, it is due to the morphological unit being a weak position; while in others it is an apparent historical change about which very little else can be said.

Analysing the data as a case of coalescence does not hold merit either. Again, the fundamental feature that two underlying segments are realised as one on the surface, with features of both UR segments present in the surface form, is lacking. The surface forms have the same number of segments as the underlying form.

**Summary and conclusions**

The goal of this paper has been to present phonological asymmetries affecting labials, coronals, dorsals and labial-dorsals, and the markedness conclusions that can be derived from these asymmetries. The strength of the analyses and conclusions lies in the variety of sources from which evidence have been sought. The data are based on observations rooted in synchronic sound alternations, diachronic sound change and loanword phonology. As far as the markedness dimension is concerned, the conclusion that dorsals are the most marked and coronals the least marked is not new when the comparison is restricted to dorsals, labials and coronals, though there are studies that argue against a single universally unmarked place feature and insist that markedness can only be determined on a language-specific basis (e.g. Hume & Tserdanelis, 2002; Hume, 2003). What the paper sought to do was to demonstrate how the markedness distinctions between place specifications in Dagbani are manifested using previously established markedness diagnostics. What is new is the evidence that Dagbani complex labial-dorsal segments are not more marked than plain dorsals. A
summary of the various sources of evidence is presented below.

**Evidence from relative distribution**

Evidence from synchronic distributional patterns shows that coronals and labials surface without restrictions: they surface as onsets, codas, word-initial and non-initial positions. A labial-dorsal does not surface in coda positions, but surfaces as onsets in intervocalic position of simplex words. An underlying plain dorsal in coda position is lost through deletion or place-changing lenition. Thus, plain dorsals surface only in two contexts: initial and post consonantal non-initial positions. These generalisations change slightly when nasals are considered, as [ŋ] surfaces in and maintains its dorsality in coda positions, both underlyingly and as a product of assimilation. The labial-dorsal [ŋm] also surfaces in codas, but only as a product of assimilation. The summary, presented in (37), accords with the dominant view of plain dorsals as the most marked, with labial-dorsals having a slight edge distributionally.

(37) Summary of distribution of place specifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>word-initial</th>
<th>intervocalic onset</th>
<th>post consonantal onset</th>
<th>coda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labial</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronal</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labial-Dorsal</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorsal</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>only nasals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evidence from phonological processes**

The emergence of labial-dorsals from underlying plain dorsals, as evidenced from synchronic alternations, diachronic change and loanword phonology, provides evidence that the labial-dorsal, in spite of being articulatorily and structurally more complex, is more favoured than the plain dorsal. What is more, it suggests a
synchronic as well as a diachronic sound change in the language that may, in the future, give labial-dorsals further greater distribution than plain dorsals. The phonological processes discussed here, which illustrate several of the diagnostics unique to phonological systems for marked phonological units, are summarised in (38).

(38) Summary of phonological patterns and their markedness conclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonological patterns defining a marked unit.</th>
<th>Markedness conclusion: Which place is the most marked?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gets neutralised</td>
<td>/o/ → [i]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/ɡ, k/ → [ɡb, kp]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained in coalescence</td>
<td>/ɡ/ + /s/ → [x]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/N/ + /ɡ/ → [ŋ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resists assimilation</td>
<td>/màn-лi/ → *[màn-lî]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These conclusions may not be sufficient to entirely dismiss the position of complexity as a markedness diagnostic in all sub-disciplines of linguistics (e.g. morphology and syntax). However, such possibilities only re-ignite the question regarding the universality of some of the markedness diagnostics and the usefulness of markedness as a monolithic concept in accounting for the wide ranging phonetic and phonological distinctions for which it has been deployed over the decades. Whether many of the differences observed in linguistic units and patterns need to be accounted for using the concept of markedness is an issue that needs further scrutiny.
References


‘The individual’ in the individualism/communitarianism debate: In defense of personism

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Abstract

Conceptually obfuscating the construct ‘the individual’ with the individuality of persons is the main underlying presupposition that generates the communitarianism/individualism debate and nourishes its tensions. Adopting chiefly an analytic approach, this paper brings some clarity to the substance of the debate focusing on Western ‘communitarian’ thought. It advocates making ‘the person’ the focus as ‘personism’ necessarily encompasses individuality and communality. Dispelling many quandaries of the debate, it is hoped, exposes to a greater degree, what should be one main, if not the main, concern of socio-political theory and practice.

Keywords: ‘the individual’, individuality, community, communality, personism
Introduction

The disagreement in the communitarianism/individualism debate: A recap

A bone of contention between individualist and communitarian thought, regardless of the particular differentiation per author, is the idea of ‘the individual’. The question or concern that engaged the neo-Kantianism of Rawls’ *A theory of justice* (1971) as well as other individualist thinkers such as Robert Nozick, David Gauthier, Ronald Dworkin, and to some extent Kymlicka is ‘the individual’. Subsequent responses from contemporary ‘communitarian writers’ like Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer and Charles Taylor from his Hegelian traditions, center fundamentally on this same notion of ‘the individual’. Even though this theme is very prominent in African philosophy, the paper focuses on the ‘communitarian’ critique from the western (Anglo-American and European) context which is presumed to be typically individualist in its socio-political orientation, systems and structures. Such an approach, in my view, better helps to expose the identified conceptual challenge one is confronted with in seeking to advocate for ‘community’ and its ideals in a linguistically and conceptually entangled term – the individual – which is under scrutiny in this paper. The linguistic and conceptual clarity envisaged at the end of this critical examination should dispel many of the quandaries of socio-political thought and practice.

Whereas Rawls and his contemporary followers have sought to advocate a special place of priority for ‘the individual’, her rights, freedoms and autonomy, the communitarian school, from its Aristotelian antecedents, through Rousseau and Hegel especially, has been committed to championing the cause of community and its attachments. The ‘communitarian writings’, in their various renditions, have sought to emphasize the significance of community and communal relationships to ‘the individual’.

By distinguishing between morality as *Moralität*–abstract, universal rules of morality–and morality as *Sittlichkeit*–community-
specific ethical precepts– Hegel (Allen, 1991, pp. xii-xiii), and his later followers, prominently Charles Taylor, set out a foundational distinction that has served as perhaps the most enduring basis for a revision of the neo-Kantian Rawlsian tradition and its implied ‘atomist’ tendencies.²

From an African perspective, to ask the question, “does the individual’s life belong to him or does it belong to the community” for Menkiti, for instance, would be to ask the unintelligible and obnoxious, if not abominable, because in his view, “it is the community which defines the person as person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will or memory” (1984, pp. 171-172) and that, “as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of the individual life histories, whatever these may be.” (p. 180). In the words of Senghor, “Negro-African society puts more stress on the group than on the individuals, more on solidarity than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the communion of persons than on their autonomy. Ours is a community society.” (1964, p. 49). He buttresses the point with the claim that “Negro-African society is collectivist or, more exactly communal, because it is rather a communion of souls than an aggregate of individuals.” (pp. 93-94).

Wiredu and Gyekye also argue that the community “alone constitutes the context, social or cultural space, in which the actualization of the possibilities of the individual person can take place, providing the individual person the opportunity to express his individuality, to acquire and develop his personality and to fully become the kind of person he wants”. (1992, p. 106). According to Mbiti, it is the community which makes the individual to the extent that without the community, the individual has no existence. In his words, somewhat opposed to Cartesian Cogito ergo sum (I think, therefore I am), “Whatever happens to the individual

² A label that even proponents of individualism themselves preferred not to admit to, even if the substantive grounds for that designation had not changed much in their theoretical foundations. See Taylor’s critique of ‘Atomism’ in Philosophy and the human sciences (1985), pp. 187, 189.

³ My emphasis to show how the use of ‘the’ suggests a problematic connotation of community as referring to a restricted linguistic, ethnic, geographical or biological group.
happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole
group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: ‘I
am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.’” (1970, p.
141; my emphasis). By this thinking, a human being becomes real
only in her relationships with others in a community or a group
and consequently, the growth and fulfillment of the human being
is inextricably tied to the harmonization of this interaction. So, in
the words of Kenyatta, “nobody is an isolated individual. Or rather,
his uniqueness is a secondary fact about him; first and foremost,
he is several people’s relative and several people’s contemporary.”
(1965, p. 297). Such African communitarian understanding of being
would then be best captured as “I am related, therefore we are”
instead of the Cartesian individualistic definition of a human-being
as an entity merely defined by thought, “I think therefore I am”.
Indeed, in Dickson’s view many agree that the sense of community
is definitive of Africanness (1977, p. 4).

The communitarian critique of individualism, from
both perspectives, is therefore the counter-view that, to varying
degrees, regards as inconceivable, meaningless and non-realizable
the individualist conception of higher morality as enshrined in
abstract and universal rules formulated behind a ‘veil of ignorance’
independent of, or purportedly disengaged from specific actual
human habitation. Consequently, the communitarian view rejects
the corresponding notion of ‘the individual’ as a rational, free and
autonomous being who is an ‘end in herself” (Kant, 1993, p. 30)
and whose ‘inalienable’ rights, guaranteed by their ‘deontological’
4 nature, have the fundamental priority, or at least a fundamental
priority, over the good. (Dworkin, 1978, p. 198; Nozick, 1974, pp.
31-32).

By contrast, the communitarian critique rather ‘embeds’,
‘encumbers’, ‘constitutes’, links, locates, or defines ‘this individual’
within or in terms of a concrete community–shared context–of a
kind–family, neighborhood, nation, state, historical or linguistic

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4 See Hasnas’ alternative view of natural rights in his discussion of Rasmussen and De Uyl’s
argument for a morally derivative status of natural rights: an instructive perspective to communitarian
critiques of liberalism as “it seems to highlight a distinction between the moral and political domains”
p.1.
group, ancestral or blood-related group—depending on which ‘communitarian’ one reads. Communitarian writers, in general, regard the moral rules of this community context as the higher level of morality and as the only way in which actually to achieve genuine autonomy, rights and moral freedoms of ‘the individual’.

Thus, the communitarian response seeks to concretize ‘the individual’ by situating her in a community context. The claim is not only that community is natural and therefore necessary for ‘the individual’, but that ‘the individual’ cannot have a freely chosen life detached from community; that meaningful individual autonomy, freedom and justice, if it exists at all, exists only within the socio-historical context of constitutive community of a sort, its culture and language. And it is in this community context, argues the communitarian, that moral values can be given actual meaning and substance. (Taylor, 1985; Sandel, 1984; MacIntyre, 1984).

Further, the communitarian critique insists that the very identity of ‘the individual’, her self-understanding and agency, stem from this community. According to Taylor, for instance, the very identity of ‘the individual’, her self-understanding and her agency, stems from communal belonging. He argues that “… an individual is constituted by the language and culture which can only be maintained and renewed in the communities he is part of,” for “outside of the continuing conversation of a community, which provides the language by which we draw our background distinctions, human agency… would be not just impossible, but inconceivable”5 (1985, p. 8) Taylor thus, outrightly rejects the individualist’s doctrine of primacy of rights by labeling it as ‘atomist’ since it does not accept the principle that, just as rights-bearing is unconditional for ‘the individual’ so is community-belonging. (1985, p 188).

From the perspective of Sandel, ‘the individual’ does not exist prior to its ends. Rather it is composed or constituted by its ends. And to the extent that its communal-others share in its ends,

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5 My emphasis to show how the individual as used here depicts concreteness, not a property or an aspect of a person; a usage which seems to be a source of the challenge against communitarian thought touching on the place of creativity, innovation and responsibility in the absence of disengaged identity.
identities are merged in a larger entity –family, tribe, nation–that is uniquely able to form and pursue its common good on the basis of a shared vocabulary of discourse, common background practices and understandings, and some particular embodiment of community values (1982, p. 179). But given that Sandel somehow also rejects the notion of the “sociologically conditioned subject” (p. 12) one could come to the conclusion that for Sandel insofar as ‘the individual’ possesses such a given “core self” it is at the very least partly socially constructed if not a radically “situated self” (p. 172).

MacIntyre, however, insists that, “my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity” (1984, p. 221) and thus, vehemently rejects as dubious individualism’s model of ‘the individual’ as the being who has natural rights with fundamental primacy prior to or detached from communal attachments. In his view, “the truth is plain: there are no such rights, and belief in them is one with belief in witches and in unicorns”; that “natural or human rights… are fictions” (1984, p. 60).

In the view of Walzer, since there cannot be a meaningful, universal or absolute, yet *just* morality outside of specific community context, it is ‘the individual’s’ community that would have to prescribe and underwrite her moral values and moral autonomy. From this premise, Walzer (1983) seems to admit to the implied moral relativism entailed in his position that justice demands that general conceptions of value be expressed in particular community-specific terms even if such conclusions have problematic implications for social and political thought and practice.

It is worth noting that the communitarian notion of community is not to be regarded as a simple aggregate or mere association of ‘individuals’ with the character depicted in social contract theories, whose agreed cooperation is based on the search for mutual benefits. In the communitarian view, such a notion of community understood as causal dependency between ‘the individual’ and her ‘community’, defended by individualists like Gauthier, (1986, pp. 330-355) not only undermines the very identity
of ‘the individual’ but more fundamentally, detracts from the worth of community\(^6\), which communitarians hold to be desirable in itself. The conception of community as of intrinsic worth is well stressed by Walzer (1983), in his discussion on community-membership, where he reiterates the position that belonging to a community is not only valuable for the goods that it brings but more importantly and fundamentally, that the sense of communal belonging is itself a good that is worthwhile.

**Examining ‘the individual’ in the communitarianism/individualism debate**

The foregoing overview thus unveils an apparent disagreement between the two schools of thought which seems to center on a postulation of an image of ‘the individual’ as an abstract, universal, rational, free and autonomous right-bearing being, who is an entity unto itself, and who has inalienable, deontological rights prior to and ‘outside’ of community. The communitarian disagrees with this image and the implications thereof.

Yet on closer inspection, when the individualist talks about ‘the individual’ he refers to and argues on the basis of appeal to consciousness, rights, autonomy, freedom, and so on. But these concepts only describe capacities, properties, qualities or states of being of a subject labeled ‘the individual’. These capacities or properties are themselves not the *subject* that bears them, whether or not this free rights-bearing and autonomous subject is a concrete, embodied human being (or soul/spirit/mind). In appealing to these properties or capacities, the individualist has not as yet defined the subject itself. At most, the individualist has offered a description of some properties or capacities of *individuality* that a certain subject, concrete or not, bears. So, to say that ‘the individual’ is a being defined by primacy of rights, autonomy and freedom is merely to ascribe some of the qualities that this subject, labeled ‘the individual’, bears. The individualist has thus specified the character

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\(^6\) Another ambiguity in the debate as both debaters talk past each other with different senses of the term community: the communitarian sense of community, itself straddling between a closed social, linguistic or territorial unit in some contexts but in other contexts referring to the relational ties, attachments or bonds themselves; while the individualist argues with the mindset of ‘community’ as association or accidental collectivity of a kind.
of being *individual* that is the character of *individuality*; he or she has not specified *the bearer* of the character of individuality – whether concrete or not.

If the above analysis is correct, the individualist is not justified in equating the character of *individuality* (rights-bearing, free, conscious, autonomous), with the concrete human subject who bears it. Nor is it then accurate to label this being ‘the individual’. In sum, the individualist has neither yet defined the subject who bears this *individuality*, nor has he shown why the *individuality* of this undefined bearer should be the defining feature of this subject and thus be accorded uttermost priority: by, and over, who or what?

Insofar as the subject in question does not, as it stands, warrant the label ‘the individual’, neither does this notion of ‘the individual’ address the fundamental concern of the communitarianism/individualism dispute so far discussed. That concern centers around the question of the nature of the being or subject who bears the quality(s) of *individuality*. The point of this objection is that this subject could bear some other qualities or could itself be some other thing(s) other than *individuality* bearing; - and especially so for this debate whose disagreements, centre chiefly on the concrete embodied human subject who necessarily belongs to and inhabits human society.

As it stands, without an accurate conception of the nature of this subject, individualist claims about rights, freedoms and autonomy would read, and *mean*, respect for the primacy of *individuality* and not respect for the primacy of ‘the individual’ over the community ontologically and/or morally. Arguments regarding the subject’s ontological constitution, which must precede demands for its ontological or moral primacy, have not been argued for as yet by analytical reckoning. Neither would the claim of *individuality* of this individuality-bearing subject preclude the possibility of the subject bearing some other quality(s) or *being* some other thing than *individuality*-bearing, as already argued.

