11 From Burger Highlife to Gospel Highlife

Music, Migration, and the Ghanaian Diaspora

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This chapter deals with music in the context of Ghanaian migration, with a particular focus on the Ghanaian diaspora in Germany that emerged over the course of the past three to four decades. Germany constitutes one of the preferred destinations of Ghanaian migrants in Western Europe and it assumed a prominent role in the production of Ghanaian popular music in the 1980s and 1990s. In the following discussion, two different, though interrelated, fields of musical activity will be highlighted, namely, burger highlife and gospel highlife, and the role of these in the negotiation of social status and identity in the context of migration discussed. While the early and formative years of Ghanaian highlife music have received relatively much scholarly attention (Asante-Darko and van der Gerst 1983; Collins 1986, 1989, 1996; Coplan 1978), developments in Ghanaian popular music from the 1980s onwards have often been neglected, if not openly dismissed for their alleged 'inauthenticity', because of the heavy reliance on computerized sounds and the lack of live performed musical instruments (Collins 1996, 289–95). It is only recently that researchers have begun to direct their attention to more current trends (Carl 2012; Collins 2012; Shipley 2009, 2012). As far as musical production and performance in the context of Ghanaian migration over the past decades is concerned, the sociocultural significance of this transnational field has thus far not been explored.

Burger highlife and gospel highlife both emerged in the early 1980s (Collins 2012), a development that can, as we will see, be understood as an effect of the massive emigration that characterized the so-called Rawlings era in Ghana (Akyeampong 2000, 204–8). While burger highlife enjoyed great popularity among Ghanaians at home and abroad throughout the 1980s and 1990s, gospel highlife has in a way 'outlived' burger highlife, which is now, in a positive sense, considered 'classic', or, particularly among the younger generation, seen in a more negative sense as old-fashioned and anachronistic. Today, gospel highlife is arguably the most successful genre of popular music both in Ghana and its diaspora (Atiemo 2006; Carl 2012; Collins 2004). I will argue in the following that the shift towards gospel music, which is a shift in popularity, but also in social relevance, can be

understood as a response to a particularly difficult paradox in Ghanaian diasporic experience.

The increased mobility of music, musicians, and audiences that characterized the second half of the 20th century has been addressed in the literature on musical globalization and 'World Music' (Erlmann 1998, 1999; Connell and Gibson 2003; Guilbault 1997; Meintjes 1990; Slobin 1993; Stokes 2004; Taylor 1997). For the purpose of my discussion of highlife music since the 1980s, which has actually never really crossed over into the Euro-American world music market (see Collins 2002), the growing body of literature that deals with music in the context of transnational migration and in various diasporic communities is of particular relevance (Kiwan and Meinhof 2011a, 2011b; Ramnarine 2007; Slobin 1994, 2003; Toynbee and Dueck 2011; Zheng 2010). Focusing on the ways in which relationships between diasporas and their—real or imagined—homelands are established and maintained, music has been a lens through which the negotiation of diasporic identities (Knudsen 2001; Manuel 1997; Um 2000; Ramnarine 1996; Solís 2005), the generation and transformation of gender relations in diaspora communities (Niranjana 2006; Sugarman 1997), or the relationship between migration and historical memory in the diaspora (Muller 2006; Shelemay 1998) have been examined. Reconfigured by Paul Gilroy's (1993) discussion of the Black Atlantic, the role of music in African diasporic experience has received particular attention (Feldman 2005; Monson 2000; Oliver 1990). Ingrid Monson even holds that the African diaspora has 'become the paradigmatic case for the closing years of the twentieth century' (2000, 1; see also Akyeampong 2000).

The concept of diaspora has mostly been employed 'in an effort to characterize the contact zones of nations, cultures, and regions' (Clifford 1994, 303). As such, it is, as James Clifford (1994) noted, linked to a number of other terms such as 'border', 'creolization', or 'hybridity' that emerged in the wake of the critical reconceptualization of anthropology since the 1980s (Appadurai 1996; Fox 1991; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Hannerz 1996; Marcus and Fischer 1986). By now, 'diaspora' has undergone a similar process of critical scrutiny as the culture concept itself a decade earlier (see Brubaker 2005; Clifford 1994; Safran 1991). As Rogers Brubaker (2005, 12) remarks, while 'diaspora can be seen as an *alternative* to the essentialization of belonging, [. . .] it can also represent a non-territorial *form* of essentialized belonging' (emphasis in the original). Brubaker therefore suggests to treat diaspora 'as a category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group' (2005, 13; see also Slobin 2003). A similar critique has been raised in recent work on migrating African musicians (Kiwan and Meinhof 2011a, 2011b), where a one-dimensional relationship between diaspora and homeland has proved problematic (see also Hutchinson 2006). To escape this simple dualism, Kiwan and Meinhof (2011a), for instance, argue for a subject-centered multisited approach that

examines the complexity and fluidity of the individual networks of African musicians that transcend not only national but also ethnic boundaries.

