



Global Humanities  
Studies in Histories, Cultures, and Societies  
01/2015  
On the Correlation of Center and Periphery







**Global Humanities**  
**Studies in Histories, Cultures, and Societies**

01/2015

**On the Correlation of  
Center and Periphery**

Edited by Frank Jacob



Neofelis Verlag





## **Global Humanities – Studies in Histories, Cultures, and Societies**

01/2015: On the Correlation of Center and Periphery

Ed. by Frank Jacob

### **Scientific Board**

Dr. Jessica Achberger (University of Lusaka, Zambia), Prof. Saheed Aderinto (Western Carolina University, USA), Prof. Shigeru Akita (Osaka University, Japan), Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Altgeld (Würzburg University, Germany), Prof. Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr. (Angelo State University, USA), Prof. Dr. Roland Borgards (Würzburg University, Germany), Prof. Dr. Sarah K. Danielsson (QCC, City University of New York, USA), Prof. Timothy Demy (Naval War College, Newport, USA), Dr. Julia Hauser (Göttingen University, Germany), Prof. Dr. Stephan Köhn (Cologne University, Germany), Prof. Dr. Helmut Löffler (QCC, City University of New York, USA), Dr. Eike Lossin (Würzburg University, Germany), PD Dr. Sabine Müller (Kiel University, Germany), Dr. Petra Ney-Hellmuth (Würzburg University, Germany), Prof. Jeffrey Shaw (Naval War College, Newport, USA).

### **German National Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the German National Library:

<http://dnb.d-nb.de>

© 2015 Neofelis Verlag GmbH, Berlin

[www.neofelis-verlag.de](http://www.neofelis-verlag.de)

All rights reserved.

Cover Design: Marija Skara

Printed by PRESSEL Digitaler Produktionsdruck, Remshalden

Printed on FSC-certified paper.

ISSN: 2199-3939

ISBN (Print): 978-3-943414-68-4

ISBN (PDF): 978-3-943414-91-2

*Global Humanities* appears biannually.

Annual Subscription: 40 €; Single Issue: 25 €

Available in bookshops or directly from Neofelis Verlag:

[vertrieb@neofelis-verlag.de](mailto:vertrieb@neofelis-verlag.de)





## Inhalt

Editorial..... 7

### Receptions

*Henner Kropp*

Halfway around the World

Russian America as a Part of the Russian Empire..... 13

*Ingo Löppenber*

Their Knowledge about Arctic Nature.....

The Utility of Indigenous Knowledge for German Polar

Exploration and Knowledge of the Inuit in Imperial Germany..... 24

*Dina Mansour*

Stirring the “Mix”

Gender and Religion within Islamic Contexts in Europe..... 41

### Exchanges

*Oliver Schlenkerich / Christoph Mohamad-Klotz*

Open and Closed Electoral Autocracies in the (Semi-)Periphery

from 1996 to 2010: Democratization and Foreign Aid Flows..... 57

*Evangelidis Vasileios*

Centers, Peripheries and Technical Progress ..... 78

*Jeffrey M. Shaw*

Self-Transcendence in Thomas Merton,

Reza Arasteh, and Daisetz Suzuki ..... 89

### Exploitation and Stereotypes

*Julia Harnoncourt*

Labor-Relations and the Periphery

The Example of *trabalho escravo* in Pará (Brazil)..... 105

*Liony Bauer*

Can German Nationalism after WWII Be Characterized

by the Concept of ‘Economic Securitization’?

Case Study: Securitization of the Roma Minority..... 115





*De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway*

Defiance, Rhetoric and Ideologies of Order, and the Rewriting  
of Colonial Historiography: An Exploration of Cultural  
Nationalism in Colonial and Post-Colonial Ghana..... 131

**Constructions**

*Solveig Lena Hansen / Cathrin Cronjäger*

Transcending the Spatialized Other  
in and through Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* ..... 157

*Kyle J. Wanberg*

Disrupting the Center: Toward a Theory of Global Aesthetics..... 170

*Julia Brühne*

A Revolutionary Myth: Border Crossing, Nostalgia and  
Identification in Robert Rodríguez's *Machete* (2010) .....186

**Reviews**.....211

Abbildungsverzeichnis .....225





## Exploitation and Stereotypes





# Defiance, Rhetoric and Ideologies of Order, and the Rewriting of Colonial Historiography

## An Exploration of Cultural Nationalism in Colonial and Post-Colonial Ghana

De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway

### Introduction: A Brief Contextualised View of African Cultural Nationalism in the Colonial Milieu

The extension and consolidation of the imperialistic and colonisation enterprise of European nation states in Africa that started around the 15<sup>th</sup> century invited confrontational African nationalism(s). In the African context, this multifaceted phenomenon included the consciousness of belonging to a particular African ethnic and by extension an imagined African family of parallel ethnics, and the attitude of opposition to alien control, and pride in the cultural constructs, traditions, institutions and achievements of indigenous Africa.<sup>1</sup> This ethnic awareness and cultural contentment, like the responsibility to protect African indigenous cultures, traditions, institutions, and achievements form the phenomenon of *African Cultural Nationalism* in the milieu of this study.

### The Intrusion of European Cultural Imperialism in Gold Coast: An Examination

The sustained contact between European imperial powers and Africa from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, according to Mojola Agbebi, formerly D. B. Vincent, introduced “the usages and institutions of European life into the African social system [...] a disordering and a dislocation of the latter”<sup>2</sup> and yielded colonialism but more importantly a complex cultural interaction, which Andrew D. Roberts describes as “transformations”, i. e. “transformations in social identities,

1 Further insights into nationalism in the African context are found in James S. Coleman: Nationalism in Tropical Africa. In: *American Political Science Review* 48,2 (1954), pp. 404–426; James S. Coleman: *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1958; Thomas L. Hodgkin: *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*. London: Frederick Muller 1956, p. 23.

2 Pastor Mojola Agbebi: On the West African Problem. From: *Papers on Inter-Racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress*, ed. by Gustav Spiller, 1911, pp. 343–348. In: Henry S. Wilson (ed.): *Origins of West African Nationalism*. London / New York: Macmillan / St. Martin's 1969, p. 304.





cognitive systems and means of communication”<sup>3</sup>. Roger S. Gocking believes that much absorption and adaptation featured in that transformative process.<sup>4</sup> However, the extension and consolidation of European missionary influence, education, and political control, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century, swayed the pendulum and hegemonized European (Western) culture. This cultural ascendancy unleashed “the complete and deliberate break-down of cultural patterns among the suppressed peoples”.<sup>5</sup> For example, Great Britain’s Anglicization component of its colonial interaction with Gold Coast, from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, weakened indigenous religious, artistic, political, judicial, and linguistic constructs. The expansionist Western cultural constructs, which Britain sustained when she became the sole political mistress of the colony, threatened prevailing autochthonous economic and socio-political systems, “of self-government as perfect and as efficient as the most forward nations of the earth today can possibly conceive”<sup>6</sup>. The British Colony, which became the independent country of Ghana on March 6, 1957, was created on January 1, 1902. Between 1902 and 1957, the Gold Coast was demarcated into three regions, i. e. Gold Coast, Asante and the Northern Territories.

Britain’s control, obtained through martial might in combination with brute force, and Eurocentric Christianity and formal schooling, yielded Anglicised systems, which “led indirectly to a Western-modelled restructuring (Westernisation) of the society as a whole.”<sup>7</sup> This influence strongly evolved particularly in the urban communities of Gold Coast littoral societies, over which Britain illegally exercised and gradually developed control from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the proclamation of the Crown Colony in 1874. Hence, by the late nineteenth and twentieth century, those areas had become what Raymond Jenkins describes as “Euro-African Societies”.<sup>8</sup>

3 Andrew D. Roberts (ed.): *The Colonial Moment in Africa: Essays in the Movement of Minds and Materials, 1900–1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990, p.1.