It is worth noting that, for the communitarian, the demand to respect individuality is not contentious. The communitarian objection is not to rights or autonomy per say. Even the strictest
communitarian critique upholds respect for *individuality*—rights, autonomy and freedoms—though it typically requires a connection of sorts to community and/or its attachments. Consider Taylor’s assertion that, “the identity of the autonomous, self-determining individual requires a social matrix … which … recognizes the right to *autonomous* decision and which calls for the individual having a voice”; similarly his claim that this “free individual who affirms himself as such already has an obligation to complete, restore, or sustain the society within which this identity is possible” (1992, p. 49). Similarly, Sandel’s intoned admission of the resort to individual rights even if only in circumstances when communal bonds have been distorted, expressed in his argument that in “a more or less ideal family situation… *individual rights* and fair decision procedures are seldom invoked, not because injustice is rampant but because their appeal is pre-empted by a spirit of generosity in which I am rarely inclined to claim my fair share” (1982, p. 33), supports this assertion.\(^7\) As well, MacIntyre’s hinted admission of individuality is granted in his insistence that “the fact that the self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities… does not entail that the self has to accept the moral *limitations* of the particularity of those forms of community” (1984, p. 221). In similar fashion, Walzer’s regard of national rights as originated from individual rights in his words, “territorial integrity and political sovereignty … belong to states, but they derive ultimately from the *rights of individuals*, and from them they take their force.” ‘The duties and rights of states are nothing more than the duties and rights of the men who compose them’” (1977, p. 53; 1980, p. 219) should ground the position that communitarianism would not be antagonistic to rights, autonomies or freedoms as such and thus not to *individuality* properly understood. Likewise, even the relatively stricter African communitarian perspectives earlier referred to also admit of *individuality* (i.e. uniqueness, autonomy, etc.), either in relational terms to the ‘community’ or in terms of less priority to

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\(^7\) In agreement with Hume’s intonation of justice as remedial, since “‘tis only from the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin’ (Hume, D. (1739).
‘community’.

The arguments so far show that the actual underlying question in the debate between communitarians and individualists is over the nature of the subject that is conscious, free, right-bearing and autonomous (Taylor, 1992, pp. 49-50); or in different terms, that bears the character of individuality. To this question, individualist postulated ‘the individual’, provides no answer. And here, the communitarian critique, once purged of its own linguistic ambiguities, comes into its own, for the communitarian contention is that this subject is definitely something more than a being that bears individuality or at the least, bears something more than individuality.

Taylor, for instance, conceives of this subject as a concrete embodied human being who inhabits human society, lives, moves and has its being so to speak, instead of individualism’s “extensionless subject, epistemologically a tabula rasa” (1992, p. 50), subsisting, as it were, in a supposed state of nature or resident behind a claimed veiled world of ignorance. Further, for the communitarian, it would still not be accurate to conceive of the concrete, embodied human subject as ‘atomic’ – a being that can be autonomous and self-sufficient even when detached from community. Rather, the communitarian conceives of this subject not only as an embodied human person bearing the character of individuality but insists that this subject’s bearing of individuality presupposes and is preconditioned by ‘constitutive’, ‘embedded’ or ‘encumbered’ community-ties of a sort, and with it its accompanying attachments and obligations. Accordingly, the challenge of the communitarian critique seems directed, although equivocally in my view, at the individualist conceived ‘the individual’.

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8 Mbiti and Kenyatta, respectively.
9 Alluded to by social contract theorists like Hobbes.
The ambiguities in the communitarian critique of individualism and implications

As earlier charged, the communitarian critique of individualism, as well as some of the individualist claims and responses, is saddled with a number of subversive linguistic imprecision and a resultant conceptual morass. This obscures its principal thrust which is directed at ‘the individual’ as the presumed right-bearing human subject. Apart from the lack of clarity of terms concerning the terms of the debate between the two perspectives, the uncircumspect use of the label ‘the individual’, makes the line of reasoning of the communitarian critics especially, but also the individualist response, somewhat confused and muddled, if not inconsistent. Upon closer examination, the communitarian critique of individualism harbors at least three such ambiguous uses: 1) the reference to individualists’ abstract image of individuality which is an abstraction and thus, meaningless or absurd; 2) the reference to individualists’ inadequately conceived community-detached human being which communitarians consider to be a falsity that must be corrected because of its dubious supposition of the possibility of an atomic self-sufficient man; 3) the reference to the duly community-situated human being who communitarian arguments suggest, is the actual resident of human society and thus should be the appropriate referent of the discussion.

Taylor’s critique of ‘the individual’ as an “extensionless subject, epistemologically a tabula rasa...” (1992, p. 50), for instance, employs the term ‘the individual’ to refer to individualists’ abstract image of individuality. Second, and in the same context he implicitly uses the term ‘the individual’ to refer to individualists inaccurately presumed community-detached though concrete person when he describes as ‘atomic’ individualism’s conception of man as “politically a presuppositionless bearer of rights.” (Taylor, 1992, p. 50). In yet a third sense, Taylor (1985) uses the term ‘individuals’ to refer to men, but this time to mean the duly community-situated concrete human persons when he regards as ‘atomist’ the view that takes as at least a,
fundamental, principle of their political theory the ascription of certain *rights to individuals* and which deny the same status to a principle of belonging … that is a principle which states our *obligation as men to belong* to or sustain society, … Primacy-of-right theories in other words accept a principle *ascribing rights to men* as binding unconditionally,… [b]ut they do not accept as similarly unconditional a principle of belonging or obligation. (p. 188, emphases mine).

This third sense of linguistic ambiguity, where the term ‘the individual’ is used to refer to the community-situated person, is also expressed in Walzer’s definition of states’ rights as ultimately deriving “from the rights of individuals”; Walzer goes on to say that “the duties and rights of states are nothing more than the duties and rights of the men who compose them” (Walzer, 1977, p 53; 1980, p 219) Here, both Walzer and Taylor equate ‘individual’ with ‘man’. But if such an equation is acceptable to the communitarian, then the communitarian complaint against individualism is undermined. This is because the thrust of the communitarian critique is to argue that it is *men* –community-situated concrete human persons– who live in human society, not *individuals*–an abstract image of *individuality*, nor a notion of atomic community-detached concrete persons.

The tension that arises from this ambiguous usage for Taylor, for example, is what justification he would now adduce to deny *men* (whom he now equates to ‘individuals’) the primacy of their rights, since per his communitarian argument *man*, unlike ‘the individual’, is not what he describes as an “extensionless subject, epistemologically a *tabula rasa* and politically a presuppositionless bearer of rights” (1992, p. 50). Nor is man the free individual “…in a state of nature where he could never attain this identity and hence never create by contract a society which respects it” (p. 49). According to Taylor, men, unlike ‘individuals’, *already* have their identity “partly defined in conversation with others or

10 My emphasis.
through the common understanding” (p. 49); they are therefore firmly constituted in a social matrix which “recognizes the right to autonomous decision” (p 49) as well as obligations. Yet the labeling of individualism as ‘absurd’, on one hand, and as ‘atomist’, on the other, is sustainable only so long as Taylor can distinguish ‘the individual’ from ‘man’, and his or her individuality. The critique fails when it equates ‘man’ to ‘the individual’ or worse still to ‘individuality’. In the same vein, in questioning the rationale for starting “a political theory with an assertion of individual rights” (1985, p 189) the intended target of Taylor’s objection, individuality, is confused with ‘the human subject’ to give the impression that Taylor objects to humans’ bearing rights. But upon careful examination, it comes to light that what Taylor contests is why the assertion of individuality should start a political theory, given that the human person in a political setting is also naturally communal, if not fundamentally communal. Likewise straddling the concepts undermines the potency of Taylor’s contention that “the whole effort to find a background for the arguments which start from rights is misguided” (1979, p. 42).

Nevertheless, Taylor’s conceptual difficulties in the face of the conflation of ‘the individual’ with ‘the concrete person’, as already indicated, seems to be the least problematic among the communitarians discussed and thus, could be salvaged by a linguistic clarification of the differences between ‘the individual’ he rejects and ‘the individual’ he admits in his communitarian critique. Perhaps this was what the term ‘atomist’ was intended to do but it seems that has not been completely successful. But the same cannot be said in this regard for other communitarians such as MacIntyre who unequivocally states from the same obfuscated presuppositions about the concept ‘the individual’ that: “the truth is plain: there are no such rights, and belief in them is one with belief in witches and in unicorns”; that “natural or human rights… are fictions” (1984, pp. 69-70).

It is worth asking that on what basis would the communitarian have raised issue with individualism if not to indicate that there is more to personhood than individualism’s notion of a self-
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sufficient ‘individual’ or the mere idea of *individuality* expressed as autonomy, right-bearing, freedom, and rationality. It is the perceived inadequacy in the individualist’s seeming conception of ‘the individual’ as self-sufficient alone that attracts the criticizing label of ‘atomist’, for instance, to argue that such embodied yet community-detached ‘individuals’ portrayed by individualists do not exist in human society, if they exist at all; neither does a presumed abstract and incorporeal notion of *individuality*— autonomy, right-bearing, freedom, and rationality.

After all, the general communitarian argument from ‘constitutiveness’ through ‘embeddedness’ to ‘encumberedness’, is meant to highlight the necessary *communality* of persons. For the communitarian, it is concrete human persons who inhabit human society, and such human persons are at the least communally-situated, if not communally-conditioned, regardless of how strong or weak these communal bonds are. But if the problem that initiated the debate in the first place was the concern that neither an abstraction – *individuality* – nor an isolated ‘individual’ can rightly represent the concrete human person, then there is a severe incoherence entailed in communitarians’ implicit admission to that same presupposition in the bid to critique the individualist notion of ‘the individual’.

The challenge for the communitarian thus becomes how to ground the critique against individualism. For, by implicitly assuming that ‘the individual’ equates to the concrete person, the communitarian forfeits the legitimacy to question the faulted individualist thesis. Such a critique remains potent only if ‘the person’ can be properly delimited, conceptually and substantively, from ‘the individual’, since it is the person whose personhood, per communitarian reckoning, is preconditioned by communal belonging.

Nonetheless, such an error would not have arisen in the first place if the individualist primacy-of-right thesis had itself not employed the ambiguous linguistic construct ‘the individual’ which lent concreteness to a notion that should reflect a dimension of the person and not the concrete person herself. After all,
individualism could not have been thought to have meaningfully denied that people belonged to community even if only for mutual advantage and other instrumental purposes. (Gauthier, 1986, pp. 330-55). Not even Nozick’s minimal state which is “limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on” (1974, p. ix) could meaningfully claim to have been constituted by ‘individuals’ who do not belong to, and thus owe some form of obligation to a community of a kind as queried by communitarians.

Subsequently, by arguing for various forms of community-‘embeddedness’ or ‘encumberedness’ with such an ambiguous use of the term ‘the individual’, to mean individuality in one instance and a person in another, the communitarian critique backfires and exposes itself to a misconceived individualist rebound critique which inquires of the communitarian what the place of rights, conscious responsibility and creative novelty would be at all in the ‘communitarian community’ which as it stands, individualists argue, denies individuality. And to this conclusion the individualist would find evidence in MacIntyre’s explicit rejection of natural or human rights earlier referred to.

**Diagnosis and consequences**

From the discussion so far, one observation worth-making is the diagnosis that many of the difficulties of communitarian arguments stem from proponents’ self-assigned task to improve the individualist conception of ‘the individual’ by arguing for a restoration of its natural and necessary community, communal ties and obligations. But although the communitarian vision to correct this misnomer may be valuable, the project cannot be discharged fruitfully in the individualist’s conceptually tangled vocabulary ‘the individual’ without attracting criticisms that question the place of individuality in the context of community-embeddedness of ‘that individual’.

To avoid being misunderstood or yet still confusing her own project, the communitarian need not make it a preoccupation to seek to improve upon individualist conceived ‘individual’ in the
very terms of individualism. Such a project is unsuccessful given the communitarian conception of the concrete human person. Besides, the alternative approach of making it a preoccupation to over-emphasize the communal aspects of persons in the rather lopsided attention towards the negation of individualists’ construal of rights and morals seems to submerge individuality of persons into ‘the communitarian community’ to the point of non-retrieval. This portrays a false image of the communitarian ideal which opens it up to a myriad of legitimate opposing challenges to what should rather have been a worthwhile task of correcting a distortion in the conception of the concrete human person who should be conceived of as a composite right-bearing and relationally-obligated subject whose conditions of human agency, thus, necessarily encompass individuality and communality.

Yet, presupposing ‘the individual’ as the concrete object of existence, which elicits the communitarian critique and, therefore, initiates the debate in the first place, seems to be the underlying error whose reversal remains an unrelenting project of any communitarian perspective. For, if individualism from the onset conceived of its supposed disembodied, unrelated and abstract ‘individual’ rather as an embodied, relational and concrete autonomous ‘human person’, then this debate would not have arisen at all, or would have rather engaged the deeper question of how to mitigate the ‘internal’ opposing dimensions of a person. The outcome would have translated to how to mediate inter-person and inter-collective interactions. But resorting to the use of the linguistic construct ‘the individual’ which bears a misleading borrowed concreteness, and with it its convoluted conceptual ambiguities that equate it to ‘the person’ in some contexts and ‘individuality’ in others, tends to undermine the potency of the real communitarian ideal, shifts the focus of the debate itself, and rather exposes communitarianism to legitimate criticisms arising from its undesirable consequences.

Accordingly, more substantive are the woes of the worthwhile communitarian agenda aimed at a community-situated conception of the human person and her individuality. For, not only does it generate similar ambiguities and conceptual difficulties
which have been well stressed so far, but it also yields fundamentally undesirable consequences, including but not limited to relativity of fundamental moral values and the challenge of determination of the legitimate scope and limit of community. More importantly and often overlooked is the undesirable consequence of individualistic power-control couched in the name of community-consensus, which itself does not negate the dominance of certain person’s *individuality* over others. This is a central concern of individualists which features prominently in Nozick’s *State, anarchy and utopia* (1974) Nozick there argues emphatically that, “there is no social entity with a good that undergoes some sacrifice for its own good. There are only individual people, different individual people, with their own individual lives. ... Nothing more. ... Talk of an overall social good covers this up” (pp. 32-33). On such an individualist assumption, a communitarian perspective that defines *individuality* as, at the very least, a communal-construct would have much to answer for.

Besides, the fundamental challenge remains regarding the source and place of *individuality*—critical reflection, originality, capacity for moral judgment—in the communitarian context. There, *individuality* is defined in terms of community-embeddedness, community-constitutiveness or community-encumberedness. The individualist legitimately asks how critical reflection on communal values is possible, if communitarianism is right in its claim that persons are not free to choose but rather that the choices persons make, and the moral worth of these choices are determined by their communal-constitutiveness. Not only would there be no reason to question one’s community and its values, standards or practices – it would seem that criticizing ‘the community’ would not even arise at all, since one, by such a conception of *individuality*, would think and evaluate in terms of ‘the community’ and therefore, could not conceive of an alternative standard to serve as grounds to examine, and consequently criticize her own community(s)’ ‘goods’. Individualists contend that should such alternative standard even

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11 Coined in opposing terms to communitarian critiques captured in Sandel’s ‘unencumbered self’, Taylor’s ‘constitutive identity’ and MacIntyre’s ‘embeddedness’.
arise from sources external to the community(s), persons within that community, by the communitarian thesis as presented, cannot access, assess and apply such values to a critical evaluation of their own community so far as individuality is accounted for in the light of community-embeddedness. The fact that this does not seem to be the intention of communitarian thought, as argued, can be seen from its attempt to account for individual rights, autonomy and freedoms, albeit in terms of community of a sort. Yet, failing to clearly define its conceptual terms of reference distinctly from the erred individualist model of individuality as equal and same as the concrete person generates such besetting challenges whose detrimental effect could make the very avowed advocates of the communitarian ideal denounce the label of a ‘communitarian’ in preference for ‘a liberal’ or ‘a republican’.  

Nevertheless, this study contends that, if the communitarian critique, as well as the individualist claims and responses to this critique, is disambiguated of its linguistic and conceptual incoherencies and inconsistencies, it would become self-evident that communitarians and individualists alike seek a synthesized thesis that advocates for the person, not ‘the individual’ nor ‘the community’, as the object of socio-political philosophy.