If the idea of diaspora as bounded community is problematic, as work on music and transnational migration has demonstrated, it is a sense of diaspora as 'state of mind' (Slobin 2003, 292) or as what Anderson (1991) called 'imagined community' that is more relevant for our discussion. From this angle, the Ghanaian diaspora can be understood as a public or social imaginary (Dueck 2011). As Byron Dueck writes, 'social imaginaries have particularly important implications for migrants, who through acts of attention, performance and publication play a role in extending homelands across borders' (2011, 23). It is here that music and dance are crucial, since:

> the 'border-crossing nation' [is not] the end of the matter: social imaginaries often come into being around forms of affiliation quite distinct from nationhood or ethnicity. Of particular interest are those publics that emerge through the circulation of embodied and expressive practices, such as music and dance, and religious activities, such as worship and exhortation. (Dueck 2011, 23)

In the following discussion, which is based on research in Berlin and Accra (see also Carl 2009, 2011, 2012),[1] I argue then for an understanding of both burger highlife and gospel highlife as expressive practices through which the negotiation of social status and diasporic identity is mediated (Stokes 1994; Turino 1999, 2008), as well as embodied practices that help to maintain social relations across geographical space and also to create new forms of social intimacy (Dueck 2011). George Marcus (1995) has suggested a number of 'tracking' strategies for multisited ethnographic projects, namely to follow people, things, metaphors, and biographies, among other things. In multisited musical ethnography, subject-centered approaches focusing on individual musical experience (Rice 2003) or on the social networks of individual traveling musicians (Kiwan and Meinhof 2011a) have been proposed. While I have discussed some of the methodological implications of my own research at greater length elsewhere (Carl 2012), my rhetorical strategy in the following analysis is basically discourse centered; that is, I chiefly follow musical objects, metaphors and narratives, rather than individual people's life stories and musical experience.[2] To contextualize my argument, the following section will outline the demographic implications of Ghanaian migration and introduce some of the public spaces in which musical performance and consumption in the Ghanaian diaspora in Germany takes place. The latter half of the chapter will then discuss the social imaginaries associated with, first, burger highlife and, then, gospel highlife and elucidate the ways in which musical style is involved in the production and negotiation of social status and diasporic identity.

MUSIC AND THE GHANAIAN DIASPORA IN GERMANY

While from the late 19th well into the first half of the 20th century the former Gold Coast attracted substantial numbers of labor migrants from other parts of West Africa, the net migration rate gradually reversed after Ghana attained political independence from British colonial rule in 1957. From the 1960s onwards, due to political and economic instability, increasing numbers of Ghanaians turned their back on their homeland in search of 'greener pastures'. Whereas Ghanaian migrants up until the 1960s were mostly young men of higher social status in search of education, from the late 1970s Ghanaian migration 'encompassed the professional and non-professional classes, elites and commoners, male and female, on a scale that was stupendous' (Akyeampong 2000, 206). The outward migration reached a peak in the 1980s, when the country was at the brink of collapse, and by the mid-1990s Ghana had the highest emigration rate of all West African countries. It is estimated that currently about 10 percent of Ghana's total population lives abroad (Bump 2006; Peil 1995; Tonah 2007).

Emigration receded slightly in the wake of the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1992 and the gradual improvement of socioeconomic conditions in Ghana, but it still constitutes a major demographic as well as sociocultural factor. Today, the Ghanaian expatriate communities that emerged in the post-independence era form a wide-ranging transnational network that spans over virtually all continents, with larger clusters in Western Europe and North America, interconnecting Ghana and its diaspora in various and often complex ways (Akyeampong 2000, 204–13; Bump 2006; Nieswand 2005). One area that was directly affected by the political and economic turmoil of the late 1970s and early 1980s, resulting in the mass exodus of Ghanaians over subsequent decades, was musical production. Many prominent highlife musicians left Ghana in this period. Additionally, almost two and a half years of night curfew from 1982 to 1984, under the military PNDC government, drastically affected urban nightlife and the entertainment industry in Ghana. Many of those musicians who stayed in the country during this time moved into the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches that started mushrooming in the late 1970s and that provided a space for live performed popular music (Gifford 2004; Meyer 2004). Eventually, these developments resulted in a shift of highlife music from the secular realm towards gospel music (Collins 2002, 2004).

At the same time, secular highlife music was transformed by Ghanaian musicians who migrated to Western Europe. It was particularly musicians who settled in Germany who created a new blend of older forms of guitar-band highlife, funk music, and contemporary styles such as disco and synthesizer-based pop that came to be known as burger highlife (Collins 2012). This genre has thus become particularly associated with travel traffic between Ghana and Germany. One reason why Germany became a preferred destination for Ghanaian migrants, including musicians, were the relatively

relaxed immigration laws in the 1980s (Carl 2009, 11). Today, Germany hosts the second-largest Ghanaian community in Europe, after the UK and before the Netherlands, with regional concentrations in the larger urban centers, particularly Hamburg, Berlin, Bremen, Frankfurt, Cologne, and the Ruhr region. The exact size of the Ghanaian population in Germany is statistically difficult to determine, but different authors estimate that there are currently between 40,000 and 50,000 Ghanaian nationals residing in the country (Nieswand 2008; Schmelz 2009; Tonah 2007).