4 Roger S. Gocking: *Facing Two Ways: Ghana’s Coastal Communities under Colonial Rule*. Lanham, MD / New York / Oxford: University Press of America 1999, p.3.

5 William E. B. Du Bois: *The World and Africa*. New York: International Publishers 1965, p.35.

6 Joseph E. Casely Hayford: *Gold Coast Native Institutions*. London: Frank Cass 1903 (reprinted in 1971), p.128.

7 Bjorn M. Edsman: *Lawyers in Gold Coast Politics, c. 1900–1945: From Mensab Sarbah to J. B. Danquah*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis 1979, p.214.

8 Raymond Jenkins: *Gold Coast Historians and Their Pursuit of the Gold Coast Past: 1882–1917*. Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Birmingham 1985, pp.43–50. See also Raymond Jenkins: Gold Coasters Overseas, 1880–1919: With Specific Reference to their Activities in Britain. In: *Immigrants and Minorities* 4,3 (1985), pp. 5–52.



School curricula, largely centred on Western epistemic and cosmological ethos, marginalised and peripheralized indigenous values, norms and epistemic traditions. It Europeanized many of its aborigine students and alienated them from their local customs. However, it also produced a corps of Western educated Gold Coasters whose acquisition of literary skills did not only confer on them the title of “enlightened” elites but gave them sufficient prospects for leadership position in the rising “modern” and complex societies of the colony, for which many would have been unqualified for in their indigenous societies. Many became appendages (the “periphery”) to the colonial administration (the “core”) and for years served as consultants, advisors, diplomats, teacher-catechists,<sup>9</sup> and useful mediators for the establishment’s bureaucracy and the public, and between the hinterland aborigines and coastal Europeans. This relatively small homogenised yet influential nouveaux riches corpus of Europeanized Africans or Black English, and Anglo-Fantis<sup>10</sup> (as one critic described them in the Euro-African society of Cape Coast) wherever they were, considered themselves the natural inheritors of colonial rule in the colony. Many of the grassroots aspired to join this group.

Eurocentric indoctrination from pulpits and schools demeaned most indigenous beliefs, institutions and practices and practitioners as heathen and promised the wrath of a Christian God and torments of hellfire on them. In the name of “civilising and pacifying” so-called “barbarous and fierce” people, wars of aggression were commonly unleashed on indigenous societies. Joseph E. Casely Hayford opined that such wars sought to seize the independence and eliminate the institutions, customs, laws and rights, which such people had created.<sup>11</sup> Coercion and out of place imposition of intimidating colonial laws, acts and ordinances, animated by European legal philosophies, enhanced and anchored European cultural infringement in the territory. From 1874, and particularly after 1900, the colonisation endeavours of Britain antagonised most indigenous efforts to defend the sanctity of time-honoured cultures and sovereignty. For example, it took about four major wars – 1824, 1826, 1874, 1900/1901, for the British to finally subjugate the Asante. The Crown deliberately humiliated Prempe, the Asantehene (Paramount chief of

9 Adu Boahen: *Ghana, Evolution and Change in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. London: Longman 1975.

10 Kobina Sekyi: *The Blinkards*. London: Rex Collings 1974. Originally written in c. 1915. An original typescript can be found in Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD), Cape Coast, 644/64.

11 Casely Hayford: *Gold Coast Native Institutions*, p. 258.



Asante), whose person and office symbolized the custodianship and sanctity of Asante culture. The Asantehene, who culture required to not submit in public, was coerced to perform a public act of submission aimed to breach the sacredness of Asante culture before the British governor. The monarch Prempe and his mother Yaa Kyiaa, the Queen of Asante, were threatened and forced to prostrate before a mere officer of the British monarch.<sup>12</sup> They embraced his feet and those of Sir Francis Scott and Colonel Kempster.<sup>13</sup> This humiliating rite, for now, suffices as one of the cases where the foundation of an indigenous culture was assaulted by British force.

### **“Raw” Defiance as Resistance: Indigenous Rulers and Cultural Nationalism**

The character of resistance emerged among endogenous elements who, upon becoming conscious of that adverse cultural onslaught (Westernization and Anglicization), adopted different methods to restrain it and protect the foundation of local cultures. A continuum of initiatives and acts of defiance fertilised and sustained this tradition of nationalism until independence in 1957. Incidentally, Western educated Gold Coasters were part of those who took up arms against the system that produced them. They were primarily incited by two worries: (i) Eurocentric colonial historiography excised and/or belittled the role of indigenous ancestors and their deep thought and culture to the development of the histories of the territory, and (ii) claiming it as its “colony” Britain increasingly positioned itself as the suzerain of Gold Coast. But what kind of colony was it? The Western educated people, who were living in the colony, wanted to define whether or not it was a colony by settlement or cession or conquest in order to be able to define the actual nature of the relationship that should exist between the local territory and Britain. Their reaction, which Philip D. Curtin labelled as “intellectual responses to European culture”<sup>14</sup> manifested in the form of writings – books and newspaper articles, and argumentative speeches, and establishment of study groups, like *Mfantse Amanbubu Fekuw* (Fante Nationalist Society) in Cape Coast,<sup>15</sup> about local aboriginal history, culture, society, law and government. The Fante

12 Francis K. Buah: *A History of Ghana*. London: Macmillan 1989, p. 96.

13 Du Bois: *The World*, p. 36.

14 Philip D. Curtin (ed.): *Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1972.

15 David Kimble: *A Political History of Ghana*. Oxford: Clarendon 1963, p. 150.

Nationalist Society, a pioneer of well-organised cultural nationalist groups in the colonial territory, eventually birthed the Aborigines Rights Protection Society, in the 1890s, to take opposition to and halt the advancement of the infamous Crown Lands Bill of 1894–1897, which was one of the ill-judged British judicial interference with the indigenous system of land holding in the colonial territory.

The Gold Coast, which Henry S. Wilson, in *Origins of West African Nationalism*, deemed as “fertile in men [and women] who could give sustained thought to these matters”<sup>16</sup> had both some un-Westernized ethnic chieftains like Prempe and Yaa Asantewaa, the Queen of Ejisu, and Western educated middle-class African elites like Reverends J. B. Anaman, C. C. Reindorf, Attoh Ahuma alias S. R. B. Solomon, and lawyers J. M. Sarbah, J. E. Casely Hayford and Kobina Sekyi alias William Essuman Gwira Sekyi, nourishing its cultural nationalism to protect and promote cultural basics like music, language, names, dressing, cuisine, ways of eating, dancing, religion, rites, chieftaincy institution, egalitarianism and communalism. These actors worked to protect their societies from unreasonable and political culture corroding colonial legislation, like the Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1878.<sup>17</sup> Open defiance, engendered by a cultural nationalist cause, played out from some indigenous rulers and ordinary citizens. For example the “Natural Rulers” of Asante, suspicious of cultural ramifications of missionary and colonial supported formal schooling and Christianity, fiercely proscribed them from entering Asante. Hence, the first Basel evangelist to visit Asante disappointedly felt that proselytising efforts into Asante “had to wait for better hints from the Lord”.<sup>18</sup> The Wesleyans reporting on their missionary work wrote:

The state of the work of God in Asante is rather discouraging at present, from the circumstance of the people being afraid to expose themselves to the ire of the king, whose frown is indeed death for the people becoming Christians [...] They always do what their king sanctions, whether good or bad, so that, the king himself being a pagan still, they all remain pagans still.<sup>19</sup>

16 Henry S. Wilson: *Origins of West African Nationalism*. London / New York: Macmillan / St. Martin's 1969, p. 265.

17 Buah: *History of Ghana*, p. 106.

18 Extract from a letter, Reverend F. Ramseyer to Freeling, 18th December 1877, mentioning the journey to Kumasi in 1839 by Reverend A. Riis; CO/96/122, as mentioned in Kimble: *Political History*, p. 152.