**Personism as a response**

The thesis of personism, whose espousal has been implicit all this while, states that actual human society is not inhabited by atomic ‘individuals’ nor abstract individualities but is constituted or inhabited by human persons whose personhood is naturally and necessarily already both individual and communal, whether or not the persons themselves conceive it as such or, accept it to be the case.

In other words, personism holds, in agreement with the core of the individualist argument, that a person naturally and necessarily has autonomy, freedom and dignity; and that these

12 Sandel adopts the tag ‘republican’ instead in his *Liberalism and the limits of justice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 2nd ed.; In (Gutmann 1992), both Taylor and Walzer identify themselves as liberals; MacIntyre’s claim that “in spite of rumors to the contrary, I am not and never have been a communitarian”, in his ‘Letter’, in *The responsive community*, Summer 1991.
are values, emanating from his or her given individuality, that are not only worth respecting and preserving by society but are also inviolable. But at the same time personism also holds, in agreement with the core communitarian argument that a person is at the same time *naturally* and necessarily communal or relational.

It bears noting that personism conceives of individuality and communality as dual dispositions or dimensions of one entity ‘the person’ who is naturally and necessarily both individual and relational and interrelated at different levels with other such persons all at once. This is unlike the doctrines of individualism and communitarianism, both of which conceive of ‘the individual’ as an entity whose rights\(^\text{13}\) are to be accommodated and respected, for different reasons though, by a supposed ‘the community’ or ‘the communities’ for some, which is another entity.

The difference is if communality is conceived of as ‘the community’, it makes it a matter of choice whether persons would want to belong to ‘the community’. But, personism defends the view that communality, like individuality, is not optional to the person. That is to say, for the personist thesis, the person does not choose to be *individual*. Neither does s/he choose to be *communal* (i.e. relational). S/he is at once both individual *and* communal outside of his or her choice. And therefore, it would not be a question of mediating between two distinct *entities* so as to give rise to liberalist or ‘moderate communitarian’ arguments such as advanced by the renowned African philosopher, Gyekye (1995, pp. 154-162)\(^\text{14}\).

According to Gyekye, ‘moderate communitarianism’ expresses the idea that although the African society is communitarian in character, it also grants some individuality and/or individual rights. But Gyekye’s view has been saddled with the critique of incoherence in his conceptions of ‘person, personhood and community’ as a result of “difficulties existent in Gyekye’s own arguments” resulting in lack of clarity (Majeed, 2018, p. 36). The same is confronted with the challenge of subsuming individuality into ‘community’. The contention here is that ‘moderate communitarianism’, as Gyekye

13 Which will be defined as ‘individual rights’ (so will exclude the very essential *communal rights* which are equally constitutive of the person’s nature).

14 A more elaborate exposition of this is done in his *Tradition and modernity*, pp. 35-75.
Myles, N. O. ‘The individual’ in the individualism/communitarianism debate presents it, is not as moderate as he believes it to be; that the supposed gap between his view and the ‘radical communitarian’ view he criticizes may not be as wide as he opines (Famakinwa, 2011).

However, that one is naturally and necessarily communal, related or naturally relational, in the personist view, need not translate as the need for a person to be solely tied to, bonded by or embedded in a collective, bounded and enclosed ‘communitarian community’ within which the *individuality* of persons expressed as autonomy, rationality, creativity, among others, would be non-existent or inconsequential. For, the argument of personism is that a person’s *individuality* is not only inaccessible and non-transferrable to others; it is actually inalienable as well. Not even the person herself can negate or dispense with her *individuality* understood in this sense since, one’s attempt at suppression of her *individuality* would itself be the very expression of that *individuality*.

Yet, personism insists that the force of a person’s natural and necessary *communality* or relationality cannot be downplayed either: first with herself; then with immediate ‘significant others’ such as family, the ‘communitarian community’ and its essential systems, structures, language, history, culture and particular forms of life that contribute to forming her identity; but then also with the external world and several others in different ways some of which might be distant and yet very significant. This is so because, just like *individuality*, *communality* is itself inalienable and not transferrable to others even if some aspects of the ‘communitarian community’, defined in terms of kinship-ties, common history, territorial and linguistic boundaries, could be said to be to a certain degree.

The given *communality* of a person is, thus, distinguishable from her natural membership in a specific community defined by kinship-ties, language, culture, history, territory, among others, yet not totally detached from ‘community’ of a kind at any point in time. Therefore, *communality* will entail community-membership but community-membership will not necessarily entail *communality*. That is to say, *communality* would transcend the boundaries of
belonging together as members of a geographical, linguistic, biological or ancestral community since persons necessarily share in values, aims, goals and aspirations of others who may not necessarily ‘belong’ to the said communitarian community. Besides, in a fast-globalizing world, different persons would necessarily affect and be affected by the values, aims, goals and aspirations of such ‘others’ who are presumed to be external to their ‘community’. The ties and boundaries of community then would themselves not only vary but would be very elusive. Thus, it would be more defensible to think of persons as communal beings than as beings defined by and restricted to linguistic, ancestral, geographical or some such ‘communitarian community’, and this is what personism stands for.

Conclusion
This paper has been committed to exposing the source of disagreement between individualists and communitarians. It has argued that the apparent disagreement is as a result of the debaters’ inconsistent and incoherent use and conceptualization of the term ‘the individual’. The proposed way out espoused in this paper is the thesis of personism. The advantage of personism over both communitarianism and individualism is seen in its ability to contest individualism’s labeling and conception of the person as ‘an individual’, without denying her natural and necessary character of individuality—autonomy, freedom\(^{15}\) and right-bearing—on one hand, and at the same time advocate a consistent and pragmatic defense of her equally natural and necessary communality or relationality without restricting it to a fixed immutable conception of a unitary or fraternal ‘community’.

Upholding this thesis of personism does not only dissolve the pseudo-disagreements entailed in this debate but would more importantly, expose the actual concern of both perspectives which reads in simple terms as how, and who, to govern the natural and necessary individuality and communality of persons: first, within the person herself; second, inter-persons; and third, among inter-related persons or collectives.

\(^{15}\) Including freedom to think, analyze, and criticize.
References


Capitalist exchange, consumerism and power in nineteenth century Gold Coast: Interrogating Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Anowa* and the contested personage of the merchant prince

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Abstract
Commercial activities in nineteenth century Gold Coast were crucial in defining, not only the nature of African capitalism, but the consumption changes it brought to its merchant elite, commonly referred to in African historiography as merchant princes. The transformation of the Gold Coast economy into a commercial capitalist economy, which had as its life source a vibrant north Atlantic world market, exposed merchant princes to other goods which were not necessities but had the power to change one’s social status. In partaking freely in this consumerism that the north Atlantic world offered, they were redefining power relations and helping to entrench colonial capitalism in the Gold Coast. More importantly, this new kind of consumerism signaled the merchant princes’ desire to, at once, show off their newly acquired wealth and also appropriate power in a politically uncertain environment. Using available historical sources as well as creative works such as Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Anowa*, this paper suggests imaginative ways in which scholars may tease out African agency in existing narratives on the nineteenth century.

Keywords: merchant prince, capitalist exchange, power, Gold Coast, Anowa
Introduction

The nineteenth century Gold Coast was described as an “area of vigorous economic activity,” (Iliffe, 1983, pp. 13-14) as commercial activities were crucial in defining, not only the nature of African capitalism, but the consumption changes it brought to its merchant elite, commonly referred to in historiography as merchant princes. In traditional historiography and from common knowledge, guns and liquor had been the stereotypical mainstay of consumer goods on the West African coast at the height of the Atlantic slave trade. However, contrary to popular belief, before the nineteenth century, the Gold Coast economy had exposed merchant princes to other goods, which were not necessities but had the power to change one’s social status. These goods included European linen, Turkish carpets, velvet-covered armchairs, silver-headed canes, and felt hats. (Alpern, 1995; Murillo, 2017) By the nineteenth century, African merchants had changed the narrative by openly consuming such luxury items, thereby injecting African agency in the political economy of nineteenth century Gold Coast. Narratives on these colorful and contentious personages by Dike (1956), Amenumey (1968), Sampson (1969), Daaku (1970), Reynolds (1974a), Kaplow (1977), Arhin (1979), Kea (1982), Dumett (1983), Rotimi and Ogen (2008), Akyeampong (2010), and Sapong (2011) situate them in the grand narrative of mercantilist Euro-African interaction on the West African coast while others, such as Priestley (1969) and Smith (2014) focus on family histories.

This study uses Aidoo’s play, Anowa (1984), as a trope to explore the contested sites of capitalist commercial exchange and power on the West African coast before consolidation of formal colonial rule in the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, it situates the fascinating person of the West African merchant prince, who was highly contentious and often underappreciated, in this pre-colonial milieu. This middleman played several roles, including facilitating trade on the West African coast, consuming imported luxury items, and resisting European mercantilist expansion. In the end, the merchant prince who was adored by some and loathed by
others, became a tragic figure of British imperialist designs and was hounded out of his/her sphere of influence. What is most instructive is that British merchant capital exploited the groundwork laid by this class to establish colonial rule.

The themes of African capitalist exchange, consumerism, and power are aptly dramatized in Anowa, Aidoo’s theatrical interpretation of nineteenth century Gold Coast social and political economy, and also historically foregrounded in a highly contentious era when European nations sought to strengthen their commercial and political hold on Africa. In the story, Aidoo recreates the proverbial tale of a girl who defied her parents and community by turning the mores of gender roles, marriage, and occupation upside down. Anowa, the female protagonist of this eponymous drama, decided to elope with Kofi Ako, a man she chose to marry. They subsequently built a new life by taking advantage of the Atlantic trade boom of the nineteenth century to accumulate wealth. This paper draws the reader’s attention to the character Kofi Ako, whose rise to wealth and power reflects the lives of historical figures who came to prominence in the nineteenth century Gold Coast by virtue of capitalist commercial exchanges in a north Atlantic economy. As noted by Reynolds (1974a), by the mid-nineteenth century, “status was achieved through the creation of wealth by trade and production for market by a group whose commercial and political interests frequently overlapped” (p. 256). In casting the character of a merchant prince in Anowa, Aidoo had historical examples to work with. The list included John Kabes, George Blankson Sr., F.C. Grant, R.J. Ghartey, John Sarbah, John Ocansey, Geraldo de Lima, James Bannerman, J.W. Hansen, Henry Barnes, J.P. Brown, James F. Amissah, John G. Halm, and John Plange (Dumett, 1983, pp. 671-673).

Anowa feeds the reader with snippets of Ghana’s precolonial history by weaving the formation of the Anglo-Fante alliance, in the face of Asante invasion, seamlessly into the plot. Between 1806 and 1826, there were several wars between the Asantes and Fantes, which culminated in the subjugation of the Fantes. It points out that
the Fante armies, “well-organised though they may be, are more skilled in quenching fires than in the art of war!” (Aidoo, 1984, p. 6) It continues, “let not posterity judge it too bitterly that in a dangerous moment, the lords of our Houses sought the protection of those that-came-from-beyond-the-horizon against our more active kinsmen from the north” (Aidoo, 1984, p. 6). For Aidoo (1984), it was in this era that “the lords of our Houses signed that piece of paper – the Bond of 1844 they call it – binding us to the white men who came from beyond the horizon” (p. 8). Here, she was referring to a declaration signed by a group of southern rulers, including the kings of Denkyira, Abora, Cape Coast, Anomabu, Dixcove and James Town, formally recognizing the roles of Commander Hill and George Maclean as representatives of British power and jurisdiction on the coast.

The nineteenth century is referred to as a period of the “new imperialism” because unlike previous attempts at Empire, this one saw the massive deployment of European technology, show of force, business acumen, and other tools of Empire. Headrick (1981) argues that comparatively, technology gave Europe an edge over Africa and Asia. It was also an era that offered economic opportunities for enterprising West Africans who saw the necessity of symbiotic trade relations with Europeans. Thus, in Anowa it was said that “men will always go where the rumbling hunger in their bowels shall be stilled, and that is where they will stay… let it not surprise us the that This-One and That-One depend for their well-being on the presence of the pale stranger in our midst” (Aidoo, 1984, p. 7). However, events were neither simplistic nor were West Africans passive observers. They responded in various ways to adapt, negotiate and sometimes resist the terms of engagement. Commercially, cases of accommodation, adaptation, negotiation, and resistance were evident in the rise to prominence of a coastal merchant elite, who shrewdly negotiated the boundaries of commercial authority and often resisted European economic incursions into their spheres of influence. Sometimes, these merchant princes adapted to situations by forming and shifting alliances between European nations to
ensure the survival of their African businesses. The function of these merchant princes, “who wielded considerable influence in their home bases, soon evolved from facilitators of trade to resisters of British intrusion into the heartland of West Africa” (Sapong, 2011). Thus, these merchant princes were not solely agents of Euro-African commercial relations, but also often interfered with the extent of European influence in West Africa.

A word on analytical framework

There are several theoretical perspectives on the origins of capitalism in world history. These include orthodox Marxism, modernization theory, and Wallerstein’s world-systems analysis. While orthodox Marxism perceives the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth century as the watershed moment for the fruition of capitalism, world-systems analysis date it further back to the “long” sixteenth century. Modernization theory, on the other hand, relies on the drastic contrast between the pre-industrial medieval era and the industrial modern era, a transition that witnessed the dissolution of important vestiges of medieval society. Capitalism, however, received its first classic statements in the works of Adam Smith (1776/2003), who is of the view that capitalism is the systematic production of commodities for sale on the market to generate profit. It is assumed that this profit would be used to enhance material comfort as well as to further social progress. Smith argued that capitalism emerged out of centuries of competition between manufacturers and merchants in the rational pursuit of individual economic gain. He saw capitalism as the harbinger of a future free market economy, in which diligent men would be prosperous because all have access to a vibrant market. Gradually, the pursuit of economic self-interest led to new forms of wealth and productive resources, as well as intellectual and cultural habits, which eroded the existing pre-capitalist structure of society.

Weber (1905/2002) took Smith’s classical views a step further by inquiring into the nature of the spirit, which Werner Sombart (1911/2015) had also argued, was crucial to the development of modern capitalism. According to Weber, man is
motivated by the making of money and acquisition of wealth as the fundamental purpose of life. Consequently, traditional modes of enterprise encouraged the accumulation of wealth for the sake of material comfort, but the advent of capitalism witnessed the triumph of rationality over tradition. Capitalism initiated a disciplined labor force and a systematic reinvestment of capital. Weber argued that this kind of rationality, which combined a disciplined labor force with a systematic reinvestment of capital, took place mostly in Protestant nations such as England and Holland. Thus, it stands to reason that there is a causal relation between Protestant ethic and capitalism, at least in parts of the Atlantic world, where a percentage of the colonists were Protestant. Weber’s thesis, however, presents a difficulty for the Gold Coast. Apart from the absence of a significant Protestant population in the Gold Coast, pre-capitalist modes of production before the nineteenth century creates analytical complications.

In orthodox Marxist terms, for the economy to be capitalist, it needed a land monopolizing upper class, which would hold labor to ransom. McNally is of the view that “capitalism was the product of an immense transformation in the social relationships of landed society…Without a radical transformation of the agrarian economy, the activities of merchants and manufacturers would have remained strictly confined” (McNally, 1988, pp. xi-xii). This transformation prompted rural producers to enter the labor market as wage laborers, and they came to rely on their wage as a means of subsistence. Analytically, this seamless transition to wage labor is problematic and may be at odds with the economic history of nineteenth century Gold Coast. Austin (2005), in an important study of labor, land and capital in Asante, points out that even the social organization of labor is highly complicated. This situation is “epitomized by the difficulty of separating familial from extra-familial [slaves and pawns] sources of labor, or non-market from market ones” (Austin, 2005, 106). Generally, by the nineteenth century, parts of Africa with centuries-old economic connections to world markets exhibited a combination of merchant capitalism “in the sphere of exchange” and “pre-capitalist modes of production.”
(Iliffe, 1983, p. 5) The pre-capitalist mode of production included domestic production by family units, as well as the use of slave labor in both rural and urban centers of production (Iliffe, 1983). Quintessentially, Iliffe (1983) points out that African capitalism is:

by definition identical to capitalism elsewhere. But surrounding the core, the flesh may have distinctive shapes and qualities …. Its special qualities result, on the one hand, from the very late stage in the global history of capitalism at which that system of production developed in Africa, and on the other hand, from the special characteristics of Africa’s pre-capitalist societies. (pp. 4-5)

In analyzing the capitalist impetus in nineteenth century Gold Coast, this work focuses on the nineteenth century capitalist sector of exchange, which dates back to West Africa’s interaction with the Mediterranean world market. Through interactions with trans-Saharan trade networks, commercial activities in the Gold Coast involved the use of weights and measures, currencies, and systems of credit in procuring and exchanging goods and services.