Over the past decades a Ghanaian infrastructure emerged in Germany that comprises Ghanaian-owned shops, enterprises, associations, as well as numerous religious bodies, among which Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are the most important ones (Nieswand 2010; Tonah 2007). There are ethnic and hometown associations, branches of Ghanaian political parties, and also numerous Ghanaian national associations in German cities (Tonah 2007, 10). Media networks cater for the Ghanaian diaspora in the form of printed newspapers and periodicals. Increasingly, the internet assumes a central role with portals such as ghanaweb.com or modernghana.com that include specific diaspora news sections. In Berlin, Ghanaians make use of a weekly one-hour time slot on the private radio station Afro FM to announce events and discuss issues of concern to Ghanaians in the city, and in Hamburg the FM station TopAfric Radio serves the needs of the African diaspora. While these stations also play Ghanaian music, the Internet now provides better opportunities for people in the diaspora to keep up with developments in Ghana. Most major Ghanaian FM stations today provide streaming services and on websites such as ghanamusic.com or YouTube the latest video clips of Ghanaian artists can be watched.

Important places for informal networking in the diaspora are Ghanaian-owned stores, so-called Afro Shops, which sell groceries, cosmetics, hair products, and sometimes clothes, music, and movies, but that also, and more importantly, serve as communication centers. In these shops, social events such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals are announced, people might drop a letter for someone without legal resident status, sometimes international money transfer services that circumvent the official banking sector are offered, and often people simply come to chat and exchange the latest gossip. In Berlin, a fluctuating number of about a dozen of such shops that are owned by Ghanaians are found. In Hamburg there are about 20 (Erika Eichholzer, personal communication, January 26, 2006). To some extent, collective music consumption also takes place in Afro Shops, as people spend time together and might discuss and listen to new releases by Ghanaian artists. More important contexts for the collective consumption of both secular and gospel highlife music in the diaspora, as well as opportunities for social dancing, are provided at naming ceremonies, funeral celebrations, and other social events to which customarily 'all sympathizers and well-wishers' are publicly invited. While big sound systems are rented to entertain guests at such events, family ties and other social relations both

within the diaspora and between diaspora and homeland are reaffirmed at these occasions. In this context, the circulation of video recordings of the events, for which specialists are usually hired, or, sometimes even their real-time transmission through video calls, are of crucial importance.

Both burger highlife as well as gospel highlife artists also perform live concerts in the diaspora, though such shows are rather scarce and, if they take place in Germany, are mostly restricted to Hamburg, where the potentially largest Ghanaian audience can be found. For gospel artists, performances in diasporic churches are much more common and it is here where the transnational networks of Ghanaian Christianity come into play. More generally, diasporic churches, and particularly those of Pentecostal-Charismatic orientation, provide a public space in which gospel highlife is collectively performed alongside other expressive practices such as prayer, prophecy, healing, or speaking in tongues (Carl 2012). In Hamburg alone, there are more than 30 Ghanaian-initiated churches; in Berlin more than a dozen have been established. The fellowship of these ranges anywhere between a dozen to some 300 people. Several authors have pointed out that Ghanaian-initiated churches, some representing branches of existing ones in the homeland, some newly founded abroad, form an important link between Ghana and its diaspora (Ter Haar 1998; Tonah 2007; van Dijk 1997). Particularly Pentecostal-Charismatic churches have therefore taken on a mediating role, both in the transnational movement of people, as they also assist with the formalities and paperwork involved in international travel (Nieswand 2010), as well as in the circulation of expressive and embodied practices.

THE STYLE AND AESTHETICS OF BURGER HIGHLIFE

The significance of Germany as a site for the production of burger high-life is evident in the genre's name. According to popular etymology the word 'burger' is derived from the name of the city of Hamburg, where the largest Ghanaian community in Germany is located (see Collins 2004, 419; for an alternative etymology, see also Martin 2005, 11–13). As a social type, the 'burger' symbolizes in many ways the process of redefinition of social identity that took place in the wake of the massive emigration waves of the post-independence era and it became a metaphor for the accumulation of economic and symbolic capital through migration (Bourdieu 1989). More generally, we might think of the 'burger' and the way it configures social interaction in terms of what Pierre Bourdieu called 'habitus,' which describes 'a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectifications and apperception' (1977, 86; see also Turino 2008, 120–21).

Featuring prominent in Ghanaian social discourse and popular culture, as for instance in video film productions, 'burger' refers to a Ghanaian who lives or has lived abroad and who adopted a specific habitus and style, a way of walking and dressing, as well as speaking (Martin 2005). The term is also used to refer to somebody who has never traveled abroad but who imitates the lifestyle and habitus of a 'burger', popularly referred to as 'home burger' (John Dankwa, personal communication, Cape Coast, April 25, 2011). As a social type, the *burger* is associated with economic capital accumulated through travel and its public display, for example, in the form of expensive cars, clothing, and other assets. It implies at the same time a generous attitude, denoting somebody who shares his wealth by inviting and helping others. Much of the symbolic capital linked to the 'burger' is derived from the prestige attached to transnational travel itself. As a young dancer and musician in Ghana, who himself aspired to travel to Western Europe, told me, a 'burger' is somebody who has the means 'to move freely' (personal communication, Accra, January 16, 2005). Burger highlife musicians have come to embody these connotations, at the same time that they helped shaping the image of the 'burger'.[3] The performance and consumption of burger highlife music allows people to participate in the ongoing negotiation of identity and social status that takes place in the transnational field spanning between Ghana and its diaspora.