19 Report of Reverend T. Laing as quoted by Carl C. Reindorf : *History of the Gold Coast and Asante*. Basel: Basel Mission 1895, pp. 242–243, as mentioned in Kimble: *Political History*, p. 153.

Missionary work in Asante became effective only after Britain militarily defeated Asante in 1874 and later in 1896 banished the Asante overlord Prempe.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the unveiled defiance and refusal of the rulers of Asante to satisfy Governor Sir Frederick Hodgson's demand for Sikadwa Kofi, which is the legendary Golden Stool, a sacred relic symbolising the totality of Asante political and cultural unity, spawned the Yaa Asantewaa War, which Asante lost to Britain. It was a war which Asante, inspired by Queen Yaa Asantewaa, engaged in to protect the sacredness of its culture. Even though its capital Kumasi was scorched and Asante was finally defeated in 1901,<sup>21</sup> the relic was protected.

On the other hand, the "educated elites" preferred intellectual resistance, with what Casely Hayford defined as "appeal to the logic of facts",<sup>22</sup> because the lethal nature of the new potent military technology of Europe taught them that belligerent rebellion was hopelessly doomed. Their writings and speeches aimed to question European interventions and sensitise readers, particularly Africans, about the truths and imperativeness of African history, and the need to salvage aboriginal cultures. Their satires ridiculed the shortcomings of the colonial agenda, and absurdities in the lifestyle of the "Black Victorians", whom the nationalist sage Kobina Sekyi lampooned as Mr/Mrs. Brofuser.<sup>23</sup> The concepts of cultural revitalisation, what the local sage Attoh Ahuma (1863–1921) described in *The Gold Coast Nation and National Consciousness* in 1911, as "Intelligent Retrogression [...] 'Back to the Land' [...] 'Back to the Simple Life' of our progenitors [...] to rid ourselves of foreign accretions and excrescences"<sup>24</sup> and reactivation of the "African Personality", which "is [...] defined by the cluster of humanist principles that underlie the traditional African society",<sup>25</sup> were very active within that tradition of resistance.

### **Stoking the Fire of Intellectual Resistance: Gold Coast African Intelligentsia and Cultural Nationalism**

Apart from writing, lecturing and forming secular societies to publicise their nationalist ideas, other thinkers of the educated elite corps like J.B. Anaman

20 Kimble: *Political History*, p. 153.

21 Buah: *History of Ghana*, p. 96.

22 Casely Hayford: *Gold Coast Native Institutions*, p. 313.

23 See Sekyi: *The Blinkards*.

24 Attoh Ahuma: *The Gold Coast Nation and National Consciousness* [1911], cit. in Wilson: *Origins*, p. 266.

25 Kwame Nkrumah: *Consciencism*. London: Heinemann 1964, p. 79.

and Joseph William Appiah, alias Jemisimiham Jehu-Appiah, a former Wesleyan catechist, formed Independent African Churches as nationalistic schismatic movements to africanize the ecclesiastical bureaucracies and preach the promotion of aspects of indigenous values within the spiritual and devotional cultures of Christianity. Anaman and Appiah founded the Nigritian Church (c. 1907) and the Musama Disco Christo Church (M.D.C.C.)<sup>26</sup> (c. 1922) respectively. They promoted Fante and other local languages as liturgical languages and the M.D.C.C. frowned not on the indigenous practice of polygyny.<sup>27</sup> The tradition of schism continued into the post-colony moment. Its nationalist fervour inspired the Catholic priest Reverend Dr. Kwabena Damuah (1930–1992) during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to “Africani[z]e the worship of God, and promote Godliness and love according to the sacred traditions of Africa.”<sup>28</sup> He therefore renounced Christianity and formed Afrikania Mission in 1982 to revive and revitalise indigenous “Theocentric” spirituality and reposition it among the major religions of the world”<sup>29</sup>

It was also prevalent for the early educated nationalists to petition irrational colonial legislation. Others demanded a system of formal schooling, which allowed a deeper study of African history and cultures. Hence many produced “defensive revisionist African historiography and arguments by refutation” to combat the biases of colonial historiography, set the records right about African histories, and highlight the relevance of African cultural values and pride. In support of this revision, Attoh Ahuma asserted in 1899 that “As a people we must grow our own authors.”<sup>30</sup> Three other thinkers, who were also part-time historians, namely John M. Sarbah, Joseph E. Casely Hayford and Kobina Sekyi, whose works we would shortly come to inspect, argued for the imperativeness of the correction of the records about history, culture, and, as Casely Hayford put it to “simply say, ‘Allow us to make use of our own Native Institutions, which we understand, and which from experience are adapted to us.’ We shall [...] ask again, and, if [...] not listened to, we

26 For more on the M.D.C.C. and its founder see De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway: *Prophet Jemisimiham Jehu-Appiah: The Man, his Vision and Work*. M.Phil Thesis, Department of History, University of Cape Coast, 2004.

27 Kimble: *Political History*, p.164.

28 Kwesi I. Otobil: *Notes on West African Traditional Religion*, vol.1. Fourth Edition. Winneba: Ghana 1994, p.210.

29 Samuel Gyanfosu: A Traditional Religion Reformed: Vincent Kwabena Damuah and the Afrikania Movement, 1982–2000. In: David Maxwell / Ingrid Lawrie (eds): *Studies of Religion in Africa*, vol.23. Leiden: Brill 2002, pp.271–294, here p.272.

30 Attoh Ahuma: *By the Way*. In: *Gold Coast Aborigines*, 27.05.1899.

shall hand on the legacy of legitimate and constitutional request to the next generation".<sup>31</sup> Sarbah posited that the impatient imposition, in a few years, of centuries-old European concepts and lifeways

has generally neglected the duty to understand the African – his life, habits, cast of mind, institutions, and history. Europe has not studied the African, nor understood him [...] Europe is apt to forget that Africans are human beings, with human aspirations and instincts, and they cannot for ever be treated like so many dumb-driven cattle<sup>32</sup> . . . The African must know himself, his country, and his destiny, and such knowledge [...] will [...] permeate [...] outside until it fills his country with wonders [...] his prospects will widen and become brighter as his mind is enriched.<sup>33</sup>

Casely Hayford averred that the correction was vital because, “on the Gold Coast, you are not dealing with a savage people without a past, who are merely striving to copy or imitate foreign institutions”<sup>34</sup>, but “Here on the Gold Coast, you have to deal with an aboriginal race with distinctive institutions, customs and laws, which [...] European writers may attempt to portray, but which they can never fully interpret to the outside world”.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, Sekyi maintained that

Europeans have been studying Africa, her institutions for years; but the result of such studies, when considered by Africans who can understand European modes of thought and expression, are not altogether satisfactory. A great deal of mischief was done through the hasty generalisations of past investigators and observers, several of whom were not in any way imbued with the scientific spirit [...] A few of us in Africa are firmly of the opinion that the interpretation of Africa, of her institutions and ideas, of her various peoples, can best be achieved by the African himself.<sup>36</sup>

These were logical emphases that colonial subjects needed to “world” their locale by interpreting their historical and cultural realities to the outside world. This was their inalienable right. A powerful reminder these observations were that what history ought not to be or should be, within a colonial territory, should not be in the exclusive domain of the colonial power.