On a broader historiographical canvass, the demand, supply, and consumption patterns of these African merchants signaled “moving beyond the restrictive analytical logic of an always dominant ‘core’ that underwrites most models of historical integration” (Prestholdt, 2004, pp. 757-758). Thus, any analysis of the global capitalist system must take cognizance of the divergent and contingent demands in peripheral markets, which shaped the responses of European markets. On the Gold Coast, these merchants who traded in and consumed imported manufactures appropriated surplus to underpin their place as an African coastal elite. Socially, they saw themselves as agents of change and sought to redefine Gold Coast African “class” relations. Politically, they saw themselves as a viable alternative to the Colonial Office and European commercial enterprise, especially from early to mid-nineteenth century when the Crown wavered on its future on the Gold Coast. Indeed, by the 1830s and 1840s, European capital “permitted and even encouraged the
growth of this African merchant group as a temporary intermediary for the consolidation of its own economic and territorial empire.” (Kaplow, 1977, pp. 317-318) In the end, the commercial activities of the African merchant elite helped to entrench colonial capitalism in the Gold Coast by accumulating capital for “monopolies which overwhelmed them.” (Kaplow, 1977, p. 333) From this weakened position, the political ambitions of the African merchant elite were easily thwarted by the colonial government.

Additionally, an analysis of the activities of these merchants helps scholars to explain nuances in the mode of production in pre-colonial African economies as well as transitional periods in the nineteenth century before formal colonial rule. Here, the pre-colonial African state may have significantly intensified an awareness of class relations, but it becomes one of several avenues for analyzing the mode of production. Indeed, Freund (1998) is of the view that more thought should be put into analyzing the character and workings of class (p. 31). Using the orthodox Marxist schema to analyze pre-colonial African societies presents its own challenges because of the use of slave labor but one way around this difficulty will be to focus on African merchants. These individual entrepreneurs excelled and created class consciousness in the nineteenth century Gold Coast by openly acquiring and consuming luxury products to set them apart from the rest.

**A word on historical methods**

Scholarship on the political economy or social history of nineteenth century Gold Coast mostly maintained the preferred traditional sources employed by historians – colonial and post-colonial archives and lately, oral histories. Historians, however, may find it intellectually fruitful to fish for points of contact and comparison in the creative arts, even if it is an exercise filled with minefields. McCaskie (1990) is particularly concerned about losing the Rankean “as is” essence of history, especially when creative writers base their works on historical events. In an analysis of Ayi Kwei Armah’s *The healers* and Asante history, McCaskie points out that Armah wanted to “subvert the rhetorics of power” by
“putting the past in a conjectural realm safely beyond the lived epistemologies of time and place” (p. 46). Thus, the trope of an “Africa of desire,” an Africa which is seemingly romanticized, becomes problematic in the quest for history as it really happened. Despite McCaskie’s reservations, he concedes that perhaps we should meet Armah halfway. Indeed, this paper is intended to meet creative works halfway because texts such as Armah’s *The healers* and Aidoo’s *Anowa* lend themselves to multiple layers of analyses and interpretations.

Significantly, Diamond (1989) argues that the fiction of a particular society “may reveal more of its values, customs, conflicts, stresses, changes and transformations than does all the formal scholarship of historians and social scientists” (p. 435). The origin of Aidoo’s early works such as *Anowa* was based on the lives of ordinary women. She was raised in a royal household, an environment that proved instrumental in raising her consciousness of traditional lore, custom, ritual, and human drama. In *Anowa*, the misconception that African femininity was passive was upstaged by Anowa’s fiery spirit of rebellion. In the drama, Anowa did not embody the societal ideal of womanhood. On the contrary, she sought validity for what she believed in and all things dear to her. In this gripping tale, however, there are multiple ways in which scholars may approach this creative work. The historian may be interested in the historical context, the anthropologist and sociologist in the mores and norms of Yebi that drove the protagonists to their tragic ends, and the literary critic may read it as a post-colonial text. Indeed, the need for multiple viewpoints culminated in Adams’ (2012) edited volume on Ama Ata Aidoo. In *Essays in honour of Ama Ata Aidoo at 70*, the reader is entertained to perspectives from historians, linguists, poets, literary critics, and cultural anthropologists on how the works of Aidoo may be analyzed and applied to their various crafts. It should be noted that most of those analyses were done with an eye on the historical context, not necessarily the present context of the author.

On deeper reflection, *Anowa* serves as a critique of colonial
discourses and inventions of dashing imperial agents, intrepid colonial officials, and devilish West African interlopers. The person of the pre-colonial West African merchant and entrepreneur was highly contested. Extant colonial official correspondence often used derogatory epitaphs for African merchants and entrepreneurs who engaged them in open competition. For instance, colonial officials such as A.B. Ellis and W.W. Claridge perceived Geraldo de Lima, the Anlo-based (Vodza) merchant prince as a dishonest person, a smuggler, scoundrel, and troublemaker (Ellis, 1893; Claridge, 1964). Furthermore, John Kabes, the prominent merchant prince of Komenda, was referred to as “ungrateful defrauder” and “dishonorable knave” (Goucher & Walton, 2013, pp. 362-364). Indigenous references were generally positive, although voices of chastisement could also be heard. In Anowa, Kofi Ako is praised for being “prosperous” and having the means to “dress up fifty brides” and another fifty more, “without moving a step” (Aidoo, 1984, p. 41). On the other hand, he bears “a bigger crime … inherited from the clans incorporate” by depending on the pale stranger for his wellbeing (pp. 6-7). Badua, in a disparaging manner, insinuates that Kofi Ako, the “watery male of all watery males,” “good-for-nothing cassava-man’s” commercial venture with the white men was growing because they were buying men and women (pp. 33).

This conundrum posed by perceptions of the merchant prince gives this work the poetic license to stretch the bounds of historical inquiry by imposing glimpses of Kofi Ako in the life-stories of the merchant princes or vice-versa. Whatever their human foibles might be, these men’s entrepreneurial spirit puts African agency back into the grand narratives of nineteenth century imperial and commercial activities. Using available historical sources as well as creative works such as Anowa, this paper suggests imaginative ways in which scholars may tease out this African agency in existing narratives on capitalist exchange in nineteenth century West Africa.

Furthermore, the need for interdisciplinarity in the humanities is a driving force behind this paper. To free historians from the research lull that sometimes occurs, there is a need to look
to the creative arts to push the boundaries of innovative thinking and to bring historical themes alive. Through the various genres of literature, creative writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo believe in using their art as a medium for interrogating our historical consciousness. Aidoo’s desire to articulate and dramatize Ghanaian history is shaped by an understanding of the writer’s commitment to broach taboo subjects, speak about the unspoken and reflect society’s mood at any given time. This study hopes to illustrate the capacities and limitations of West Africans’ attempt to control market forces, or at least to manipulate them in a nineteenth century world. In the process, the intention is to push the boundaries of innovative thinking by appreciating the nuances between the dramatic and factual.

More importantly, this paper is a response to Reid’s (2011) apprehension about the marginalisation of “pre-colonial African history from mainstream Africanist scholarship” (p. 135). He bemoans “the abiding fascination with the colonial era” and its entrenched, hegemonic hold over the direction and focus of professional research. Reid particularly extols the enormous value of researching Africa’s “deeper past” to elucidate present-day issues (p. 135). The themes of pre-colonial nineteenth century, especially conversations emanating from the denouement of Atlantic slavery, the consolidation of capitalism and Empire, and the negotiation of social relations, offer historians a deeper understanding of issues confronting the post-colonial state.

**Capitalist exchange, consumerism and power in a nineteenth century Atlantic world**

The abolition of the British slave trade in 1807 gradually changed the nature of European commercial activities on the Gold Coast. From a rational economic point of view, it was generally concluded that West Africa had more lucrative goods to offer than slaves. Thus, British trading firms and the Colonial Office encouraged trade in agricultural products such as palm oil, rubber, and eventually cocoa (Hopkins, 1973). Accordingly, while an acknowledgement of the existence of the various descriptions
and interpretations of nineteenth century Gold Coast economy is important, the aim of this work is to examine the perceptible existence of capitalist exchange in this period, in conjunction with the motivation for the capitalist zeal that accompanied economic activities. The question is not over the existence of capitalism as it is over the mode of production and the resultant class relations. It may be argued that the nineteenth century Gold Coast economy was an admixture of pre-capitalist modes of production and commercial or merchant capitalism. In bridging the apparent gap between emphasis on agrarian production and the stress on commercial endeavor, this paper suggests the two as a continuum. The agrarian economy of the Gold Coast left some room for reinvesting profit, and the introduction of an Atlantic world market, commercial enterprise, and the desire for economic growth supplanted the so-called social commitments of African merchants and farmers.

By the eighteenth century, the Gold Coast had built an emerging merchant class. John Kabes (1640s – 1722) of Komenda was the quintessential merchant prince, who had a proclivity for wearing fineries, including a lace-embellished hat. He also carried a silver-headed cane. Interestingly, in Anowa, Kofi Ako, who “wanted to have joy in our overflowing wealth” (Aidoo, 1984, p. 38), mimicked the merchant princes by building a big house in Oguaa where the furniture is “either consciously foreign or else opulent… In the central wall is a fireplace and above it, a picture of Queen Victoria … to the left of the Queen is a picture of Kofi Ako himself” (p. 43). Elsewhere, he is “resplendent in brilliant kente or velvet cloth and he is over-flowing with gold jewelry … As he passes, he makes the gestures of lordship over the area” (p. 44). Consequently, by the mid-nineteenth century, “the Gold Coast’s leading African merchants were those who most successfully combined economic activity of a capitalist kind with social relationships in an older style” (Iliffe, 1983, pp. 13-14). These Victorian merchants, as Kaplow (1977) pointed out, became “a temporary intermediary for the consolidation” of European capital, economic and territorial empire (pp. 317-318).
By the 1830s, the commercial landscape of the Gold Coast was evolving rapidly. Catalysts for this evolution included the availability of credit from London-based trade houses such as Forster, Smith and Swanzy, which sent merchandise to correspondents on the Gold Coast to be sold on commission. Additionally, the introduction of steamship services to the Gold Coast streamlined and expanded the export trade. In 1852, the African Steamship Company was formed, followed by the founding of the British and African Steam Navigation Company in 1869 (Reynolds, 1974a, pp. 256-257). A number of African merchants accumulated wealth and increased their economic and social power base through trade and production for the market. George Blankson Sr. (1809 – 1898), a Gold Coast Merchant, was described as a “commercial king” (Iliffe, pp.13-14) who built a castle that is wonderful to behold at Anomabo, and also retained a hundred slaves. Interestingly, Blankson served the Methodist Church as a lay preacher in the 1840s and became a member of the Gold Coast Legislature between 1862 and 1873. J. Bannerman and J.W. Hansen were involved in the export of products such as palm oil, ivory and gold dust to Europe, while selling imported items on the Gold Coast market. Additionally, they hired out laborers, canoes, and messengers.

Related to the intensification of African capitalist exchange in the nineteenth century Gold Coast was a kind of consumerism that emanated from a larger consumer revolution, which had earlier engulfed the Atlantic world in a complex symbiotic relationship. African merchants who made use of the established credit system began investing in palacial homes, slaves, and other landed property that gave them a sense of security. On the heels of their newly found status, they had to maintain a lifestyle that was consistent with their status (Reynolds, 1974a, p. 259). Consumerism, the preoccupation with the purchasing of consumer goods, played its part in entrenching capitalism in the Atlantic world, and the Gold Coast in particular. Consumer demand became the driving force behind economic change. Even before Britain experienced the Industrial Revolution, Breen (1986) argues that throughout its
sharp-eyed businessmen were mastering the techniques necessary to turn out small consumer goods on an unprecedented scale. Indeed, the flooding of these items onto the domestic market was responsible for what some historians have termed the birth of a consumer society. (pp. 475-476)

Awareness of the availability of these goods generated a yearning for luxury items, and even when people could not afford them, they made do with what they could acquire. In doing this, colonial subjects were imitating culture and society in the metropole, in a desperate attempt to redefine themselves. In essence, easy access to manufactured goods, which peaked in the 1740s, confounded the social divide in the colonies, and “the very wealthy found that they had to spend ever greater amounts of income just to distinguish themselves from middling consumers” (Breen, 1986, p. 478).

There was an English “consumer revolution,” which took place sometime between 1690 and 1740 in England, Scotland and Britain’s mainland American colonies. During this phase, “consumers of the gentle and particularly “middling” classes began to purchase an unprecedented number and variety of manufactured goods and to use many of them in conspicuous displays of leisure, social ritual, and status affirmation” (Axtell, 1992, p. 127). Axtell indicates that the development of wants, instead of necessities arose out of an economic situation in which both Europeans and natives found themselves with adequate purchasing power to cater for most of their trivial wants. In the case of the Europeans who were faced with so many economic choices, “consumers... were empowered by a heady sense of personal independence and the ability to fashion themselves with the material trappings of “gentility” (p. 128). Additionally, Hunter’s (2001) study of the social life of Massachusetts merchants from 1670 to 1780 revealed that merchants were the fulcrum of the social and economic transformation that hit New England in the eighteenth century. Hunter’s study “brings to
light the key role they played not only as agents of capitalism but also as proponents of the new polite and commercial culture” (p. 11). The merchants of Boston and Salem “began in earnest to adopt Georgian gentility and refigure their identity based on purchased goods and acquired manners. In pursuing economic goals and proclaiming personal status, they used wealth derived from global trading connections to reshape local environs” (p. 171). These merchants spent considerable sums of money as well as their time in investing in consumer goods and acquiring genteel behaviour.

Similarly, works by Prestholdt (2004) and Richardson’s (1979) on consumerism in East Africa and West Africa respectively suggest that “African consumers directly affected the shape of British trade … globally” (Prestholdt, 2004, pp. 757-758). Of greater interest here is what the African merchants used their wealth for. Most of them, including Bannerman, Hansen, and Blankson, maintained a retinue of slaves, who decided to serve even after abolition. They also bought and sold land, eventually passing it on “as private property to their children.” These merchants, built houses on the properties, “erecting substantial residencies in the European style and constructing other buildings in the coast towns – solid structures which the Europeans were happy to rent or buy” (Kaplow, 1977, p. 320). They then obtained ample provisions and purchased furnishings for their homes. Some also paid to educate their children in Britain.

Apart from the motif of capitalist agent and consumer, which intrigues historians, Anowa allows the historian to frame the merchant prince as a tragic figure who lost in the struggle for power on the Gold Coast. Kofi Ako was not a typical resistor to European commercial incursions, but he played the roles of facilitator of trade and tragic figure. In Anowa, Kofi Ako controlled the export of palm oil in his area of influence, and this made him “the richest man, probably, of the whole Guinea Coast” (Aidoo, 1984, p. 44). Sadly, this enterprise involved “buying men and women as though they were only worth each a handful of the sands on the shore” (Aidoo, p. 39). Indeed, the nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable expansion in
the “commercial production of cash crops based on slave labour.” This situation “generated a need for agricultural labour and for porters to carry produce to coastal traders” (Akyeampong, 2012, pp. 231-232) In the end, however, the co-protagonist (together with the heroine) ended up committing suicide, for it was “remarked that every house is ruined where they take in slaves” (Aidoo, p. 39).