The 'invention' of burger highlife is often credited to the guitarist and singer George Darko, who moved to Germany in the early 1980s and in 1983 released the hit song 'Ako te brɔfo' (The Parrot Understands English) with his band Bus Stop (Collins 2012; loc 4919). Darko and his band were, at that time, based in Berlin, where they also produced the other songs for their album *Friends*, as a former member of his band related (Bob Fiscian, personal communication, Berlin, June 30, 2005). When analyzing the song we can identify a number of stylistic features that came to define a new era in highlife music.[4] First of all, the song's instrumentation—including drum set, bass and rhythm guitar, a lead guitar, electric piano, two synthesizers, and a tenor saxophone that features as solo instrument—sets a new standard for subsequent highlife productions. The horn section of classic highlife songs has been replaced here completely by synthesizers. While in later productions of burger highlife even the drum set is substituted by an electronic drum computer, in the 1983 version of 'Ako te brɔfo' it is more the sturdy and dry sound that was assigned to the drums that distinguishes this recording from earlier productions and that is reminiscent of disco music in the 1980s. The song starts with a futuristic keyboard sound. An upbeat on a syncopated dominant seventh chord then gives way to the laid-back groove based on the funky bass line, the rather straightforward four-four drum beat, as well as the rhythmic accompaniment provided by guitar, electric piano, and synthesizer. The tonal structure of the song, on the other hand, is rather typical for highlife and consists of four measures that are repeated throughout (B—F#^{7}—B—B, F#^{7}/C#—C#^{7}—F#^{7}—F#^{7}).

Overall, both the harmonic as well as the rhythmic *ostinato* with its prominent offbeat that is characteristic for the highlife topos (Agawu 2003, 129), create the strong forward-moving feel of the song, constantly inviting further repetitions.

Other Ghanaian musicians who in the 1980s and 1990s emigrated or frequently traveled to Germany and produced their music there include Pat Thomas, Charles Amoah, the Lumba brothers (Charles Kojo Fusu aka Daddy Lumba, Nana Acheampong, and Sarkodie), Ofori Amponsah, and Amakye Dede, to mention just a few of the more prominent examples. Most of them settled in the Rhineland, in the western part of Germany, where many successful burger highlife albums have been produced. There are two recording studios in particular that stand out in this connection which are Skyline Studios in Düsseldorf, owned and run by sound engineer Peter Krick, who worked with Rex Gyamfi and Charles Amoah, among others, and Bodo Staiger's Rheinklang Studio in Cologne, where a number of Ghanaian musicians have produced, among them Daddy Lumba, Amakye Dede, and Ofori Amponsah. The importance of Staiger in the creation of the sound of burger highlife was stressed in a meeting of several Ghanaian musicians, among them George Darko and Charles Amoah, that took place in Accra in March 2006.

In an interview conducted by Martin Ziegler on August 19, 2004, in Cologne, Staiger confirmed that Ghanaian musicians approach him to produce their music and he related that many of them ask him to emulate a particular sound. Rather than requesting acoustic instruments that would be favored in German productions and that nowadays can conveniently be emulated with the help of digital samplers, Ghanaian musicians would prefer synthesized sounds that immediately reveal the impact of technology rather than conceal it (Martin Ziegler, personal communication, April 22, 2011). Take, for instance, the song 'Sika ne barima' (Money Makes a Man) by Amakye Dede, produced at Rheinklang Studio and released in 1997, which apart from an electric guitar exclusively employs synthesized instruments. Another prominent example for the impact of technology is the so-called 'Cher effect', a digital manipulation of the voice created with the pitch-correcting plug-in device Auto-Tune by Antares, which was widely popularized through Cher's 1998 world hit 'Believe'. Many Ghanaian musicians subsequently utilized the Auto-Tune plug-in, featuring prominently, for instance, on Ofori Amponsah's 2005 *Otoolege* album, parts of which were also produced with Staiger in Cologne.

From its beginnings in the 1980s and throughout the following two decades, the sound of burger highlife increasingly came to be defined through the use of modern technology, incorporating more and more purely electronic instruments such as synthesizers and drum machines. By the late 1990s burger highlife productions had moved to an entirely electronic environment with often no other acoustic sounds than the voice, as evident, for example, on Daddy Lumba's 1998 album *Highlife*

2000 that featured the hit song 'Aben wɔ ha' (It Is Cooked Here). Auto-Tune eventually enabled musicians and producers to even work on the voice parts in such a way that the impact of technology on them becomes deliberately audible. While in its musical structures burger highlife is, as we have seen, a continuation rather than a radical break with earlier forms of highlife, its actual sound came to index the modern, cosmopolitan and prosperous way of life for which the 'burger' stands. This imagery also features prominently in music videos that since the 1990s became an important medium in marketing burger highlife. If we look at the video for 'Aben wɔ ha', for instance, we get a glimpse of the 'burger' style in terms of dressing, hairstyle and other accessories signifying luxury and wealth.[5] In the clip, we see Daddy Lumba riding a white stretch limousine, dressed in a stylish suit, drinking champagne, and dancing with beautiful women (see Figure 11.1).