31 Casely Hayford, cit. in Wilson: *Origins*, p. 314.

32 John M. Sarbah: *Fanti National Constitution* (1906), chapter 6, cit. in Wilson: *Origins*, p. 281.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 283.

34 Casely Hayford, cit. in Wilson: *Origins*, p. 314.

35 Casely Hayford: *Gold Coast Native Institutions*.

36 Kobina Sekyi: A Plea for the African Standpoint. In: *The Gold Coast Times*, 02.–09.02.1935, p. 6.

### **Responding to Colonialism with Rhetoric, Ideologies, and History: A Survey of the Intellectual Resistance of Three African Gold Coast Intelligentsia**

For elucidation, let us examine aspects of the intellectual resistance standpoints of Sarbah (1864–1910), Casely Hayford (1866–1930), and Sekyi (1892–1956). Their professional lives, and activities and thought trajectories usually did confluence in the realms of law, education, national politics, and philosophy. Although they received Western schooling, with all the three legal minds getting their university education in sterling institutions in England<sup>37</sup> where after studying classical Roman and Greek law and comprehending English legal and constitutional law were called to the English Bar, their foundational worldview was inherited from the indigenous deep thought and socio-cultural systems of their Akan-Fante ethnicity. Being inner members and relatives of some aristocratic families and ruling houses in the Akan-Fante states of the south of the Gold Coast, they were able to utilise these regal statuses and links to access and gather oral primary source materials pertaining to the genesis of the littoral and southern states, aspects of Akan-Fante laws and institutions of the Gold Coast for their historiographical and intellectual resistance to colonial wrongs enterprise. They therefore were advantaged because they understood the two worlds and could easily identify and genuinely criticise the loopholes and ineptitudes in the legal and political structures, and anthropological and historical definitions which the colonial regime obtained from the European world and standpoint and illegally imposed and haphazardly applied to the indigenous African socio-cultural terrain of the thinkers. Their nationalist contemplations therefore decided that tradition was vital and must play a role at least, equally as decisive as Western ideas, in shaping attitudes towards modernization even in the context of colonialism.

These men were subjects of an unfriendly imperial, colonial and capitalist regime, whose government and economics, regardless of petty reforms,

37 John M. Sarbah studied at the Wesleyan High School, Cape Coast, and Taunton School and the Inns of Court, England, where he, in 1887, gained admission into Lincoln Inn. Casely Hayford attended the Wesleyan Boys High School, Cape Coast, and Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He entered the Bar in the Inner Temple and also studied at Peterhouse, Cambridge, England. Kobina Sekyi studied at Richmond College of West Africa (the present Mfantshipim School), in Cape Coast, the University College, London, and the Inns of Court in England. He acquired a Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts (Philosophy), and Bachelor of Laws. He became a member of the Inner Temple and Aristotelian Society in 1918. All three, after completing their studies, returned to Cape Coast and became legal practitioners, part-time historians, journalists and national politicians.



fundamentally marginalised African aborigines mainly along racial lines, and exploited their natural, fiscal, and human resources. The illegal colonial enterprise of Europe “created the natural inferiority of the African race”<sup>38</sup> and used the technique of *Divide et Impera* to justify this cultural butchering and racial subjugation and facilitate colonial rule. Its early education and ecclesiastical adventures proselytised many notions that overtly or subtly implied that the European cultural landscape was the *Ultima Thule* in human development, and indigenous cultures, creativity, and cosmologies were substandard. This psychological “cultural butchering” removed many indigenes of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries from their cultural moorings. But a vast, a sad, an increasing experience of the paradoxes in colonialism proved to many thinking Western educated Gold Coaster, so far as true contentment for them and their posterity and sacredness of culture were concerned, that these notions are unfounded. They started to rapidly arrive at an alteration of their earlier undeveloped ideas on the matter. Consequently, the reflections, travels abroad, and readings of the three thinkers, gave them a grasp of the underlying principles of the European colonial order and criticised them as not equal to their indigenous means of making sustainable groundwork for the standard requirements of all members of society, within the present and the future. This realization about the bareness and barren places of the colonial enterprise prompted them to question, from the periphery, the unnaturalness of the core of the colonial arrangement, and challenge improper colonial assumptions about aboriginal history and culture. They advanced coherent arguments to establish the veracity in indigenous jurisprudence, land tenure, social institutions, history and national consciousness.

Aspects of such arguments and rhetoric of order and reinterpretations of history and culture reflect in Sarbah’s speeches and articles, like “Gold Coast when Edward IV was King” (1904)<sup>39</sup> and “Maclean and the Gold Coast judicial assessors” (1909)<sup>40</sup> as well as books like *Fanti Customary Laws* (1897),<sup>41</sup> and *Fanti National Constitution* (1906).<sup>42</sup> The nationalist ideas of Casely Hayford, a

38 Joseph E. Casely Hayford: *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*. 2nd Edition. London: Routledge 1969, p. iv.

39 John M. Sarbah: Gold Coast when Edward IV was King. In: *Journal of the African Society* 3 (1904), pp. 194–197.

40 John M. Sarbah: Maclean and Gold Coast Judicial Assessors. In: *Journal of the African Society* 9 (1909–10), pp. 349–359.

41 John M. Sarbah: *Fanti Customary Laws*. London: W. Clowes and Sons 1897, reprinted by Frank Cass in 1968.

42 John M. Sarbah: *Fanti National Constitution*. London: Frank Cass 1906 (reprinted in 1968).

pan-Africanist and Garveyite knight,<sup>43</sup> corroborated many of the intellectual output of Sarbah, who he personally knew very well as a senior professional colleague in the law business and nationalist compatriot. His works included *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (1903),<sup>44</sup> *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation* (1911),<sup>45</sup> *The Truth about West African Land Question* (1913),<sup>46</sup> and *Gold Coast Land Tenure and the Forest Bill, 1911* (1912)<sup>47</sup>. His pamphlets included “United West Africa” (1919) and “The Disabilities of the Black Folk and Their Treatment: An Appeal to The Labour Party” (1929).

The ideological import of the works of Kobina Sekyi, the youngest of the three, was similar to those of the other two. After his university education in England in 1918, he dedicated two years to the study of the traditions of his people – the Fante – and became a member of Gold Coast National Research Association. He deepened his respect for African institutions and communal ethos. Thus his works, which were not bulky books but mostly newspaper and public lecture articles and plays, publicised the aesthetic and functional in African culture and philosophy and denounced colonialism. *The Blinkards* (1915), “Morality and Nature” (1915),<sup>48</sup> his M. A. dissertation “The Relation between the State and the Individual in the Light of its Bearing on the Concept of Duty” (1918)<sup>49</sup>, “Our White Friends”,<sup>50</sup> “The Future of Subject Peoples” (1917),<sup>51</sup> “The Parting of the Ways” (1925),<sup>52</sup> “A Comparison of Gold Coast, English and Akan-Fanti Laws in Relation to the Absolute Right of the Individual” (1935),<sup>53</sup> “The Meaning of the Expression ‘Thinking in

43 *Negro World*, 19.08.1922, quoted in Tony Martin: *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. Dover, MA: Majority 1986, p. 116.