Similarly, African merchants fell victim to British desire to control the West African coastal marketplace and political authority. In the 1860s, a series of events led to apprehensions about the future of the coastal African merchant elite and potentates in the Colony. These included the Asante invasion of 1863 and loss of confidence in British protection, and the gradual withdrawal of the Dutch from the Gold Coast, especially after the 1867 exchange of territories and possessions with the British. The exchange of possessions between the British and Dutch particularly crystalized the Colonial Office’s monopoly on the West African coast. The instinctive response of African merchants to this growing British political and economic dominance was through movements such as the Fante Confederation of 1868, Accra Native Confederation of 1869, and the Aborigines’ Rights Protection Society of 1897. Additionally, individual acts of resistance against what was perceived to be European attempt to monopolize trade on the West African coast was met with arrest and exile. In 1866, King John Aggrey of Cape Coast was arrested and exiled to Sierra Leone for challenging British authority in his domain. In the case of Geraldo de Lima, Governor Young of the Gold Coast Colony placed a bounty on his head in 1885. He was subsequently arrested and incarcerated in Accra. Similar fates befell king Jaja of Opobo and Nana Olomu of Itsekiri in the Niger Delta region, when they resisted British incursions into their spheres of influence. Kaplow referred to the trajectory of the nineteenth century Gold Coast merchant as “the abortive development of a Gold Coast bourgeoisie in the Victorian era” (Kaplow, p. 318). Unfortunately, the economic activities of these African “Victorian” merchants inadvertently consolidated capital and political power for British monopolies, damning the political ambitions of the
merchant princes.

**Conclusion**

The political economy of nineteenth century Gold Coast suggests a synergy and a complex interaction between capitalist exchange, consumerism, and power. While economic opportunities allowed African merchants to accumulate wealth and openly display it through property acquisition and consumer items, their attempts to translate that wealth into political power faced stiff opposition from the British, and sometimes from traditional rulers. These merchants elicited several kinds of responses. On one hand they were admired for their entrepreneurial spirit, and on the other hand, disliked for taking advantage of market forces to enrich themselves. They were often seen as opportunistic individuals who accumulated wealth at the expense of the community. These West African brokers manipulated their economic assets to protect the economic monopoly they enjoyed in the interior before the advent of formal colonial rule. They frequently clashed with British as well as the interest of traditional rulers, because “they often used their influence to protect and to foster their own interests” (Reynolds, 1974a, p. 258).

In *Anowa*, Kofi Ako’s rise to wealth through trade is foreshadowed by several historical personages who assumed the role of a merchant prince. In the end, Ako’s tragic end mirrors the stifling of political and economic ambitions of a West African merchant elite. Aidoo’s *Anowa* is a text that lends itself to multiple layers of analyses and interpretations, especially when studied comparatively with other works such as McCaskie’s (1995) book on pre-colonial Asante, or Reynolds’ (1974a) study on African merchants on the Gold Coast. Points of similarity as well as points of departure between the historical merchant prince and Kofi Ako have been explored to illustrate the capacities and limitations of attempts by West Africans to control market forces, or at least to manipulate them in a nineteenth century context. In the process, historians inadvertently show a bias for the historical text, but this work hoped to push the boundaries of innovative thinking by
blurring the interface between the literary text and the historical text, appreciating the varied levels of nuances.
References


Assessment of students’ reading culture in a Nigerian university: Waxing or waning?

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Abstract
This study assessed the trend of the reading culture of the students of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Nigeria. The respondents’ level of study, preferred language skill, frequency and duration of reading, and types of materials read were examined. Using a descriptive survey design, data was collected from 509 students in the first and last years of study across eight colleges by means of a questionnaire. The findings revealed that the most preferred language activity was reading with a high percentage engaging in it daily. Most students only read to pass examinations as they hardly engaged in any reading outside school books. A relationship between the students’ level and their reading culture was established. Amongst other recommendations, students were encouraged to read magazines, novels, and other recreational materials in order to improve their reading habits.

Keywords: literacy, reading culture, reading frequency, reading materials, recreational reading
Introduction

Reading, one of the most fundamental building blocks of learning, is a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units, and to comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message (Aina, Ogungbemi, Adigun, & Ogundipe, 2011, p. 1; Onuoha, Unegbu, & Umahi, 2013, p. 2). In other words, reading is a process of decoding symbols in order to derive or construct meaning. Reading is, therefore, vital for everyday activities of being better informed, sharpening and shaping the mind, rational and objective reasoning leading to greatness in life. Reading is also said to be an encapsulating process which is integrative in nature, and which affects the reader’s perceptual, cognitive, and affective domains (Oriogu 2013, p. 61). Simply put, reading is not just for school, it is for life! It is affirmed that humans are capable of transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations through reading. This confirms the assertion that success in school or any life endeavor is dependent on a good foundation in reading competence (Oriogu, 2013, p. 61).

Reading has been said to be the only form of entertainment that is also an essential life skill. Gentile (1976, p. 378) argues that “reading allows an individual the opportunity to grow and develop insights into life and the world at large. Thus, he is able to make effective decisions that lead to personal health and happiness”. Reading is one of the most rewarding pursuits in life and an art that is central to human development. Therefore, developing a reading culture is pertinent to success in life.

Reading culture is the process of building up a positive reading attitude. This is when reading becomes a part of the individual’s life and not only certain aspects, such as school or work. Phillip (2005, p. 1) affirms that reading is not just for the acquisition of literacy, but also for the cultivation of the habit of reading when he stated:
Giving someone literacy skills is rather like teaching a person to drive and then giving them only a few drops of petrol to practise with - the machine is perfect and the driving skill has been acquired but it is not yet an automatic skill because there has not been enough practice. Once the fuel runs out, the driving skill becomes useless and begins to deteriorate. With a harnessed reading culture, on the other hand, the person is provided with a continuous supply of easily processed fuel so that the new driver can go places, can get to enjoy driving and can eventually realize the limitless possibilities it opens up.

Reading culture is best developed in the formative years of the child. This is why reading should be a major part of the school curriculum and also, an instrument of thoroughly understanding the subject-matter of any school subject. Reading is one of the fundamental skills which students are expected to acquire through the process of schooling without which there would possibly be no other means of achieving academic success (Oyewole, 2017, p. 92).

Reading culture in different climes

Societies and nations, consciously or unconsciously, view and value the concept of reading differently. A reading nation is said to be a growing nation as the way of life of a nation is influenced by the percentage of its literate citizens – the more and better literate, the better developed. According to Palani (2012, p. 91), consciously creating a good reading habit is an essential and important aspect of creating a literate and developed society. For example, Cuba, despite decades of diplomatic conflicts with the United States of America, is said to have the highest rate (99.8%) of literacy in the world and this accounts for its vibrant economy. Britain, which also places a high premium on reading, has about 99% of her citizens being able to read and write (CIA World Factbook, 2015, p. 139). A 2015 Nielsen Bookscan report indicates that out of the 67% who bought books in the United States of America in 2014, 59%
In 2015, a survey by Booktrust showed that 76% of the 1500 adults quizzed on reading habits in the UK enjoyed the act. The reading habit in the United States of America is also high as it is reported that in 2013, some 76% of American adults aged 18 and above stated that they read at least one book in the past year (Zickuhr & Raine, 2014, p. 1).

However, the reading culture in developing societies such as Nigeria with a literacy level of 59.6%, Ethiopia 49.1%, and Benin 38.4% (CIA World Factbook, 2015, p. 139) is very low. In Nigeria, for example, reading is associated with passing examinations and is seen as a means of accomplishing academic success. This mindset reflects in students’ lack of inspiration to read in their leisure time and outside their disciplines since they associate reading with textbooks and attending school. It is revealed that 40% of adult Nigerians hardly engage in reading non-fiction books (Ilori & Abdullahi, 2006, p. 145). The average Nigerian reads less than one book per year, and only one percent of successful men and women in Nigeria read one non-fiction book per month. It further showed that 30 million Nigerians have graduated from high school with poor reading skills. It was reported that in 2006, South African Grade 4 and Grade 5 learners came last in a study of 40 countries that took part in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Mullins, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007, p. 37).

Another project reveals that South African Grade 6 learners were the second-worst readers from a group of 15 countries in Southern and Eastern Africa (Kruger, 2011, p. 1). Janse van Vuuren (2011, p. 9) contends that the South African population cannot be described as a book reading nation. The results of the studies in the developing countries corroborate an old saying that “if you want to hide something from a Black person, put it in a book” meaning that Black people do not like to read. This behaviour may be attributable to the fact that traditionally, Black people generally relied on oral communication to document history and to communicate.

The efforts of various governmental and non-governmental
agencies, and the media in spearheading the promotion of reading culture in the African society are, however, commendable. Notable amongst these are the Pan African Reading Society, and the Writers and Readers Interactive and Total Empowerment Scheme for Africa (WRITES Africa). The former organizes conferences and literacy events on the African continent, providing platforms for literacy professionals and researchers to interface with policy makers in government and the donor community. It is reported that positive developments have been experienced in the eight countries (South Africa (1999); Nigeria (2001); Uganda (2003); Swaziland (2005); Ghana (2007); Tanzania (2009); Botswana (2011); and Kenya (2013) where the conference has been held (RASA, 2015). The mission of WRITES Africa is to “completely change the mentality of African youths towards reading and totally inculcate the reading and writing spirits into the innermost recesses of their hearts”. It was established to promote the reading culture in Nigeria in particular and Africa as a whole. The project, which includes a reality TV show, is designed to expose the youth to the process of nation-building through self-discovering reading.

**Reading culture and school performance**

Reading, a major aspect of literacy, is essential for the acquisition and transfer of knowledge, and academic achievement. A reading culture of deliberate and well-planned study habit is, therefore, very important in attaining success in school, and life in general. In other words, reading and success are dependent on each other. However, the prevailing conditions in many societies is that reading is fast losing popularity as the television, internet, and various forms of new technologies have reduced the reading culture so much so that it has negatively affected school performance. The decline in reading appears to be a direct consequence of technological advancements and this has brought about significant changes in family, social, and economic conditions (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014, p. 4). The society, including students of school age, no more reads books for pleasure, but would rather get entertained listening to music, watching home videos, or chatting
on social media. In Nigeria, the rate of failure recorded by students in qualifying examinations, such as the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), National Examinations Council (NECO) and the Joint Admission Matriculation Board (JAMB) is a clear indication of the effect of lack of reading culture on school performance. Adetulu (2016) reveals that the dearth of reading culture and the absence of equipped libraries have been identified as the two causative agents in the 80% failure rate recorded among Nigerian youth. Research on the study habits of undergraduates also revealed that students have a negative attitude towards reading and this often affects their performance in class and examinations (Akabuike & Asika, 2012; Oriogu, Subair, Oriogu-Ogbuiyi, & Ogbuiyi, 2017). It is against the backdrop of dwindling reading culture that the current research was embarked upon to find out, amongst others, if the class level of students in tertiary institutions has an effect on their reading habit. Is their reading culture waxing or waning?

**Theoretical framework**

The current study is anchored on the social behaviour theory of symbolic interactionism as propounded by Mead (1934), developed by Blumer (1969/1986), and further expounded by Milliken and Schreiber (2012). The theory presents language, meaning, and thoughts as inextricably linked concepts of communication in the process of socialization by interaction (Mead, 1934, pp. 89-90 as cited in Cronk 2001). As Milliken & Schreiber (2012, pp. 688-689) put it, the “meaning of objects (words) … arise(s) from, and (is) modified by, the social interaction through which people engage with them”. Blumer (1969) highlights human interaction with things, others and the society based on meanings ascribed to them and the interpretation given when dealing with things in specific circumstances as the premises on which symbolic interactionism is based. Reading, an art which involves the decoding of symbols in the derivation and interpretation of meaning, can influence and guide students’ social behaviour and interaction with others in the society. Reading habits can be linked to academic performance and even job performance later in life.
Statement of the problem

A good reading habit has been established as essential for academic success. It stands to reason then that the more students read, the better their academic performance; and the higher they move up the academic ladder, the more they ought to engage in reading. However, it seems the social media with its features of dynamism, visual appeal, and brevity is making students engage less in reading. This effect of loss of interest in reading is greater on science students than on their counterparts in the arts who tend to have a greater motivation for reading. With the intent of assessing if class level affects reading habits, this research examines first and final year students of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) in South West Nigeria. Do they read more, or less, as they progress in school?

Objectives of the study

The study set out to:

i. ascertain the level of reading culture among Nigerian undergraduates
ii. assess the frequency of the respondents’ reading
iii. determine what constitute tertiary institution students’ reading habits
iv. assess the relationship between students’ level in the University and their reading culture

Research questions

i. What is the level of reading culture among undergraduates?
ii. What is the frequency of the respondents’ reading?
iii. What are the reading habits of tertiary institution students?
iv. Is there any relationship between students’ level in the University and their reading culture?
Methodology

The study was carried out at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB) in South West Nigeria. The university, established in 1988, is a non-conventional institution offering mostly agriculture-based courses, some natural sciences, and recently social and management sciences courses. The respondents were randomly selected first and final year students across eight of the University’s colleges. The reactions and responses of 509 first and final year students to the culture of reading were assessed. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with the research instrument for data collection being a questionnaire which was used to obtain, amongst other parameters, data on respondents’ level of study, reading habits such as the frequency and duration of reading, and the types of materials read. Results were analysed using simple percentages.

Results

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Five hundred and nine (509) students served as respondents in this study. A consideration of their level of study reveals that two hundred and ninety seven (297) students, constituting 58.3% of the respondents, were in year one while two hundred and twelve (212) that is, 41.7 % of the respondents were in the final year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year one</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final year</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>509</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016

College distribution of respondents

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents (47.7 %) were in the Agriculture Programme which is run by three Colleges: College of Agricultural Management and Rural Development
COLAMRUD, College of Animal Science and Livestock Production (COLANIM), and College of Plant Science and Crop Production (COLPLANT); College of Natural Sciences (COLNAS) had (23.8 %); College of Food Science (COLFHEC) had (11.2 %); College of Environmental Resources Management (COLERM) (10.8%); College of Engineering (COLENG) was (3.9%); and College of Veterinary Medicine (COLVET) (2.6%). (The last two Colleges normally admit very few students hence the low sample).

Table 2: College distribution of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COLAMRUD</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLANIM</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLPLANT</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLNAS</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLFHEC</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLERM</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLENG</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLVET</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016

Reading culture of respondents

Despite the fact that students’ reading culture is generally said to be low, most respondents (59.3 %) submitted to having preferred reading to writing (16.7 %), listening (13.7 %), and speaking (7 %). Table 3 indicates that more students would read than engage in other language skills.
Table 3: Response of students on language activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who of these skills do you prefer doing?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>509</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016

The frequency of students’ reading was also considered. Table 4 reveals that daily reading was the most common among the students, followed by weekly reading. Fewer percentages of the students stated that they read monthly (4 %) and occasionally (12 %).

Table 4: Reading frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you read?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>509</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016

On assessing how long the students read continuously, it was established that the duration of reading at a time among the students differed.
Table 5: Reading duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long do you read at a stretch?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 30 min.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31- 60 min.</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61- 90 min.</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-120 min.</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 and above</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016

As shown in Table 5, many of the students (31.2%) read for over two hours at a stretch while only 5.9% of the students read for about 30 minutes at a time. The percentage of those who read between one and a half and two hours at a stretch was almost 50%. This shows that the respondents have quality reading time.

**Reading materials and environments**

The study sought to investigate the reading habits of students with particular reference to what they read, and where they read. Table 6 shows that prescribed school books constitute the most read materials as indicated by 62% of the respondents. This declaration is corroborated by the high percentage (66.4%) of those who also agreed to have read texts relevant to their course of study. Some 15.7% claim to read religious and motivational books, 14.2% and 5.5% read novels and comics respectively. The result confirms the ‘reading to pass’ mindset of most students and also reveals that students hardly read for pleasure.
Table 6: Responses of students on reading habit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What kind of materials do you read?</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prescribed school books</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious/motivational</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novels</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comics</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>509</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I usually read texts relevant to my course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>66.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>509</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where do you read?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anywhere</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noisy environment</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>509</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you take pleasure in reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately well</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>509</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2016

The reading environment is believed to have effect on reading habit. It would seem natural that a serene, as opposed to
a noisy, study environment would lead to better understanding. In this study, 54.6% of respondents submitted to reading anywhere. Only 38.5% read in the library while 4.5% and 2.4% read in the classroom and even noisy environments, respectively. The attitude of reading anywhere would probably reduce students’ level of comprehension of read texts. The level of pleasure derived from reading among the students varied. Forty-eight percent (48%) of the respondents claim to derive high pleasure from reading, 36% got moderate pleasure while only 16% of the students declared to have fairly enjoyed reading. Though a higher percentage indicated they enjoyed reading, it may be assumed that their reading is precipitated by the need to do well in their academic work.