Burger highlife illustrates the significance of sound technology and, more generally, of timbre, in the mediation of everyday-life experience and the production of social difference that different authors have pointed out (Lysloff 1997; Meintjes 2003; Taylor 2001). It is not so much its musical structures but the electronic sound of burger highlife itself that plays a crucial role in this mediation, understood as 'a process that connects and translates disparate worlds, people, imaginations, values, and ideas,

Figure 11.1   Screenshot from the music video *Aben wɔ ha* by Daddy Lumba.

Source: *Aben wɔ ha*, Lumba Productions (1998). Reproduced with permission.

whether in its symbolic, social, or technological form' (Meintjes 2003, 8). It is important to note that technology is also constitutive of the social imaginary of the Ghanaian diaspora both in its symbolic and material dimension, technology thus being at the very heart of Ghanaian diasporic experience itself. As far as the symbolic dimension of burger highlife is concerned, paradoxically the use of technology that indexes 'modernity' and expresses aspirations to participate in a global cosmopolitan public, by and large prevented Ghanaian highlife musicians to access the more lucrative world music market and restricted them to audiences in Ghana and its diaspora (Collins 2002). After all, the kind of 'audio hyper-realism' (Lysloff 1997, 211) that characterizes the aesthetics of burger highlife seems diametrically opposed to the trope of authenticity and an aesthetics of 'liveness' that has been central, for instance, in the marketing of world music (Lysloff 1997, 209–11; Meintjes 2003, 129–30).

THE PARADOX OF MIGRATION

While the use of sound technology that indexes global modernity in the social imaginary of burger highlife paradoxically also marks the genre's locality, the fundamental tension arising for African musicians who 'desire to participate in the world as cosmopolitans who can move with ease across geopolitical divides, unfettered from nation or locality as a primary source for identity' results more generally from 'a pressure to metaculturally mark their global participation as ethnically specific and emplaced' (Meintjes 2003, 220). This becomes obvious in the fact that those Ghanaian musicians in Germany who, to at least some degree, established their presence in the transcultural World Music scene were able to do so not with the performance of burger highlife, but with ethnically marked forms of African music such as 'traditional' dance-drumming and hybrid forms of popular music that blend in various 'ethnic' elements (Carl 2011).

It must be stressed, that the form of symbolic capital embodied by the 'burger' is not a form of 'transcultural capital' as Kiwan and Meinhof (2011b) use the term, but represents a culturally bounded form of symbolic capital that comes into play within diasporic networks and in interaction with the homeland. In contrast to this, the notion of 'transcultural capital', while building on the work of Bourdieu and others, was developed in an effort to 'foreground the capacity for strategic interventions of migrant and minority groups' vis-à-vis 'the symbolic and social networking power of hegemonic groups in majority society' (2011b, 8). As such, 'transcultural capital' describes the capacity of migrant musicians to assume power positions in the status systems of both their homeland and the host society at the same time. The 'burger's' symbolic capital, however, is restricted to homeland and diaspora.

The marginalization of migrants in their host society is sometimes addressed in burger highlife songs. Here, we are confronted with the flip side to the image of a prosperous life abroad without worries and problems. Though the darker aspects of transnational migration are often not openly discussed, there are some burger highlife songs that capture the hopes and anxieties of migrants and deal with the more problematic realities of migration in their lyrics. In these texts it becomes clear that diasporic subjects are often trapped in what Homi Bhabha referred to as 'inbetween space' (1994, 56), alienated from both homeland and host country. Under the broader theme of love, which undoubtedly represents the most common topic of burger highlife, we find songs that address issues related to transnational migration. A prominent recent example is Kwabena Kwabena's (George Kwabena Adu) 'Aso', released in 2005 on the same-titled album, which deals with the experience of a disappointed husband who travels abroad, leaving his wife back home in the hands of a trusted friend, just to find out upon his return that she and his best friend have started an affair behind his back.[6]

Another theme related to migration addressed in burger highlife are the social expectations towards the migrant. In an extended family system as we find it in Ghana, migration is not an individual decision alone, but often a family affair. Whether family members contribute financially or not, they will expect the person who travels to share some of the associated 'benefits,' generally assuming that migration leads to prosperity. One of the greatest fears, consequently, of migrants is to fail economically and to return home 'empty-handed' (see Martin 2005). In a highly metaphorical way the song 'Ako te brɔfo', for instance, deals with the expectations and social pressure that weigh on migrants, concluding that no matter how travels turn out, migration cannot change the basic identity of a person. Darko evokes the ancestors and tradition—the parrot (Twi, *ako*) is the totem of the Asona clan to which Darko belongs and it generally symbolizes eloquence—and makes reference to an Akan proverb saying that everybody should focus on his or her own burden: *Woso wo twe, menso meso me twe* ('you carry your antelope [i.e., burden], I carry mine'). The song suggests that even if one is not successful in the endeavor to become prosperous through travel, at least not instantly, one can always return home, just as when a trap is sprung, it returns to its original position: *Metu bata na annyɛ yie a, Yaw George, e mɛsan makɔ m'akyi* ('when I travel and it doesn't end well, Yaw George, I will go back where I came from'). However, looking at the realities of migration, there are migrants in the diaspora who are barred from traveling back home, because they have actually not 'made it'. The psychological pressure this puts on individuals can be immense.