44 The first book of his was published in London by Sweet and Maxwell.

45 The second of his books, C. M. Philips published it first, in London.

46 It was published by C. M. Phillips in London.

47 Published in London by C. M. Philips in 1912.

48 It was first delivered as a lecture to the Philosophical Society of King’s College, University of London, on January 19, 1915. Parts were subsequently published in *African Telegraph* and *Gold Coast Mirror*, on February 11 and 25, 1915.

49 See PRAAD, Cape Coast. Acc. 527/64 for a version of the work.

50 See PRAAD Cape Coast. Acc. 400/64 for a copy. The *Gold Coast Leader* published series of it in 1921 and 1922/23.

51 Kobina Sekyi: The Future of the Subject Peoples. In: *African Times and Orient Review*, Oct–Dec 1917. This work is reproduced in Ayo Langley (ed.): *Ideologies of Liberation in Black Africa, 1850–1970: Documents on Modern African Political Thought from Colonial Times to the Present*. London: Rex Collings 1979, pp. 242–251.

52 See PRAAD, Cape Coast, Acc. 464/64.

53 The PRAAD, Cape Coast, Acc. 659/64. This lecture series delivered in 1935 challenged

English” (1943),<sup>54</sup> and “The Best Constitutions are Born not Made” (1950)<sup>55</sup> were works that he produced.

Kobina Sekyi theorised in his dissertation that a state had a moral responsibility of influencing the morality of its people and its constitution of governance. Challenging Euro-Darwinist inspired unilateral theory of social development, where “progress”, law and state represented the apogee of human development, he held the view that such a perspective confused civilisation with “progress” and “progress” with culture. Progress in his view was not essentially civilisation because that which was civilised was governed by morality. Thus he opined that the so-called “civilization” of Europe that produced the menace of colonialism, which immorally attacked African societies, cultures, and people as uncivilized, was one which suffered moral deficiency and was rather uncivilized. The European state and quest for social progress were therefore unsuccessful because it neglected adding to the morality of man. Challenging the colonial notion that African cultures generally debased women, he, using the Akan-Fante as case study in his dissertation, which also had a section that explored “The social systems of the peoples of the Gold Coast”, showed in his argument that unlike Western forms, the indigenous forms empowered women to occupy high social and economic positions and allowed them active participation in politics. Drawing examples from the Akan-Fante customs, such as the Queen mother’s status as the final authority to approve the nomination of a male paramount chief, he demonstrated how the rights of women were protected, roles defined and allowed to exercise important political functions. Similar to those in Sarbah and Casely Hayford, the cultural activist consciousness in Sekyi was critical of aspects of colonial educational, religious, and economic institutions, which it perceived inimical to the cultural survival of indigenous societies. Thus he refuted thorough “Anglicization and Christianization” as passports to “civilization” and progress. He also challenged certain interfering colonial ordinances. For example, he deemed the Marriage Ordinance of 1884 as anti-African, which bigoted missionaries fashioned to disintegrate the African family, which allowed

British hegemony and law in Gold Coast. It compared indigenous Akan-Fante laws and English laws and favoured the former’s application in Gold Coast. It called for reforms in the colonialist-colonist arrangement between England and Gold Coast.

54 See PRAAD, Cape Coast, Acc. 531/64 for “The Meaning of the Expression ‘Thinking In English’” series.

55 Kobina Sekyi: *The Best Constitutions are Born Not Made*. In: PRAAD, Cape Coast, Acc. 423/64.

polygyny, and engender individualism and immorality.<sup>56</sup> “Wonders will never cease. What has marriage to do with the Government?”<sup>57</sup> was a succinct satirical expression of his disgust, through Old Fish, a character in *The Blinkards*, at the Marriage Ordinance of 1884. The colonial regimes interference in indigenous family life configurations and matrimonial arrangements, especially the plural marriage custom which was indigenously seen as an unfailing supply of population, and the imposition of English-oriented laws on the local terrain, in his view, was preposterous and unacceptable.

As a part-time revisionist historian Sekyi implored Western trained Africans to research and document the African past to liberate it from prejudiced European colonial historiography.<sup>58</sup> Hence his collecting of primary information about histories related to ancient African discoveries, origin, migration and collapse of some societies, and indigenous theology.<sup>59</sup> He condemned Africans who ended up being disloyal to the indigenous state, known in Akan-Fante as *Oman*, and its political weight, cultural norms, and moral values and practices because of their uncritical acceptance and application of certain foreign religious ideas and practices, like that of colonialism-inspired Euro-centric Christianity, which were antithetical to those of the indigenous milieu. Philosophically, he directed the Akan proverb *Oman so bo na posuban sim*, “The Company fence [of society] stands only so long as the state exists”, to such converts, their ecclesiastical mentors, and the colonial regime. It was a reminder that the *Oman* was supreme and loyalty to it was to be paramount for all people and foreign institutions. Exposing the colonial institution’s proverbial ignorance and critiquing its lack of respect for indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices of local communities, he explained that:

our ancestors were above all things a religious people, with whom religion was no mere matter of form or weekly ceremony. Religion with our ancestors was interwoven with the

56 Sekyi: *The Blinkards*, p. xxv.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

58 Sekyi: A Plea for the African Standpoint.

59 See Fanti Nation Proverbs. In: PRAAD, Cape Coast, Acc. 549/64, and An African Political Hierarchy. In: PRAAD, Cape Coast, Acc. 555/64. See PRAAD, Cape Coast file Acc. 554/ 64 assembly of oral account traditions about the history of different ethnic groups. It contains accounts about the founding of Anomabu, origin of Wassa, genesis of Elmina, migration of Akyem Bosome, concept of God in Africa, Asante constitution, rise and fall of Takyiman and the migration of the Fante, arrival of the Fante on the coast, and highlights of Fante history and the oath of the paramount chief Cape Coast.

whole fabric of their daily life; and therefore when the company system was established among them it was not without its religious concomitants.<sup>60</sup>

As a supporter of a renaissance of the rationality and dignity of the ancestors,<sup>61</sup> he opined that any Constitution that would govern the local national scene in the envisaged post-colony moment should essentially emerge from indigenous political philosophy and must respect the ancient sanctity of the *Oman*.<sup>62</sup> Following his exhortation that scientists, artists and artisans, and professionals, relying on the best of both local and foreign training and locale-friendly paradigms, should improve the local society with their knowledge and skills,<sup>63</sup> he worked closely with indigenous rulers and once served as counsellor to the chief of Cape Coast. He advocated for the sacred institution of chieftaincy to be upheld. As a believer of local modernization, dictated by local time and pace, he did not support externally (colonialism) generated political reforms that undermined the sanctity of time tested indigenous political traditions. He deemed such reforms and “new” constitutions young and inferior to endogenous political systems, and hardly useful to African reality, stability, freedom and especially indigenous political democratic and constitutional concepts, practices and systems. Like the other two thinkers Sekyi refuted the notion that colonialism, which was autocratic in politics, capitalist in commerce, and bigoted in culture and religion, was the Prometheus of political democratic ideas to indigenous Africa. The argument was that indigenous polities were essentially, in their unique ways, defined by democratic and constitutional elements. Sekyi viewed colonialism and its exploitative commercial and religious implications as the principal factors of social disintegration and economic retrogression to Africa.<sup>64</sup>

Generally, his ideas, which were fundamentally stimulated by the notion of “intelligent retrogression” and self-determination, were dually conservative and revolutionary like those of the other two thinkers. Conservative because they demanded a resurgence and repossession of all peripheralized, discarded and suppressed positive local values and institutions. Revolutionary they were because they urged indigenous populations to reconstruct such legacies to meet the needs of their day, and escape the mental oppression

60 Kobina Sekyi: *The Parting of the Ways*, reproduced in Ayo Langley: *Ideologies*, pp.251–252.

61 *Ibid*.