Table 7 is a juxtaposition of the reading habits of the respondents according to levels – first and final years of study. Reading, as an activity, was preferred to other language skills irrespective of the student’s level. However, more first year respondents (64%), as against 52.8% of the final year, submitted to have preferred reading. With respect to frequency of reading, more final year students seemed to be lackadaisical having 15% and 32% reading on a monthly or occasional basis respectively. The first year students, however, recorded 7% and 30% respectively. Remarkably, more first year respondents (71%) read on a daily basis.
### Table 7: Patterns in the reading culture of first and final year students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>First Year (n=297)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Final Year (n=212)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which do you prefer doing?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How often do you read?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>For how long do you read at a stretch?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 -30 min</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31- 60 min</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 – 90 min</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 – 120 min</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 and above</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How well do you take pleasure in reading?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately well</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly well</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field Survey 2016

The students’ length of study time was significantly influenced by their level as most of the students in year one (34
%) read for more than 2 hours and above while most students in the final year (28.3 %) barely read for more than an hour. It was also established that more final year students (9.4 %) as opposed to 3.4 % of year one students read for just 30 minutes. Both sets, however, declared to have derived at least some moderate pleasure from reading with 84.2% for the first year and 84.9% for the final year students.

The findings on the relationship between the students’ level of study and their reading culture are graphically represented in Figure 1 below:

**Relationship between student’s level and reading culture**

![Figure 1: Relationship between student’s level and reading culture](image)

Discussion

According to the findings, 59.3 % of the undergraduates sampled prefer reading to other language activities. The level of reading is a bit above average, which is considered good compared to the general notion that undergraduates do not read. This result, however, becomes worrisome when we consider the fact that good readers are presumed to be good writers. Available literature shows that the writing skills of Nigerian undergraduates are well below average as revealed in studies by Aborisade (2003), and Oguntuase (2003) at the Federal University of Technology Akure; Adelabu and Fadimu (2004) at the Federal University of Technology, Makurdi.
Onukaogu (2005) and Bodunde and Sotiloye (2013) also recorded poor writing performance of students in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, and the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, respectively.

The increase in reading interest might, however, be attributable to the fact that 100 level students are generally eager to do needful assignments and thus may be forced to read. Their exposure to GNS 101 (Use of English) which requires that they read literary works may also be a plausible reason. Generally, it is expected that undergraduates’ reading materials include recommended school books as well as novels, magazines, comics, religious/motivational books, and some other materials as these are expected to prepare them for a total life. However, this research shows that over half of the respondents (62 %) read only school books and 64 % read materials related to school work which gives the impression that respondents did not engage in extracurricular reading. They only read to pass examinations! This suggests that in the absence of school books, students will probably not read to gain knowledge or broaden and educate their minds.

The results of the study also corroborate previous findings that the culture of reading in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, is linked only with schooling (Louise, 2008). The value system encourages reading whenever one must write examinations or school assignments. This may invariably affect their work performance after graduation, especially if their job description demands reading.

The study has confirmed the mindset surrounding the Nigerian formal education revolving around paper qualification which was further emphasized by the percentage of students (64 %) who agreed to have read only texts relevant to their field of study. In other words, students tend not to read extensively outside their fields for them to be exposed to other disciplines. Owusu-Acheaw & Larson (2014, p. 19) working on Ghanaian students’ reading habits discovered that 87% of the students read lecture notes or their textbooks whenever they visited the library while only 3 % read novels, and 10 % other materials.
The low reading habit of non-school books can be attributed to the access to home videos, cartoons and comic materials made affordable by the emergence of ubiquitous technologies which give students the opportunity to watch these on mobile phones and other such devices. The lack of interest in reading for pleasure has, however, gained the attention of some associations; governmental as well as non-governmental agencies that are making concerted efforts to promote and improve reading proficiency in various African countries. One such agency is the Open Library Project, an initiative to nurture and maintain a reading for pleasure culture in Kenya. This actually had a positive impact on the participants, and the society at large, with Kenya’s literacy level rising up to 78% in 2015 (CIA World FactBook, 2015). In 2011, the African Library Project (ALP) a non-governmental agency in Swaziland was also reported to have started establishing and operating Fundza (Siswati word for “to learn” or “to read”) libraries to which students were exposed in order to improve their reading habits (ALP Newsletter, 2017). Furthermore, Associations such as, the Reading Association of South Africa, and Reading Association of Nigeria are trying to improve the literacy level in their respective communities.

There seems to be a relationship between the students’ level and their reading culture as Table 7 reveals that 64% of year one undergraduates engaged in reading as against 52.5% of the final year students. It could be postulated that the final year students did not read as much as the first year students because they depend on the existing grade points they had made during their earlier years in school, whereas the year one students read to build up their Cumulative Grade Points so as to be able to graduate with high grades. It could also be attributable to the fact that first year students have more courses to offer, and have the zeal to read more as is expected of fresh university students. The difference in the length of study time of the first and final year students is of great concern. The negative trend may culminate in students’ cessation of reading after graduation. It has been observed that though a combination of the study time and other factors may explain students’ academic
performance, students who are very successful in their desired career have longer study time (Kunal, 2008). A thirty-minute study time would probably not lead to academic excellence.

Based on the premise of symbolic interactionism which interprets human behaviour through people’s interaction with things, others, and the society, it is presumable that students who engage in the art of reading have the tendency to score high grades while low grades may be interpreted as having lesser interaction with reading materials.

**Conclusion**

It can be concluded from the findings that, of the four language skills, reading was the most preferred by the students while speaking was the least on the list. Most of the students engaged in reading daily and read for two and a half hours at a stretch. However, the majority read only school prescribed books while very few read novels and comics. This is an indication that they did not read for pleasure meaning and did not engage in extensive reading. A comparison of the reading habit of the first and final year students revealed a waning trend in that the former engaged in the act of reading more than the final year students and read for a longer period of time. This may be explained by the fact that the first year students have to take many basic and foundation courses which demand more reading.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and the discussions, it is recommended that a vibrant reading culture be created in students, right from the cradle, through interesting educative indoor games that demand the use of the reading skill. Reading habits can be developed using several educational games, such as scrabble, monopoly, and chess. Students at the primary and secondary school levels should be encouraged to enrol for vocabulary developing competitions such as the scrabble game, debates, or spelling competitions. Since majority of the undergraduates limit themselves to prescribed books, it is recommended that courses
and programmes be expanded to include more liberal arts books or even the introduction of reading courses. The South African One-Book-One-Library project, where everyone in the university community was made to read one book at the same time, could be adopted or adapted in Nigeria. School libraries should be well-equipped and effort be made to attract students of different ages to read by introducing various incentives such as giving out tickets to eat at a restaurant, ticket to a book launch, or even scholarships to those who excel in reading competitions.

Furthermore, communities should build up or update their libraries and form Readers Associations through which children as well as adults can develop or improve their reading skill. Students should be encouraged to read magazines, novels, and other materials instead of reading textbooks all the time. It has been established that students, who read magazines at intervals learn to relax, cool their brain, and avoid mental fatigue. It is pertinent to encourage students to set an effective study time-table and stick to it. This can be achieved if students are taught effective time management to accommodate extensive reading. Everyone should be encouraged to read outside school or work, and read for pleasure as that is an avenue to make great minds which would culminate in the construction of a great nation.

Language courses, specifically on reading, could be made compulsory for all students as is obtainable in some institutions like the Daystar University in Kenya where all students, irrespective of their major courses, are made to take Advanced Reading and Advanced Writing. The same university has also established a Writing and Speech Center where students, through peer-tutoring, learn to improve their writing and speech abilities. Institutions can extend this to reading whereby students can practice reading in a fun-filled and relaxed atmosphere outside the classroom setting. It is also appropriate that the big distraction of the new technology give way, be curtailed, or modified so that students’ reading habits can improve. Instead of being glued to the mobile phone, television, or internet and engaged in activities that have limited educational advantage, students can actually make use of e-book facilities of the
new technology. Finally, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to shed more light on the reading habits of students in more tertiary institutions to cover more geo-political domains of the country and the continent.
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Participation in online activation (#) campaigns: A look at the drivers in an African setting

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Abstract
Online brand activation is in vogue and has been used by several brand giants (e.g. Apple, Adidas, etc.) to create viral campaigns that invite consumers to join brand-initiated conversations. The opportunities therein for brand visibility and customer engagement are immense. However, to leverage it, brand communicators must first understand the characteristics of persons most likely to participate in it and target them, a question that is yet to be addressed in the budding literature on the subject. For brand communicators, particularly in developing economies such as Ghana where low internet penetration levels and high associated costs may hinder participation, this is a critical gap in their quest to justify the relevance of online activations to boost brand visibility and customer engagement. This study sought to address this gap by testing a model of the drivers of participation in online activations using a consumer survey (N = 278), set in a recent online activation campaign in Ghana. The findings suggest that persons who trust the activated brand would be inclined to participate in it, suggesting the need for brand communicators to first work on building trust. The study also finds that individuals who are susceptible to interpersonal influence are less likely to participate in such activations. Possible explanations for this are explored in the study along with their implications.

Keywords: online activations, social media, brand communication, Ghana, customer engagement
Introduction

In big consumer markets such as the USA and the UK, online brand activations have joined the repertoire of strategies used by brand communicators to engage audiences and build visibility for brands (Van Noort, Antheunis & Van Reijmersdal, 2012). Contemporary communication campaigns by brands typically include a web-based activation element where targets are invited to join the ‘conversation’, and share their own experiences (Jansen, Sobel & Cook, 2011). We define online brand activations as invitations to brand lovers, consumers, and followers to join online brand-related conversations by sharing their brand experiences (e.g. posts, selfies, comments etc.), and associating with brands online. Artefacts of online activations may take various forms including brand selfies, posting of comments, and following brand-generated conversations as well as joining hashtag conversations (the use of the symbol ‘#’ to precede words/phrases/sentences on social media to identify and connect messages on a specific topic).

Arising out of brands’ need to leverage more touch-points with increasingly fragmented audiences (Christopher, 1996), online activations help brands to generate discourses that coalesce into online tribes of engaged customers (Cova & Pace, 2006). Herein also lies the opportunity for earned media and viral visibility. By asking targets to post brand selfies, join ongoing ‘hashtag’ conversations, or initiate their own brand stories, online activations also enhance evangelism opportunities (Van Noort, Antheunis & Van Reijmersdal, 2012).

Though not an old strategy, online activations are already evolving into a profitable industry as social media platforms recognize their power and begin to charge for mounting them. For instance, a 2015 Financial Times report quoted Snapchat as charging $750,000 from brands seeking to activate user-generated selfies on the platform (Financial Times, 2015). Several brands have launched online activations including Apple’s Beats Electronics’ 2014 #SOLOSELFIE (asking fans to promote the Solo2 headphones) (Willens, 2014) and the World Wildlife Fund’s #LastSelfie (inviting...
Snapchat users to take a picture of its endangered species adverts and Snapchat it to their friends) (Cision, PR Newswire, 2014).

While online activations are common in large economies and are attracting scholarly attention (Presi, Maehle & Kleppe, 2016; Sung et al., 2016; Van Noort, Antheunis & Van Reijmersdal, 2012), very little is understood about them in developing countries where many internet-based phenomena remain a novelty. Yet, with such benefits, and given the tendency for developing markets to replicate best practices from bigger markets (Spencer, 2008), it is no surprise that online activations are gaining attraction in developing countries such as Ghana. For instance, in December 2016, CloseUp launched the #BlueChristmas selfie campaign asking Ghanaian consumers to post pictures of themselves with CloseUp Blue, online (CloseUp Ghana, 2017). MTN, in early 2017, also launched a campaign commemorating Ghana’s 60th independence anniversary requesting Ghanaians to post their uniquely Ghanaian experiences on social media using #ItsAGhanaThing to join the conversation (MTN Ghana, 2017). To combat a nationwide illegal mining (“Galamsey1”) menace, Citi FM (an Accra FM station) and later, the Media Coalition Against Galamsey also launched an online activation asking Ghanaians to share and spread stories of the dangers of ‘Galamsey’ using the #StopGalamseyNow hashtag (Ghana Web, 2017).

Clearly, online activations are gaining popularity in Ghana. Yet conditions within developing countries may challenge their uptake by audiences. As established in existing literature, differences across markets may interfere with cross-context replication of marketing (communication) practices (Sheth, 2011). For instance, low internet penetration levels (World Bank, 2014) coupled with high costs (Opoku & Kuranchie, 2015) mean consumers may be unable to join in such purely web-based campaigns. Indeed, given the high data costs, targets may rather choose other uses for their data rather than use it to ‘propagate’ a brand’s cause. Thus, it appears that it takes a certain kind of person to go beyond such conditions.

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1 A Ghanaian term derived from the expression “gather them and sell”. In essence, it means illegal small-scale gold mining.
and participate in online activations. To leverage the benefits, therefore, brand communicators must understand the unique domain in which they operate (Labrecque, 2014).

With current scholarship focusing on brand-target conversations via websites (Opoku, Abratt & Pitt 2006; Wang, 2006), brand communities (Brodie et al., 2013) and social media pages (Chu and Kim 2011), online activation campaigns remain under-studied. The closest attempt at exploring the issue, perhaps, comes from recent scholarship on brand selfie activations (a form of online activations) (see Kedzior, Allen & Schroeder, 2016; Presi et al., 2016). Yet these remain largely conceptual. Thus, online activations have yet to be engaged in the empirical literature to bring clarity to their scope, drivers, consequences and boundaries. Importantly, this also means context-based differences that attend online activations, including conditions existing in developing countries remain under-explored.

To contribute to bringing clarity to some of the issues raised, this study explores online activation campaigns using consumer data from Ghana. Starting off with the question ‘who is the ideal target of an online activation campaign?’, the study attempts to explain participation in online activation campaigns as a form of customer engagement behaviour demonstrated towards brands. It then tests a conceptual model that argues brand identification, brand trust, market mavenism (individuals’ drive to influence the market-directed behaviours of members within their online networks [Faick &Price, 1987]) and individual susceptibility to influence as the main drivers of participation in online activations. By so doing, the study lays the foundation for recognizing the online activation phenomenon to pave the way for scholarly engagement with it. Given their rising popularity across the globe, online activations promise to change the face of marketing communications, requiring the scholarly fraternity to generate understanding of the phenomenon to guide practitioners.

To our knowledge, this study is among the first to examine the empirics behind online activations in Ghana. This sets the tone for
understanding how to target such campaigns to the right audiences, enabling practitioners to manipulate and leverage the benefits of online activations. Our attempt to explain participation in online activations from the perspective of customer engagement behaviours also invites scholars to a theoretical lens for understanding the behaviour. Importantly, doing these with data from a developing country enriches the literature with rare evidence.

**Background to the study**

The study is set in a recent online activation campaign in Ghana. At the peak of campaigning for Ghana’s 2016 general elections, a photo of the opposition candidate (now president) Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo (hereafter Nana Addo) in which he was drinking Kalyppo, a local fruit juice brand mainly targeting children, begun to circulate on social media. Given his age (72 years), political opponents sought to use it to suggest his general inability to cope with the energy demands of campaigning, and for the presidency. To counter the potential negative effect on the Nana Addo brand, his New Patriotic Party (NPP) launched an online activation campaign encouraging the public to post selfies of themselves and Kalyppo as a show of solidarity. This instigated the highly popular #KalyppoChallenge campaign across various social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) in which people posted their own selfies or shared, commented on and liked those of others. The typical #KalyppoChallenge showed participants using Kalyppo in often funny scenarios accompanied by the KalyppoChallenge hashtag (#).

**Online brand activations: A consumer brand engagement perspective**

When brand communicators invite audiences to join activations and tell their stories, spins and interpretations of brands (Mancuso & Stuth, 2014), they require latter’s response to give life to the campaign. Thus, the audiences determine whether campaigns would gather momentum and generate the visibility targeted by brand communicators. The response may manifest in varied
forms including creating and posting content, ‘sharing’ and liking others posts, etc. While this suggests a multi-dimensional tone to the participation in online activation construct, our core interest lies in the consumer engagement underpinnings of the behaviour, irrespective of the form in which it evidences itself. We view the underlying ingredient to achieving success in such activations as resting with the individual target member’s participatory action which, according to Dijkmans et al (2015), is indicative of involvement and engagement with the brand.