In a similar vein, Amakye Dede's song 'Sika ne barima' deals with the hardships involved in the struggle to make money abroad. While at the beginning of the song the protagonist notes that one cannot progress by staying at one place, he realizes at the same time that migrants' struggle

for money abroad sometimes borders on enslavement: *Ɛno nti na baabi adehyeɛ, yɛadane nkoa baabi akuro so yi* ('even though we're royals in our place, we've turned into slaves in somebody else's town'). In stark contrast to the pleasures of a luxurious and successful life as depicted in the clip to Lumba's song 'Aben wɔ ha', life abroad in Dede's account is nothing but struggle. In this struggle, the song makes clear, one can only rely on oneself and it might take long before one can see success. As Amakye Dede puts it quite drastically, the only thing that counts is money, without which a man remains a nobody: *Sika ne barima. Na wiase wo sika sua a, w'asɛm sua* ('Money is what makes a man. If you have little money in this world, your word counts little.').

There is then a paradox attached to the accumulation of economic and consequently symbolic capital through migration, for in order to raise one's status in the homeland, one has to make oneself first a 'slave' (Twi, *akoa*, pl. *nkoa*) in somebody else's country. This resonates with Akyeampong's remark that class distinctions among African immigrants in the diaspora are often erased as the 'educated and the semiliterate, the highborn and the lowborn, rub shoulders as they vie for the same menial jobs' (2000, 186). Nieswand (2008) makes a similar point with regard to the Ghanaian diaspora in Germany. He concludes that we are basically dealing with two different status systems into which migrants are incorporated at the same time and which results in what he calls the 'status paradox' of migration. While experiencing marginalization and stigmatization in their host societies, Ghanaian migrants are considered successful 'burgers' back home—if only, that is, they are able to regularly send remittances to family members and possibly also to build a house (see also Martin 2005).

GOSPEL HIGHLIFE AND PENTECOSTAL-CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANITY

In contrast to burger highlife, gospel highlife can be understood as part of the social imaginary of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, which has been tremendously successful over the past decades both in Ghana and its diaspora (Gifford 2004; Nieswand 2010; Ter Haar 1998; van Dijk 1997). Participation in the Pentecostal-Charismatic public offers Ghanaian migrants alternative modes of identification, a process in which gospel highlife as embodied expressive practice plays a central role. Structurally similar to its secular variants, gospel highlife's distinguishing feature is, first and foremost, the symbolic content, generally drawing on Christian themes and particularly the imagery associated with Pentecostalism. Other than burger highlife, there is no direct association of commercial gospel highlife with the Ghanaian diaspora as production site, though quite a few musicians and producers do actually operate within this transnational field nowadays. Since the 1990s it is increasingly churches themselves that have

also played a role in the production of gospel music, putting up their own recording studios and distribution networks that encompass Ghana and its diaspora (see Awuah 2012; Collins 2012, loc 5211).

The transnational networks of Ghanaian churches that have emerged over the past decades do not only play their part in the production and distribution of commercial gospel highlife, but, as briefly mentioned earlier, more importantly provide a network for the transnational movement of people as well as embodied expressive practices both between homeland and diaspora and within the diaspora. Thus, in Ghana the rise of 'urban Pentecostalism has very much become a window to the world' (van Dijk 1997, 139), creating a 'moral and physical geography whose domain is one of transnational cultural inter-penetration and flow' (van Dijk 1997, 142). In the diaspora, on the other hand, African churches provide, as Akyeampong writes, 'some security in racially hostile cities [and] are thus an important substitute for kinship and family networks, while extending the emotive religious experience initiated by Pentecostal churches in the homeland' (2000, 209).

The central figure around which Pentecostal-Charismatic identity revolves is the born-again Christian, which is principally somebody who accepts Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. The implications of being born again have, we might note, parallels to the imagery associated with the 'burger', as notions of prosperity and financial success are also central to Pentecostalism. In the evangelistic logic, however, prosperity and personal success are reinterpreted as signs of divine grace (Twi, *adom*), as expressed in the so-called 'gospel of prosperity' (Coleman 2000, 27–40). Mediated by images of prosperity and Western modernity, imagining abroad (Twi, *aburokyire*) is also part of the social imaginary of Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, though here, again, the imagery is framed by the moral geography of Pentecostalism. As Gerrie Ter Haar in his study of Ghanaian diasporic churches in the Netherlands noted, 'although many Africans who have come to Europe are appalled by its spiritual poverty, at the same time its material abundance seems to them hardly less than what a Christian may expect to find in heaven' (1998, vi). In Ghana, to be able to travel abroad is therefore an important aspect of the 'gospel of prosperity' and equally seen as a sign of divine grace, a fact that many churches capitalize on by offering 'prayer support' not only for financial success and health, but also for success in traveling and particularly the acquisition of an entry visa for Western countries. As much as burger highlife musicians, as we noted, embody the attributes of the 'burger' as part of their habitus, gospel highlife musicians embody the attributes of the born-again Christian, and stressing success abroad—which, in this context, means in the diaspora—constitutes an important part of an artist's self-representations.[7]