62 See Sekyi: *The Best Constitutions are Born not Made*.

63 For example see Kobina Sekyi: *Our Obligations*. In: *Gold Coast Times*, 03.–10.01.1931.

64 See Sekyi: *The Future of the Subject Peoples*.

and embarrassment of unfettered Euro-phililia and Anglo-mania, especially prevalent among the educated elites and “been-tos”.<sup>65</sup> Thus in *The Blinkards*, a satirical comedy whose plot revolves around Mrs. Brofusem, the epitome of irrational Euro/Anglo-mania, whose brief travel to England produced in her the self-delusion that African culture is backward and must yield to “the finer values of the European”, Sekyi exposed and admonished the colonial society’s embarrassing mimicry of the ways of the “colonial master” and negative attitudes towards its indigenous customary values. Any borrowing by African societies, he counselled, should rationally take the high and functional and positive aspects of European culture, lest they embrace the unrefined low class ones. However, he like the two other thinkers, preached that caution should be taken in the surgery of cultural “grafting” because irrational hybridization of the borrowed, especially the vulgar, and indigenous systems would spawn a grotesque creature of an underdeveloped Euro-African culture of confusion and false values in Africa. He highlighted such a perverted situation in the caricatured lifestyle of Mrs. Brofusem.

He critiqued also the linguistic hegemony of English and sidelining of local languages in the colonial territory. To him languages as key markers of identity were also originally produced from and by unique socio-cultural milieu, therefore their effective intelligibility and application in creative thinking and processes were locale specific.<sup>66</sup> Many English words were deficient in conveying and defining African concepts satisfactorily. For example, he, in *The Blinkards*, challenged an erroneous colonial notion that the indigenous *etam* (shawl) left the wearer “naked”. He argued that such an opinion was alive because the use of the word “naked”, which in its proper English context connoted something entirely different, had been inadequate in conveying a local conception of bareness. He concluded that actually *etam* and other local garments left certain body parts “bare” not naked.<sup>67</sup> Reminding the colonial administration and indigenous peoples to make actual sustainable efforts to promote indigenous languages and develop their flexibility he brought into question the imposed status and acceptability of English as official medium of instruction in educational and administrative institutions in Gold Coast.

65 ‘Been-to’ was a jargon used during the colonial time for Africans (especially rich illiterates) who had been to England. Satirically it referred to those who returned to their original homes with borrowed aspects of rudimentary English working class culture which they ignorantly imitated and cherished as high class English aristocratic culture.

66 See Sekyi: The Meaning of the Expression ‘Thinking in English’.

67 Sekyi: *The Blinkards*, p. 53.

Proud of their origins and history, and convinced that goodness, morality, and sophistication resided in their cultural systems, the three thinkers deemed it their moral duty and destiny to use their mind, pen, and speech, to defend the human dignity and cultural fabric of their people and them from mockery and destruction by any people and force. Hence, John M. Sarbah observed:

He who uses his opportunity to help raise the masses of his brethren to his own high level [of consciousness] is following his own destiny and cannot be engaged in a more nobler work. But when, from indifference or deliberate choice, an educated African becomes a tool of Europeans of the baser sort, and keeps back, directly or indirectly, the masses in ignorance and superstition, he becomes the greatest enemy of his down-trodden and long suffering race; and the greater his educational attainments and opportunities, the graver his fault and personal guilt.<sup>68</sup>

Consequently, as a brilliant lawyer and orator, Sarbah challenged unhealthy colonial policies. Perhaps the greatest that accentuated his national fame was that against the Land Bill of 1897, which gave so-called public land to the Crown. Challenging the legality of the Bill, he argued:

another point which we have endeavoured to bring before this [Legislative] council is the definition of what is called 'public land'. In going through the Bill, we have endeavoured to understand the meaning of each closely and the meaning of the words in it. Looking at the definition of public land, our instruction are that the Bill seems to fall into error that every piece of land in this country except those enumerated in section 13 of the Bill is public land; [...] it is affirmed that every plot of land in Gold Coast has an owner whether inch, piece or plot, the waste land or forest land<sup>69</sup>.

He boldly exposed the Bill as illegal and a violation that would “deprive the Aborigines of their [natural absolute] right in the soil of their native land”, dissolve the different rights to land for individuals, families and community, weaken native authority, and break family bonds.<sup>70</sup> The Bill was withdrawn.

Spurred to use acts of defiance, rhetoric of order, arguments by refutation and defensive historiography to correct biases and inaccuracies in colonial laws, historiography and anthropological reports, the three thinkers argued with sociological and historical evidence that Africa had a glorious pre-colonial past and that unobstructed, its people could cause a cultural, historical

68 Sarbah: *Fanti National Constitution*, p. 249.

69 Extract of the Minutes of meeting of the Legislative Council on 27 May 1897, quoted in Azu Crabbe: *John Mensah Sarbah 1864–1910 (His Life and Works)*. Accra: Ghana University Press 1971, chapter 3, p. 22.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 23.



and intellectual renaissance for humanity's happiness and development.<sup>71</sup> In Sarbah's *Fanti Customary Laws* and *Fanti National Constitution* and Casely Hayford's *Gold Coast Native Institutions*, the unique features and relevance of some indigenous Gold Coast institutions and the role of the *Oman*, linguist (Okyeame), headmen, and the communal, commercial, and religious systems were highlighted with facts obtained from historical, ethnographic and ethnological researches. Apart from showing that citizens belonged to clans, which constituted matrilineal families, Sarbah outlined the development of the village community, the positions of the "Ohene" (chief) and "Omanhene" (paramount chief). The latter was the head of the nation and *primus inter pares* of the rulers of the people, who, by the unwritten constitutional provision of the Oman, collectively decided cases and legislature. Indigenous constitutions, he argued, were as old as the history of the people and naturally applicable to the people. Sarbah demonstrated knowledge about the complex legal processes and principles which regulated the government of the Akan-Fante social organizations, which he claimed was politically democratic.

In *Fante National Constitution*, Sarbah showed the beginnings of British jurisdiction in Gold Coast. Reiterating the view of Brodie Cruickshank, a British Gold Coast trader and official who stayed in Gold Coast from c. 1835–1854,<sup>72</sup> and on occasion acted as administrator and governor of the British settlements, that:

indeed, we had no legal jurisdiction in the country whatsoever. It had never been conquered or purchased by us or ceded to us. The chiefs, it is true, had, on several occasions, sworn allegiance to the Crown of Great Britain but by this act they only meant the military services of vassal to superior. Native laws and customs were never understood to be abrogated or effected [sic] by it,<sup>73</sup>

he challenged British appropriation of Gold Coast. Offended by prevalent incorrect application of certain English words to define African realities, he criticized Cruickshank's misapplication of the word "allegiance" in his observation. Allegiance connoted a submissive position for the indigenous chiefs he made reference to, but they, Sarbah argued, did not regard themselves as such in the English sense of the word. Challenging the extension of British

71 Devine E. K. Amenumey, Professor of History: Lecture on Intellectual History of Ghana, delivered in October 2002, University of Cape Coast, Department of Arts, Cape Coast. (Notes in possession of the author.)

72 Brodie Cruickshank produced the two volumes *Eighteen Years on the Gold Coast of Africa*. London 1853 (Reprint: London: Frank Cass 1966).