Given that consumers seek to use their social media/online behaviours as a means of self-expression and personal branding (Labrecque, Markos & Milne, 2011), it appears that participation in such activations is enacted as a form of customer engagement with the brand (Van Varik & van Oostendorp, 2013). This is corroborated by current conceptualization of online activation artefacts such as brand selfies suggesting close links with personal branding. For instance, Eagar and Dann (2016) argue that consumers post brand selfies to give expression to their inner persons in a quasi-personal branding effort. Similarly, Saltz (2014, p. 3) has argued that individuals’ online posts mimic ‘letters to the world’ about their brand experiences.

These arguments about the self-expression intent of such online behaviours suggest a personal investment in the brand which signals consumer engagement. We view the personal investment underlying such behaviours as a form of engagement behaviour because it means individuals (interacting with brands online) appropriate brands to their lives to the extent where propagating the brand has direct implications for them. According to Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014, p. 154), consumer brand engagement is ‘a consumer’s positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions’. It is a multidimensional construct that includes ‘activation’ which represents actual engagement behaviours such as effort and time spent interacting with a brand (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014, p. 154). It encapsulates the varied ways (beyond
transactional) in which customers demonstrate their interest in brands (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

As a behavioural construct, therefore, engagement’s roots lie in the verb ‘to engage’ which refers to interest beyond the mere liking for something, and manifesting rather as a strong sense of connection and action towards it (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). The sense of connection serves a motivational effect to drive individuals towards interactions with the brand and its stakeholders. Engagement behaviours, therefore, draw from personal motivational drivers and target a broad scope of responses that have a brand as the object (Hollebeek, 2011). Customer engagement behaviours can be positive or negative, manifesting as brand choice or switching, helping behaviours, referrals, co-creation and the exercise of voice (both praise and complaint) (Maslowska, Malthouse & Collinger, 2016).

It is within the voice expression element of the consumer brand engagement construct that we situate participation in online activations. The exercise of voice refers to the choice to communicate individuals’ brand experiences and associations in the public domain (Qui et al., 2015). It manifests variously including complaint making, positive or negative (electronic) word of mouth, participation in brand communities and blogging (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Thus, to the extent that participation in online activations takes the form of joining brand-initiated conversations/posting brand-solicited messages, it signals individuals exercising voice (Mancuso & Stuth, 2014) and demonstrating brand engagement behaviour.

Indeed, scholars have argued that within the specific context of social media, consumer engagement takes on an interactivity essence based on the interactive characteristics of the Web 2.0 medium (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). For this reason, the online space and social media in particular present useful avenues for understanding consumer engagement. It becomes reasonable, then, to view customers’ interactions with brands online as a means of demonstrating aspects of their engagement with the latter. Even
negative voice expression demonstrates engagement to the extent that individuals choose to complain and seek remedial action rather than just switch brands. Accordingly, we view participation in online activations as signaling customer engagement by the personal investment roots from which the behaviour is drawn as well as the activation of interaction with the brand.

**Research hypotheses**

The foregoing highlights how consumers may appropriate online activations to their own ends signaling the primacy of person-based variables in activating the participation behaviour. Yet few indications exist by way of scholarship. To illuminate this, we identify from the perspective of customer engagement behaviour scholarship, four factors primary to the drive to participate in online activations – market mavenism, brand identification, brand trust and individuals’ susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Figure 1 presents a conceptual model proposing these relationships.

**Fig. 1: Conceptual model**

![Conceptual Model Diagram]

Source: Author-generated conceptual model

First is the individual’s quest to influence the market-
directed behaviours of members within their online networks. Individuals high on this behaviour are market mavens who position themselves as purveyors of market information (Feick & Price, 1987). Market mavens tend to be highly engaged with the market and seek to acquire and share knowledge about same to project an ‘expert’ image of themselves (Packard & Wooten, 2013; Sudbury-Riley, 2016). This positions mavenism as a form of engagement behaviour given that it can be directed at a particular brand (Feick & Price, 1987). Because mavens want to be seen to be aware of changes in the market (Lee, Leizerovici & Zhang, 2015), they may participate in online activations as a means of showing that they are ‘on top of’ happenings in the market (Sudbury-Riley, 2016).

Mavenism is also strongly linked with extraversion and word of mouth behaviour (Sorokowska et al., 2016), suggesting the self-expressive roots of engagement behaviours (Berger, 2014). To the extent that online posts are ‘letters’ written to the world (Saltz, 2014), mavens seeking avenues for self-expression may view activations as another forum to enact their expressiveness. This logic is supported by evidence from Islam, Rahman and Hollebeek (2017) that extraversion drives consumers’ engagement within online communities. Finally, evidence from Sudbury-Riley (2016) shows that mavenism generates positive attitudes towards advertising for which reason knowing that online activations are part of a brand’s advertising efforts should make them well received by mavens. Accordingly, the conceptual model includes the expectation that:

**H1: Market mavenism is positively related to participation in online activations.**

The second variable expected to drive participation in online activations is the individual’s personal identification with a brand (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). Brand identification is a form of engagement behaviour that stems from an internal evaluation of how well a brand matches one’s personal values (Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013). A resulting positive conclusion means individuals are more willing to associate with the brand in public,
even to the extent of engaging in brand advocacy (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen, 2012). We view participation in online activations as an example of such advocacy behaviour arising out of positive identification with a brand. If individuals use the social media space for personal branding (Krämer & Winter, 2008), then the extent of fit between them and brands should trigger a willingness to associate with the latter in this public sphere.

In other words, persons identifying with a brand so define themselves by it that, joining such activations becomes a means of enacting the association. Accordingly, brand-identified individuals should be more willing to join brand-initiated activations to demonstrate their associations with same. Such reasoning finds support from Ahearne, Bhattacharya and Gruen (2005) who suggest engagement behaviours to demonstrate consumers’ identification with a brand to the extent of wanting to publicly associate with and support it. A similar argument has been proffered by Hollebeek (2011) who shows that brand identification underpins customer engagement behaviours. This leads us to the supposition that:

**H2: There is a positive relationship between brand identification and participation in online activation campaigns.**

We also propose that the extent of individuals’ trust in brands is a precursor to their participation in online activations initiated by the latter. This position stems from scholarly suggestions that trust underlies engagement behaviours (Chaudhuri & Holdbrook, 2001). Because trust is a customer’s faith in the brand’s ability to fulfill promises (Chaudhuri & Holdbrook, 2001), its existence presages the customer’s willingness to interact with the brand. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994) trust is a core determinant of exchanges between individuals and brands. It involves calculations about a brand’s credibility and provides a route to persuasion such that trusted brands are more persuasive in getting customers to interact with them (Kitchen et al., 2014).

Conversely, without trust individuals may not exhibit engagement behaviours such as the exercise of voice involved in participating in online activations. Similarly, where invitations to
participate in online activations are accompanied by incentives, less trusting customers may fail to believe the offer and subsequently refuse to participate in them (Cheng & Vassileva, 2006). This leads to the proposition that:

**H3: Brand trust is positively related to participation in online activation campaigns**

Finally, our model predicts that individuals’ susceptibility to interpersonal influence may inhibit their willingness to participate in online activations. Bearden, Netemeyer and Teel (1989) define susceptibility to interpersonal influence as the need to identify with, or enhance one’s image in the opinion of significant others via conformist behaviours. Individuals susceptible to influence, therefore, need additional impetus from their social circles to engage in what they perceive to be ‘socially approved’ behaviours (Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012). Thus, unless the individual is surrounded by significant others whose participation in such activations becomes examples to conform to (or who goad them into such behaviours), the likelihood of such participation dwindles.

However, as has been argued by Van Varik and Van Oostendorp (2013), most online users passively consume information shared in their online (brand) communities. Thus they are unlikely to actively generate attention to received messages by forwarding (Romero et al., 2010). This reduces the odds that susceptible individuals would receive the necessary nudging (from their influencers) to participate in activations. In the absence of this nudging, however, susceptible individuals have little motivation to conform by participating in online activations. For this reason, we expect individuals susceptible to interpersonal influence to not participate in online activations as the needed drive to participate is unlikely to be easily forthcoming (Romero et al., 2010).

**H4: Susceptibility to interpersonal influence is negatively related to participation in online activation campaigns.**

In order not to be duplicative of existing knowledge, we
also included internet media addiction as a control variable. As argued by the media system dependency perspective, as individuals become reliant on a medium, they consume it more and may be better influenced by it (Paul, 2015). To that extent, persons addicted to social media, spend a lot of time there looking for activities to occupy their time, thus increasing the chances of their participation. This is corroborated by empirical evidence from Whang, Lee and Chang (2003). For this reason, the conceptual model controlled for the direct relationship between internet addiction and participation in online activations.

**Methodology**

**Data setting and sampling**

The data for the study was collected from a sample of university students in Ghana over a six-month period in 2017. Three reasons underscored the selection of Ghana as the empirical setting. Ghana enjoys a highly pluralistic media environment in which social network platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp are highly popular particularly among the younger demographic (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2015). Secondly, Ghana has, in recent times, been home to various online based brand activations, including the CloseUp Blue’s selfie activation (BlueChristmas), MTN’s GhanaThings campaign and CitiFM’s StopGalamseyNow campaign. Lastly, it was more convenient to gather the data from the country because we live here and it was easier getting to our sample from our respective institutions.

We employed a series of convenience sampling approaches to collect data from a sample of 288 students in two universities. While convenience sampling is less preferred in studies of this nature, we were constrained to employ it given that we wanted to collect the evidence in the moment while the activation was still ongoing. Unfortunately, this meant that there was no room to afford official bureaucratic procedures for ascertaining student populations and accessing residential lists to use as sampling frames to allow for random sampling. Regarding the choice of universities, we chose
the University of Ghana (UG) and Central University (CU), given their special positions as the largest public and private universities respectively, in Ghana. For this reason, they gave us access to large numbers of mixed demographic students.

As a caveat, we note that while the brand instigating the activation was the NPP/Nana Addo, most #KalyppoChallenge posts showcased the Kalypopo drink. Thus, prior to the survey data collection, we sought to ascertain whether it was the Nana Addo brand, rather than Kalypopo, that was instigating participation. We interviewed five participants in the #KalyppoChallenge who corroborated the view that their participation was in solidarity with the Nana Addo brand. Additionally, a look at the comments generated by the #KalyppoChallenge posts social media showed that the Nana Addo brand was the main subject of discussion rather than Kalypopo. We also interviewed an official of Aquafresh Ghana, producers of Kalypopo who denied any involvement in instigating the campaign for the benefit of their brand. Accordingly, we concluded that the activation initiated by the Nana Addo camp did indeed have him as the object in the minds of the consuming public.

In each university, sampling begun with the purposive selection of mixed sex residences. In each residential facility, a room was accidentally chosen as a starting point. Following this, we used a skip method by which each adjoining room was skipped in favor of the next. We sampled one person from each room, using a convenience approach. Where a person declined participation, we moved on to the next. Respondents self-administered their surveys. A total of 288 surveys were completed (UG = N123; CU = N165). Initial data examination, however, led to the exclusion of 10 responses due to failure to provide responses to the criterion variable (participation). As a result, the study is based on 278 responses.

Descriptive analysis of the data shows that the sample had more females (58%) than males 42%). At least 88% of the sample were active social media users with use levels ranging ‘very often’ (55%) to ‘always’ (33%). Given that the data is from a university
setting, all respondents had formal education and tended to be studying at the undergraduate level (with a few exceptions studying diploma and post graduate courses). Overall, most of the respondents had, in some way, participated in the activation event within which our data is set (#KalyppoChallenge). Across four dichotomous items measuring varying forms of participation, we found respondents had participated by liking, commenting on and sharing other people’s #KalyppoChallenge selfies (in descending order). Selfie posts emerged as the least means of participation (See Table 1).

**Table 1: Participation formats**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variant of participation</th>
<th>Frequencies (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posted own #KalyppoChallenge</td>
<td>32 (11.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared other people’s #KalyppoChallenge</td>
<td>72 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Liked’ other people’s #KalyppoChallenge</td>
<td>114 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commented on other people’s #KalyppoChallenge</td>
<td>103 (37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Field data

**Measures**

To assure ourselves that the sample was relevant to the study, the instrument began with a question as to how often respondents used social media. The dependent variable, participation in online activation campaign, was a dichotomous variable tapping whether respondents did (not) participate in the #KalyppoChallenge. We used multi-item measures anchored on five-point Likert scales for all predictors. To assess *market mavenism*, we used *my friends look up to me to provide them with current information*; *If someone needed information on social media, I could tell them where to look* and *my friends think of me as a good source of information on brands* based on Faick and Price (1987). We measured *brand identification*, with
four items adapted from Tuškej, Golob and Podnar (2013): *I feel a personal connection to [X]; I think the [X] brand helps me become the type of person I want to be; [X] symbolizes the way I want to present myself to others and [X] brand image suits me well.* We adapted the measure for *brand trust* from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) using *I consider [X] to be dependable, I consider [X] to be honest, I consider [X] to be reliable and I consider [X] to be sincere.*

The measure for *susceptibility to influence* included three items, drawn from Bearden, Netemeyer and Teel (1989). The items are: *it is important that others to like the things I do, I often identify with other people by buying the products they buy, and I achieve a sense of belonging by behaving like other people. Finally, to control for respondents’ overall addiction to internet use as a possible confound, we adapted Wang, Lee and Chang’s (2003) *social media addiction* scale thus: I see myself as an internet addict; I cannot go a whole day without using the internet and My participation in social media discussions is a key part of my day.*

**Measure assessment and validation**

Given that we used data from two university campuses, we assessed the equivalence of measures across samples. We undertook confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) employing the maximum likelihood estimation procedure in LISREL 18.50. We assessed model fit with the traditional chi-square ($\chi^2$) test along with accepted fit heuristics (root mean square error of approximation {RMSEA}, Normed Fit Index {NFI}, Non-Normed Fit Index {NNFI} and Comparative Fit Index {CFI}). Results show that our measures demonstrate a similar pattern across samples ensuring that they are invariant across the samples (*Model 1*: {$\chi^2$/degrees of freedom = 180.47/109, $p< 0.00$; RMSEA = 0.06; NFI = 0.92; NNFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96}; *Model 2*: {$\chi^2$/degrees of freedom = 210.08/109, $p< 0.00$; RMSEA = 0.07; NFI = 0.91; NNFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.95}). Following this assurance, we combined the samples and undertook an overall analogous CFA. Results show that the model replicates the data well ({$\chi^2$/degrees of freedom = 172.12/109, $p< 0.00$; RMSEA = 0.05; NFI = 0.95; NNFI = 0.97; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.96).
(CFI) = 0.98).

We assessed convergent validity and found all item loadings to be significant at 1% level. Loadings ranged between 0.56 and 0.97 (see Appendix 1). Composite reliability (CR) for all constructs exceeded the 0.60 minimum with the lowest being 0.76 and the maximum being 0.96. To ensure discriminant validity, construct inter-correlations, variance extracted for each construct (AVE), and the highest shared variance (HSV) between construct pairs were examined. Correlations among the constructs were acceptable (Zeriti, Robson, Spyropoulou, & Leonidou, 2014). AVEs were acceptable at both minimum (.53) and maximum (.88) levels. A closer look by comparing squared correlations (HSV) and AVEs found the latter to be larger than the former across board (See Table 2). Altogether, these findings assure that the constructs in the model display adequate validity and reliability.

**Table 2: Construct validity and reliability**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Composite reliability</th>
<th>Average Variance extracted</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Participation in activation</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Market maven</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-.28**</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Brand identification</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Brand trust</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Susceptibility to influence</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>-.32**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Internet addiction</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>-.35**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); **Correlations significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); alpha values for multi-item constructs are reported on the diagonal, in bold font; Highest shared variance (Squared Correlations) above diagonal.

**Source:** Field data
Structural model estimation

Prior to estimating the structural model, the means of the construct indicants were taken to create composite indicants of latent constructs (Katsikeas, Skarmeas & Bello, 2009). Following this, and considering that our criterion variable is a dichotomous non-metric one, we proceeded to estimate a logistic regression model. The logistic regression is a popular predictive tool for modeling consumer behaviour and tendencies (e.g. who is likely to not/buy a new product). It stands superior to others (e.g. OLS and discriminant function analysis) given that it is more robust to violations of normality assumptions and easily interpretable (Akinci et al. 2007).

We, therefore, felt assured to use the procedure to examine the extent to which the hypothesized variables contribute to a statistically significant separation between online activation campaign participants and non-participants. We defined participation here to mean persons posting their self-generated #KalyppoChallenge selfies during the campaign. The model was statistically significant ($X^2 = 6.10, df = 8; p = .64$) and correctly classified 91% of the cases, explaining 39% of variation in the participation variable (Nagelkerke $R^2$).