In the symbolism of gospel highlife we are therefore also confronted with images of a luxurious, cosmopolitan lifestyle, but these images are framed by the moral discourse of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity which adds

to them a dimension that Timothy Rommen (2007, 27–46) conceptualized as the 'ethics of style'. An example that illustrates this is the song 'Moving Forward' by Christiana Love, which was released in 2008 and became one of the most popular Ghanaian gospel songs in 2008 and 2009.[8] The song sets out with a simple descending melodic line played by a synthesizer that is then answered by the backing vocalists, singing 'I am moving forward, I am going forward.' The descending line is taken up by the lead singer, adding the words 'through Jesus Christ.' In the video to the song, we see the singer-protagonist at the same time getting into a bright yellow Mercedes-Benz convertible. Scenes of Christiana Love driving around in this (obviously expensive) car are then alternated with groups of dancers and scenes where she is seen singing and dancing in the interior of a big, luxurious mansion. Other visual elements we can discern are, for instance, the image of a blond, long-haired, white Jesus ascending to heaven. When Christiana Love sings the line 'Jesus died for you, he died for all your problems,' more realistic, Hollywood-mediated images of Jesus on the cross, covered in blood, as they featured prominently in Mel Gibson's *Passion of Christ*, are additionally edited into the video (see Figure 11.2).

Apart from the message of the 'gospel of prosperity' that is conveyed in songs like 'Moving Forward', but also Ohemaa Mercy's 'Wobɛyɛ kɛseɛ' (You Will Be Great), or Philips Baafi's 'Go High', to mention just a few examples, gospel highlife assumes its perhaps most crucial significance as participatory performance in the context of Pentecostal-Charismatic worship. It has been noted that music is at the heart of Pentecostal worship (Gifford 2004, 35; Hackett 1998, 263), and the fact that church bands are constantly integrating new songs into their repertoires that circulate in various audiovisual formats in the mediascape between homeland and diaspora

Figure 11.2 Screenshot from the music video *Moving Forward*, by Christiana Love. *Source*: *Moving Forward*, Big Ben Productions (2008). Reproduced with permission.

has actually contributed to the blurring of boundaries between religion and popular culture (Collins 2004; Meyer 2008). Though Pentecostal-Charismatic churches generally stress spontaneous inspiration by the Holy Spirit and their liturgy can therefore vary greatly, a common feature of Pentecostal worship are so-called 'praise' and 'worship' sections in which musical performance is central. A service in a Ghanaian-initiated church in Berlin—the Gospel Believers Center International—that I witnessed in March 2004, was typical in that regard. The first part was a 'worship' section, the music being overall slow and unmetered, where people sang, prayed with their hands lifted up into the air, some bowing down in devotion, others breaking out in tears or speaking in tongues. This was followed by an upbeat 'praise' section, where the music was faster and people danced and sang, shouting 'Praise the Lord!' and uttering other expressions of joy. Over the years, I have witnessed services in which collective performances like this could last for close to two hours.

Gospel artists in their commercial productions have adapted the praise/worship format and often release the same song in two different versions, enabling consumers, as it were, to carry the worship experience from the public spaces of Pentecostal churches to the private spaces of their homes. VCD releases like Evangelist Diana Asamoah's *Gospel Old Tunes*, which is a collection of popular Pentecostal worship songs, explicitly emulate the worship experience in churches and feature long video extracts of actual church services. It is also noticeable that live performed instruments, and particularly the trumpet, feature prominently not only in the sound, but also the visual imagery of gospel highlife. The video clips to songs like Ohemaa Mercy's 'Wobɛyɛ kɛseɛ' or Baafi's 'Go High' attest to this, just as Cecilia Marfo's 2010 hit 'Afunmu Ba' (Donkey's Foal).[9] Mediated by the worship experience in Pentecostal-Charismatic churches, we can observe that an aesthetics of liveness has reentered highlife music through the idiom of gospel. The notions of authenticity that go along with this aesthetics are, however, quite distinct from geographical or ethnic constructions of place as evident, for instance, in world music (see Connell and Gibson 2003, 19–44; Stokes 1994, 6–7). Transcending the confines of ethnicity and nationhood, the liveness celebrated in gospel highlife links its participants with the religious experience of Pentecostal worship and provides a means, at the same time, to participate in the social imaginary of Pentecostalism.

While diasporic churches provide networks of emotional and financial support for migrants and, thus, partly compensate for the attenuation of traditional social networks like the extended family in the migrational setting, gospel highlife constitutes the central musical as well as religious experience for many Ghanaians in the diaspora. Overall, the significance of gospel highlife in the context of Ghanaian migration resonates with Martin Stokes's observation that 'in migrant communities in Western Europe and North America, religious institutions and their media networks increasingly provide social and cultural infrastructure, and a sense of home' and

that in this context 'music is [. . .] a particularly important means of making a home, and imagining a future' (2011, 31).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have argued for the crucial role of music in the ongoing negotiation of social status and identity that takes place within the social space spanning between Ghana and its diaspora. I have traced the emergence of this transnational field and described how from the 1980s onwards it became an important arena in the production, dissemination, and consumption of burger highlife as well as gospel highlife music. Both genres in their particular ways construct and comment on the popular notion of abroad (Twi, *aburokyire*) as a place of prosperity, success and material abundance, an image that in turn plays a crucial role in the constitution of the Ghanaian diaspora as a social imaginary. Yet we have also seen that the realities of migration create a paradox, since the elevation in social status through migration is often paralleled by marginalization in the host country.