73 Sarbah: *Fanti National Constitution*, p. 88.





laws beyond the limits of British settlements, he asserted that indigenous rulers did not confer any exclusive powers and rights on the British Crown. Petitioning the Secretary of State on June 5, 1889 on behalf of chiefs and peoples of Cape Coast, he showed the unfairness in and of British rule and logically averred that the Gold Coast territory was not *tabula rasa* obtained and settled on by British subjects through total conquest or cession. He said *inter alia* “today we are being ruled as if we had no indigenous institutions, no language and no national characteristics, no homes”.<sup>74</sup> He implied that the British signed treaties of friendship or protection with indigenous inhabitants and sovereignties and therefore it was immoral for the former party to arrogate to itself a hegemonic status and treat the other with disrespect. He, like Sekyi, condemned the indiscriminate imposition and application of ‘English’ laws in Gold Coast. He disapproved the Marriage Ordinance of 1884 as anti-African in its disregard for indigenous marriage contract laws.

He further challenged an introduced English legal principle, that persons died interstate if they left no “written” wills to govern their property. He revealed that in the indigenous legal setting people did not expire on an interstate level, even in the absence of written wills about their assets. People often than not gave oral directions about their properties before dying. He called for the reforms of all clauses, within introduced English laws, which contravened indigenous laws and sentiments. As a natural member of a society that respected oral traditions, and a lawyer schooled in the way of English laws and the Austinian concept of Law, which supported documented statutory enactments, he argued that “law,” whether written, like the British type of laws, or orally transmitted and mentally kept, like the Fante type, should be regarded as law no matter which cultural set-up it is coming from.<sup>75</sup> Hence, functional preserved Akan and Fante legal precepts, and African customary laws, which he deemed were naturally capable of advancement, should be suitably applied in contemporary times.<sup>76</sup> Customary laws, and their legal validity, efficacy and sacredness, he advocated, should be autonomous of colonial courts and the legal definition of English laws. Although his work largely focused on Akan-Fante systems and history, it revealed that Gold Coast indigenous polities and peoples had legal and political institutions, anchored by valid and dynamic democratic constitutions.

74 Crabbe: *Sarbah*, p. 102.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

76 Sarbah: *Fanti Customary Laws*, p. 6, 23.

On the issue of dress fashion, linguistic and naming culture heritage, Sarbah rejected unrestricted assimilations and prioritization of European garments, languages, names as markers of “civilization”. He believed that the use of African ones did not connote backwardness. For example on language he argued “The fact that a man [/woman] (African) [can understand their language but] cannot read or write a foreign language is not a positive proof, that he[/she] is not astute in business, or [...] ignorant, or possesses not natural intelligence or ability for any useful work”.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, it was in a quest to publicly broaden such cultural convictions, that he and some elites, who were “dissatisfied with the demoralizing effects of certain European influences, and were determined to stop further encroachment with their nationality”<sup>78</sup>, formed the *Mfantse Amanbubu Fekuw* in 1889 in Cape Coast. When it metamorphosed into the A.R.P.S. in the 1890s, which, according to Parker, was the “Gold Coast’s first ‘protonationalist’ elite political organization”,<sup>79</sup> it maintained its original mission and protected the right of indigenes to land<sup>80</sup>, and strongly criticised those Africans it regarded as scornful of local culture heritage and customs. While it tolerated western educated Africans, it shunned Europeanized indigenes. The statement, “We simply want our education to enable us to develop and to improve our native ideas, customs, manners, and institutions”,<sup>81</sup> highlighted in the *Gold Coast Aborigine*, showed the group’s enduring orientation. The practical steps it took to collect, discuss, and compile a record of native sayings, customs, laws, and institutions<sup>82</sup> to deliberately revive the African culture, music, language, dress, and names, and promote history and culture, as instruments of political agitation, elicited a ready response in Cape Coast.<sup>83</sup> As a close monitor of colonial designs, it championed agitations for social and constitutional reforms right up to the 1930s.<sup>84</sup> The group’s enduring demand for a formal schooling system that would teach subjects in African history, language, and culture to promote cultural awareness yielded gains. Governor Frederick Guggisberg acquiesced and

77 Sarbah: *Fanti National Constitution*, cit. in: Wilson: *Origins*, p. 295.

78 Ibid., p. xvii.

79 John Parker: *Making The Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*. Portsmouth, NH / Oxford: Heinemann and James Currey 2000, p. 201.

80 Kofi N. Awoonor: *Ghana: A Political History From Pre-European To Modern Times*. Accra: Ghana University Press 1990, p. 91.

81 *Gold Coast Aborigines*, 08.02.1902, quoted in Kimble: *Political History*, p. 360.

82 Ibid.

83 Kimble: *Political History*, p. 150.

84 Buah: *History of Ghana*, p. 94.

“encouraged the teaching of African history and language”.<sup>85</sup> Achimota College, established in 1927, began this process. This was the genesis of formal teaching of African history and aspects of culture in Ghanaian schools.

Sarbah and many members of the society practically took pride in speaking Fante, wearing the *etam*, in the indigenous throw-over-shoulder style, as part of their usual dressing, consigning their so-called Christian (European) names to the background and formalising their African names. It was this same matter with names that the likes of Reverend S.R.B. Solomon, William Esuman Gwira, Joseph William Appiah and Francis Nwiah became Attoh Ahuma, Kobina Sekyi, Jemisimiham Jehu-Appiah and Kwame Nkrumah respectively. Some “Europeanised” elites and colonial administrators scorned Sarbah and his colleagues, as “gone Fantee” adventurous who had tumbled into backwardness and the low level of the Tamfurafu (wearers of *etam*). Countering such name calling, Sarbah, who was the first African barrister in Gold Coast, wrote his certainty that it was better to be called by one’s own name than be known by a foreign one and possible it was to acquire western learning without neglecting one’s mother tongue. Furthermore, the African dress, he argued, was equal to Greco-Roman garbs and need not be thrown aside.<sup>86</sup> He therefore espoused the public wearing of African clothes. This position was also taken by Sekyi, who, making the indigenous Kente *etam* a common dress code of his,<sup>87</sup> suggested that Gold Coast African professionals, like lawyers, should be able to wear African dress and *etam* to perform their professional duties. Similarly, Casely Hayford argued that “the wearing of the native [sic] dress to the extent of suggesting that academic gowns should give way, in African Universities, to traditional garbs,” because dress and habits matters “goes to the root of the Ethiopian’s [a term he used for Africans] self-respect”.<sup>88</sup>

Pioneering calls of this nature influenced some latter-day famous nationalists like Ephraim Amu, and Kwame Nkrumah. Amu, one of the country’s celebrated music composers,<sup>89</sup> angered his employers – the Presbyterian Missionaries of the Akropong Teacher Training College, in the Eastern province of the colony – for preaching in Church while wearing the “pagan” *etam*. He

85 Boahen: *Ghana*, p. 114.

86 Sarbah: *Fanti National Constitution*, p. xvi.

87 Fred Agyeman: *Amu the African: A Study in Vision and Courage*. Accra: Asempra 1988, p. 60.

88 Casely Hayford: *Ethiopia Unbound*, p. xxviii.

89 Famous for the patriotic “Yen ara asaase ni” (This is our land) and the popular “[Asante] Bonwere Kente”.

curtailed his interest to join the Presbyterian priesthood<sup>90</sup> after this cultural provocation. Acting with immense faith in the cultural revival and preservation cause, he boldly wore the shawl and promoted the use of some traditional musical instruments, which the missionaries deemed “heathen”, in music composition and performance.<sup>91</sup> Eventually, the college and church in Akropong accepted such instruments for devotional purposes and “his work on African music, his pride in sensible and practical indigenous attire [...] inject[ed] new meaning and dignity into the muscles of Ghana and African culture and civilization”.<sup>92</sup> Among other things Nkrumah, Ghana’s premier president, also signified his African cultural nationalist thought through indigenous costumes. As interpreted by George Hagan, he usually wore *jugu* (smock) from the northern part of the country “as his battle [action] dress, as it was for some leaders in the olden days”, and the Kente shawl, from the south, for non-belligerent “formal occasions”. Nkrumah “used elements of cultural attire to show that customs from different ethnic cultures were merely different [microcosmic] aspects or manifestations of one [indigenous] cultural identity, the Ghanaian [African] identity”.<sup>93</sup> All the nationalist thinkers reasoned to use aspects of world cosmopolitan culture, yet they found it beneficial and wise to endeavour to preserve and project African ones to maintain for themselves and posterity those cultural markers of their African identity.