Findings

Regarding the hypothesized paths, we argued, in H1, that market mavenism is a positive grouping variable for predicting a person’s participation in an online activation campaign. Table 3 shows that this is not supported as the parameter estimate for this hypothesis is not statistically significant ($\beta = -.359, p > .05$). Thus, the study finds that market mavens are no more likely than non-mavens to participate in online activations making the variable inconsequential to the incidence or otherwise of participation.
Table 3: Results of hypotheses tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp (B)</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market mavenism</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand identification</td>
<td>-0.49</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>Not supported*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand trust</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptibility to influence</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet addiction (control)</td>
<td>-1.19</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>8.28</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3977</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Predicted variable: Participation in online activation campaign
Model statistics: Homer and Lemeshow goodness of fit
chi Square $X^2 = 6.10$, df = 8; $p = .64$; Nagelkerke $R^2$ (variance explained) = 39%; Correctly classified cases: 91%

*Relationship is significant as predicted but in the opposite direction

Source: Field data

The second hypothesis specifies the relationship between brand identification and participation in online activation campaigns to be positive and significant. This is also not replicated in the data as it only partially vindicates our assumptions ($\beta = -0.491$, $p < .05$). Whereas identification with the brand strongly predicts who will participate (as suggested by our hypothesis), the negative direction of effect contrasts our expectation. Thus, we conclude that H2 fails to find support in the data. Indeed, brand-identified persons are 61% times less likely to participate in online activations by the brand.

The data support the expectation, in H3, that the extent of trust individuals have in a brand strongly predicts their participation in an online activation campaign initiated by the brand ($\beta = 0.717$, $p < .05$). As expected, the study finds that the more individuals trust a brand, the more likely they are to participate in online activations initiated by the brand. Indeed, brand trusting individuals are over 200 per cent times more likely than not to participate in such activations. Finally, the data also replicate the logic behind H4
suggesting that individuals susceptible to influence would fail to participate in online activation campaigns ($\beta = -.716$, $p < .05$). We find that individuals who are susceptible to interpersonal influence are nearly 50% less likely than their less susceptible colleagues to participate in online activations (See Figure 2).

**Fig. 2: Empirical model**

Source: Author generated empirical model

**Post Hoc analysis**

To understand the surprising evidence on H3, we tested an alternative model to establish whether brand identification has a quadratic relationship with participation. This is due to the untested possibility that it is only persons mildly identified with brands that may seek to boost their association with it, by giving public expression to it. Accordingly, we included the squared term of brand identification and re-estimated the logistic regression model.
Table 4: Results of post hoc analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp (B)</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market mavenism</td>
<td>-.355</td>
<td>.131</td>
<td>.701</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand identification</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>1.063</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand trust</td>
<td>.683</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>1.980</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susceptibility to influence</td>
<td>-.738</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>.478</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet addiction (control)</td>
<td>-1.171</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand identification²</td>
<td>-.102</td>
<td>.534</td>
<td>.903</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>7.797</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>2432.494</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Predicted variable: Participation in online activation campaign
Model statistics: Homer and Lemeshow goodness of fit chi Square
\( X^2 = 4.87, \text{df} = 8; p = .77 \) Nagelkerke R² (variance explained) = 39%; Correctly classified cases: 90%

Source: field data

Findings show an inferior model (\( X^2 = 7.62; \text{df} = 8, p = .47 \); Nagelkerke R² (variance explained) = 39%; classified cases: 90%) in which the \( X^2 \) is higher and the p-value is lower than those of the hypothesized model, suggesting a need to reject this competing model (Allison, 2013; Hosmer et al., 1997). In addition, the direction of effect remained unchanged while the strength of effect became weaker in the competing model. Together, these confirm the hypothesized model as the superior model suggesting a need to re-conceptualize the nature of the relationship between brand identification and engagement behaviours.

Discussion and conclusions

Online activations have gained recent popularity as almost every brand communication campaign includes an invitation for customers to join #hashtag conversations, post brand selfies or merely ‘like’ a brand (campaign) page (Jansen et al., 2011). Arising
out of pressure on brands to increase touch-points with increasingly fragmented and sophisticated consumers (Christopher, 1996), online activations aim to generate brand conversations among consumers, via earned media, that contribute to brand narratives and build visibility as messages go viral (Van Noort, Antheunis & Van Reijmersdal, 2012). A common strategy in large economies, online activations like many internet-based phenomena, remain a recent novelty in developing countries where brands and civil society are increasingly deploying them to build visibility and generate interest.

Given the lacuna in empirical scholarship on the subject (in both marketing and communication literature and particularly as pertains in developing countries), this study tested a conceptual model of the drivers of consumers’ uptake of online activations. Viewing participation in online activation campaigns as a form of customer engagement behaviour, the study examined the predictive power of market mavenism, brand identification, brand trust and individuals’ susceptibility to influence over the participation variable. It found that persons who trust the activated brand would likely participate while those who are susceptible to interpersonal influence are less likely to do same. These findings support our expectations confirming, first, that trust is a key variable to look out for as brand communicators seek to use the online sphere to generate a viral buzz for their brands. Brands need to build consumer trust by delivering to expectation. It is only then that they can expect the ambassadorial behaviour that underlies participation in activations. As argued by Sashi (2012), it is only when customers trust brands that they can be expected to become advocates. Thus, to increase the possibility of a positive reception to their online activations, brands must first build credibility among relevant targets.

Secondly, brands seeking viral attention through online activations must first contend with customers at the receiving end of influence from their friends. As established here, individuals susceptible to interpersonal influence would likely not participate in such campaigns. We reason that this is because most online media users just scroll through information without ‘sending it on’ (Romero
et al., 2010), thereby reducing the odds that susceptible persons would have been prompted by their influential friends to participate in them. To the extent that consumers trust communication by reference groups than they do commercial sources (Ha, 2002), invitations to participate in online activations would be better received when coming from online network members rather than brands (Kaanapali, Zhang & Bilgihan, 2015). However, because fewer people within networks of susceptible persons would send such invitations to encourage participation (Romero et al. 2010), the influence on them becomes limited. With this in mind, brands initiating online activations may consider a two-step approach where influential online opinion leaders are identified and incentivized to ‘spread the word’ as they are more likely to impact susceptible customers (Kandampully, Zhang & Bilgihan, 2015).

However, this may be easier said than done as the study finds that market mavenism is a weak predictor of participation in online activations. It appears that given their high profiles within online networks, mavens may, contrary to expectation, deem themselves to be too market savvy to be used as pawns in the hands of brand communicators to propagate brands. We had argued that because market mavens seek to position themselves to influence people’s brand-related actions, they would see and use participation in online activations to that end (Qui et al., 2015).

Despite this logic (Sorokowska et al., 2016), we find that participation in online activations is completely oblivious to the individual’s mavenist tendencies. Linked to the preceding discussion, therefore, it appears that while market mavens, as online opinion leaders may be influential in stimulating participation, they are not so easily driven to initiate that action. Perhaps, this is all the more reason why the suggestion to identify and incentivize such persons becomes critical. By incentivizing mavens to participate in online activation, brand communicators must consider the wider influence such persons generate rather than viewing their participation as an end in itself.

Finally, the study finds, contrary to expectation, that brand
identification is a negative predictor of participation in online activations. Whereas identification is expected to aid consumers’ public association with brands (e.g. via joining their online activations) (Ahearne et al., 2005), our evidence suggests the contrary. We even explored an alternative logic of a possible self-moderation by the identification variable. We failed to find support for this logic. It is not clear why this is so. But we reckon this might be due to the internal sources of the identification variable (Tuškej, Golob & Podnar, 2013), which might make its manifestation rather more personal than previously theorized. Might it be possible that the existence of the construct is so internally-sourced that brand-identified individuals prefer to keep personal this person-inanimate object emotion, rather than openly display it? Secondly, might there be other variables that condition the boundaries of the brand identification-participation link? We believe more research needs to attend to these issues and explore how identification is given expression within customer engagement contexts and particularly as pertains in the online space.

From the foregoing, we highlight three key contributions to the interactive marketing communication literature. While marketing communication scholars have explored the subject by studying brand communities (Brodie et al., 2013), social media-based Word-of-Mouth (WOM) behaviours (Chu & Kim, 2011; Van Noort, Antheunis & Van Reijmersdal, 2012) and brand selfies (Presi et al., 2016), online activations remain a fallow area. We bridge this gap by examining the factors that drive participation in online activations and show the usefulness of factors such as mavenism, brand identification, brand trust and individuals’ susceptibility to interpersonal influence.

We believe this sets the tone for both scholars and practitioners to understand the conditions under which online activations may be matched to the right target audiences to enhance the opportunities therein. Importantly, by explaining the participation variable as a form of customer engagement, we present scholars with a viable theoretical lens for understanding the construct. We further enrich
the marketing communication scholarship by testing the model on a sample of respondents in a developing African country, Ghana. This brings to the subject invaluable evidence that illuminates our understanding of fast-paced, technology-driven evolutions in otherwise unexplored settings such as Ghana.

**Study limitations and future research directions**

The claims made in this study are subject to limitations which we encourage future scholars to address. First, is the cross-sectional design of the study along with the fact that the data were collected with a specific activation campaign in mind. While we view the conceptual model to be applicable to developing market contexts, the evidence used may be restrictive in its reach. For this reason, future scholars may consider expanding the data to include multiple countries and activations. Even better would be the need to track the hypothesized paths across time to identify any temporal boundary conditions. Secondly, the research model focused only on the factors driving participation in online activations without any attempt to explain the implications of such participation for other market-directed behaviours. For instance, does participation extend into brand use/trial? The growing body of literature on online activations would benefit from insights into what happens after participation in such campaigns. Importantly too, it remains to be seen whether any boundary variables shape the links between participation and its drivers, and possible outcomes. Future scholars are encouraged to explore these issues further.
References


BOOK REVIEW

A page in African ethics: A review of Bernard Matolino’s
Personhood in African philosophy

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One of the most difficult intellectual problems which humans have over the ages sought to resolve is the question of personal identity. And in disparate philosophical systems, including the African, reflections on personhood have sometimes taken an ethical or religious turn, or both. For this reason, Bernard Matolino’s 191-page book, Personhood in African philosophy is useful to philosophers, ethicists and religious thinkers. The fact that the book was published by a company which seeks to promote contemporary theology solidifies my observation. This book is well-written and the quality of the ideas expressed in it is good. It discusses many of the most important concerns and disputes over personhood – especially, regarding the ethical foundations of personhood – in African philosophical thought. It is rather surprising that this book has not been sufficiently reviewed by scholars or received adequate attention on the continent, although Matolino is a well-known South African philosopher.

Matolino carries out his discussion in five chapters. Chapter one explores the nature of personhood with special focus on the “three theses” of Didier Kaphagawani and the “two conceptions”
of Polycarp Ikuenobe. The three theses on personhood identified by Kaphagawani are:

a). The force thesis which he identifies with Placide Tempels;

b). The shadow thesis which he attributes to Alexis Kagame; and

c). The communalist thesis which he associates with John Mbiti. (Matolino, pp. 3-4)

However, Matolino criticizes Kaphagawani for labeling the conception of personhood which “outlines essential attributes” of a person as West African, arguing that this conception also makes sense to the non-West African (p. 4). Contrary to Kaphagawani’s thinking, Matolino suggests that Tempels’ position should rather be understood as communalist (pp. 7-11). On Ikuenobe’s two conceptions of personhood – the “normative” and “metaphysical or descriptive” (p. 28) – Matolino seems to generally welcome the classification, although he disagrees with the characterization of the metaphysical as descriptive. Matolino (p. 29), then, aptly maintains that “metaphysics is a far more serious category” in philosophy.

Chapter two examines the basis of the communitarian view of personhood. Following Matolino’s statement above concerning the communalist character of Tempels’ argument, he is in this chapter able to discuss the argument extensively. That which is of utmost importance to the Bantu, according to Tempels, is force or life or vital force (Tempels, 1959, p. 30), which is “a feeling of being at the apex of life through fortunes of good health and sound social relations” (Matolino, p. 37). By sound social relations, the Bantu is expected to lead an ethical life which eventually will earn him a status in the community as a person. This means that personhood is an ethical concept. To a large extent, nonetheless, Tempels’ explication of the Bantu concept of being as “force” does not only seem unjustifiably mystical to Matolino but is also a “distortion” of Bantu thinking since Tempels does not give any word in Bantu which stands for
“force” (Matolino, p. 39). Nevertheless, Matolino’s designation of the force thesis as communitarian is primarily because it puts the individual “under a permanent injunction to behave in a manner that is beneficial to the community of forces” (p. 44). The community, then, is both a “social fact” and a “constitutive identity” of the individual (p. 46). It is easy to observe that this perspective on the individual is common among many African cultures, including the Akan. The prominent Akan philosophers Kwasi Wiredu and Kwame Gyekye express the same ideas about Akan social set-up (Wiredu, 1996, p. 159; Gyekye, 1997, p. 38). Mbiti substantially maintains the communitarian ideas of Temples and suggests that even the African kinship system encompasses the living-dead (pp. 51-52). It is noteworthy that this suggestion about the living-dead – referred to as nananom nsamanfo (Majeed, 2015, p. 110) – is also held in Akan thought. Two West African philosophers, Ifeanyi Menkiti and Gyekye, have discussed communitarianism in “rigid” and “moderate” forms respectively, and this has been confirmed by Majeed (2017, p. 32). But Matolino notably points out that the rigid and moderate forms are not as different as their names suggest (pp. 66-68).

The metaphysical conception of a person is tackled in chapter three with particular focus on the Yoruba and Akan schemes. This conception is discussed as distinct from and projected as equal in importance to the communitarian view which is projected in some circles as the “authentic” African conception of personhood (Matolino, pp. 72, 75). Matolino further rejects the attempts made by some philosophers to explain the former as part of the latter (pp. 77, 81). These rejections set the tone for Matolino to analyse the selected metaphysical schemes with clarity. In Yoruba philosophical thought, the concept of eniyan (person, as a matter of “strict identity”) contrasts with omoluwbabi (person, as a matter of “ethics/sociality”). In terms of the metaphysical sense, eniyan, an individual possesses spiritual and physical attributes even though some parts of the body are also said to perform spiritual roles; okan (heart) and ori (head) are examples (p. 85). On the basis of this,
Matolino questions why Gyekye postulates purely metaphysical entities like *okra* (bearer of life) in Akan philosophical scheme given that both schemes are African. He writes, Gyekye’s characterization of the *okra* as essentially non-spatial is a departure from African thought. Such a departure is not bad only if it is to be supported by some evidence to show that the departure is warranted and that the new suggestion has good basis in the metaphysical outlook of African thought. That is not the case with Gyekye’s suggestion. (p. 95)

By relying on such Akan philosophers as Abraham and, more especially, Wiredu, Matolino lends his support to the view that *okra* must be quasi-physical (p. 96). Again, Gyekye’s characterization of *sunsum* as being fully spiritual may be incorrect because *sunsum* has some physical attributes and is thus quasi-physical (pp. 101-102).

Matolino shows in chapter four how communitarians get their argument wrong. He rejects the view that communitarianism is the authentic African perspective on personhood since many Africans like him who do not live in rural, traditional communities do not have communitarian identities at all (p. 134). On the whole, communitarianism is anachronistic (p. 120). He also rejects communitarianism because of its inherent category mistake: the mistake of misconstruing “the question of what persons ought to be as moral agents who are conceived in a communitarian set-up” as “the question of what persons are as ontological entities” (p. 143).

One may, however, wonder whether the communitarian’s discussion of the ideals of communitarianism suggests that he or she is oblivious of the current reality that urban life does not often display or perfectly portray communitarian living, as Matolino claims. It does not seem to me as if the communitarian was seeking to thrust a communitarian mode of identity on every African that is seeking to define who he or she is. If the communitarian could be understood to be drawing or urging us to draw moral lessons from the traditional society, then, that would not necessarily
suggest that he or she expects the average urban dweller to possess a communitarian identity in advance. Even in a rural setting, not everyone achieves or cares to achieve a communitarian identity of personhood.

Nevertheless, Matolino’s *Personhood in African philosophy* is educative. It also offers an in-depth analysis of the concept of personhood. It is a book that ought to be read by researchers on African philosophy, religion, and society.
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