While addressing this paradox in different ways, neither burger highlife nor gospel highlife resolve the basic problematic of status production in the Ghanaian diaspora. However, gospel can nonetheless be understood as a powerful response to the paradox of migration, as it provides, particularly in its highly participatory forms as part of Pentecostalist worship, 'a means of attaining a sense of well-being and empowerment' (Dueck 2011, 25) by establishing new forms of social intimacy in the context of diasporic churches. By evoking a social imaginary that clearly transcends nationhood and ethnicity (see also Glick-Schiller, Çağlar, and Guldbrandsen 2006), the empowerment that can be experienced through the performance of and participation in gospel highlife might then represent truly a form of 'transcultural capital,' understood as a 'strategic intervention of migrant and minority groups' (Kiwan and Meinhof 2011b, 8) in the context of the social power structure of majority society. It is then the combination of popular and religious expressive modes and embodied practices characteristic for gospel highlife and their transnational circulation that seems particularly powerful with regard to what Dueck describes as 'the complex dialectical dance between intimacy and public culture' (2011, 26) in the context of migration.

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NOTES

1. Field research was done over several time periods since March 2004. In the time between March 2004 and February 2006 my research was mainly based in Berlin, interspersed with a 12-week stay in Ghana from November 2004 to February 2005. In this time I became acquainted with professional Ghanaian musicians and dancers who operated within the transcultural African music scene. Apart from performing 'traditional' African music at multicultural events and festivals for German audiences, my Ghanaian friends in Berlin also played and danced to highlife music in diasporic churches and at social events such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. As they invited me to church services and 'Ghanaian parties' in the city, I became familiar with those aspects of life in the diaspora where Ghanaians remain mostly among themselves. In Berlin, I also interviewed several highlife musicians who migrated to Germany in the 1980s and 1990s. My research in Accra, where I lived from 2006 to 2009, concentrated particularly on a smaller Pentecostal-Charismatic church in Nungua, Christ Victory Ministries International. In these three years I attended many Sunday services and other church programs, in the course of which I had the chance to interview the head pastor and other church officials as well as church musicians, choristers, and congregation members. Since 2006 I also witnessed services in numerous other churches in Ghana and danced to gospel as well as burger highlife at public concerts, as well as private events with friends.
2. While many people in Berlin and Accra shared their views with me along the way, I am particularly indebted to Seth Darko, Gordon Odametey, Kay Boni, and Ofei Ankrah for introducing me to the Ghanaian musical scene in Berlin and, in the case of Ofei, also the 'culture' scene in Accra. Likewise Samuel Kwaku Yeboah, Margaret Dzikpor, as well as Mark Kofi Asamoah and his wife, Elizabeth Abena Asamoah, gave me important insights into Ghanaian musical life in the diaspora and also shared their religious views with me. Their hospitality and openness is much appreciated. In Accra, I am particularly grateful to Bishop Joseph G. Bart-Plange and his wife, Christiana, Apostle Joseph Kwei, and Eunice Kwei of Christ Victory Ministries International, who gave me a deeper understanding of Charismatic believes and worship practices. I very much enjoyed the musical ministry of Sarah Adaku Armah and Fifi Folson, as well as the insightful conversations we had about gospel music. To all other members of Christ Victory Ministries International at Nungua, I am thankful for letting me worship with them.
3. A popular movie that draws on the image of the 'burger' is, for instance, the film *Italian Burger* with Agya Koo. In parts of the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions in Ghana, so-called Burgers' Wives Associations can be found. In their meetings the public display of wealth and conspicuous consumption feature prominently (Kwadwo Adum-Attah, personal communication, Cape Coast,

April 26, 2011). Similarities between Ghanaian *burgers* and Congolese *sappeurs* might also come to mind—an observation I owe to Byron Dueck.

4. A sound file of the 1983 version can be found on *YouTube* under the link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yk_TOtzFJ7w (accessed November 16, 2012).

5. The full clip is on *YouTube* under the link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25gWNvrRDPU (accessed November 17, 2012).

6. The song is on *YouTube* under the link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7mHO-6rWlA (accessed November 18, 2012).

7. The profiles of gospel artists like Ohemaa Mercy or Esther Opiesie on Facebook are interesting in this connection. See https://www.facebook.com/ohemaa.mercy and https://www.facebook.com/opiesie.esther (both accessed November 18, 2012).

8. See the video clip on *YouTube* under the link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-ajdMe6yP0 (accessed November 18, 2012).

9. The clip to Ohemaa Mercy's song can be found on *YouTube* under the link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EzsIjtyBdXY, Marfo's song under the link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xv9GGVp9RQ (accessed November 18, 2012).

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