Casely Hayford expressed some of his politico-cultural nationalist views in *Gold Coast Native Institutions*. On the validity of the indigenous system in governance, he espoused the view that officials at Downing Street, London, should partake in external administration, and leave the internal government of indigenous peoples “to develop upon the natural lines of their own institutions”,<sup>94</sup> because the European, he averred, was not superior to the African. Thus calling for the destruction of all colonial schemes to submerge Africa, he iterated to the National Congress of British West Africa, in Lagos in December 1929, that unacceptable it was to remain nonchalant “while propagandists of another race are spreading abroad doctrines which may submerge our continent [Africa] and make the Black man perpetually a hewer of wood and drawer

90 Agyeman: *Amu*, p. 75.

91 *Ibid.*, photo plates 4,5,6,7,8, 9.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

93 George Hagan: Nkrumah’s Cultural Policy. In: Kwame Arhin (ed.): *The Life and Works of Kwame Nkrumah*. Accra: Sedco 1991, pp. 1–26, here p. 15.

94 Casely Hayford: *Gold Coast Native Institutions*, p. 7.

of water.”<sup>95</sup> While Casely Hayford denounced British patriarchal claims that imperialism and colonialism were in the interest of Africa and its peoples, and challenged British jurisdiction in Gold Coast, he consequently made demands for healthy British imperial policies for indigenous peoples and polities. Like Sarbah, he, as a reviser of colonial historiography, considered the historical fact of treaties of friendship and protection between Britain and indigenous rulers, and argued that Gold Coast was a Protectorate and not a Colony, a nomenclature which he faulted as inappropriate and misleading. Confirming the sovereign status of indigenous chiefs he averred that two treaties of 1831 and 1844 conferred on the British the status of “honest broker” for Asante and Fante. Thus, he argued, the two never relinquished their sovereignty, neither was Gold Coast captured or ceded to the British government. The British claim of political hegemony over Gold Coast therefore contravened the two treaties. According to him “the bond had no reference to territorial acquisition; it did not extend the Queen’s Possessions beyond their former limits (the confines of the forts).<sup>96</sup> Therefore, “whatever authority by usage Great Britain may be able to extend in these parts we intently expect will be exercised with fairness, and full recognition of the historical facts relating to British relations with the Gold Coast”.<sup>97</sup> In pursuance of his call for the British to be fair in their dealings with the aborigines, he challenged direct taxation and other taxes, which the colonial government unilaterally formulated and imposed on the local peoples. Such taxes, he, like the other two thinkers, described as anti-African and undemocratic. Aware that the taxed English commoners, had representatives in the House of Commons, he argued for significant African representation in the Legislative Assembly to provide adequate representation in the formulation and implementation of policies that would affect them. Hence, he asserted that

Any important measure affecting the people must be passed with the consent and the direct co-operation of the chiefs themselves [and] [...] what the country requires most urgently to-day is a national assembly where all sections of the community will be adequately represented. This is the fundamental element of progress – the reform at which all thinking men must directly aim.<sup>98</sup>

95 Magnus J. Sampson (ed.): *West African Leadership: Public Speeches delivered by Joseph E. Casely Hayford*. London: Frank Cass 1969, p. 88.

96 Casely Hayford: *Gold Coast Native Institutions*, pp. 159–161.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

98 *Ibid.*, pp. 164–165.

Among other issues, he also discussed colonial prejudices and errors about indigenous spirituality in *Ethiopia Unbound*, a novel-like “intellectual biography [...] that sought to rally Negroes [sic] throughout the world in defence of their culture, institutions and racial integrity.”<sup>99</sup> Arguing that the designation “heathen” should not be used for peoples’ religions and worldviews, he philosophically challenged any colonialism that engineered an assumed “right of [...] Christians to a monopoly of divine light”<sup>100</sup> and notions that the African landscape was spiritually bankrupt because beliefs and practices that defined their spirituality were vulgarly fetish and heathen. He opined through Kwamankra, the novel’s protagonist,

the word ‘heathen’ is a relative term, and perhaps your average Englishman has no right to call the average Ethiopian [African] heathen. Ours [spirituality] was the cradle of civilisation and that it had not the permanence that the Christian civilisation [European Christianity] is likely to have does not make it any the less a civilisation; and I, for one, feel nothing but pity for the kind of ignorance which scoffs at what it does not understand.<sup>101</sup>

Challenging the assumed superiority of Euro-centric Christianity he asserted that “I have studied our own Eastern [African spiritual] systems and compared them with the system you westerns [sic] have adopted [westernized Christianity] and find that one broad divinity [God] as well as humanity runs through them all”.<sup>102</sup> He explained that indigenous cosmology accommodated a Supreme Being, the same Principle which the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic called “God” and “Gutha” respectively. Linguistically interrogating the etymology of the Fante terms “NYIAKROPON” and “NYAMI” as names for that Principle, to elucidate the philosophical underpinnings of “African Theology”, he argued that they were essentially the same as the Hebraic-Judeo-Christian notions of “YAHWEH” and “I AM”.<sup>103</sup> He also denounced as spurious, the colonial claim derived from certain Eurocentric Talmudic Judeo-Christian traditions that Africa was spiritually ignorant with no knowledge of a renowned teacher like Jesus Christ. Hence, he declared, as a rebuttal, that since it was in Africa that Jesus Christ the Messiah found a safe haven,<sup>104</sup> then the African society and its people were destined to lead the physical and spiritual progression of Christianity and humanity.

99 Wilson: *Origins*, p. 40.

100 Casely Hayford: *Ethiopia Unbound*, p. 26.

101 Ibid., p. 27.

102 Ibid., p. 28.

103 Ibid., pp. 5–8.

104 Ibid., p. 9.

Negotiating resistance from the periphery, the three nationalist thinkers indubitably exposed the inadequacies of the colonial enterprise and revised inapt notions about indigenous history and human and cultural ecology so that the peripheralized aborigine would develop confidence in their unlimited possibilities to be self-determined. To this end, Sarbah, who declared that “The African must know himself, his country, and his destiny”<sup>105</sup> also asserted in an attempt to explain their intentions, actions and efforts that “[t]he[ir] [subject African’s] ambition to excel in whatever is of good report is not insolence, neither is the determination to cultivate self-respect and to cherish a manly independent spirit, nor is pride of race in the African a sign of disloyalty”.<sup>106</sup>

### Conclusion

All in all some of the methods, particularly intellectual arguments and discussions, which some indigenous elements in Gold Coast, especially those of J.M. Sarbah, Kobina Sekyi and J.E. Casely Hayford, employed to manifest cultural nationalism against European, especially British political and cultural hegemony in that colonial African environment, were examined in the present article. Crucial was the protection of indigenous history and culture because they were the *force vitale* of African consciousness and identity. In the post colony moment of globalization, the complex dynamic indigenous cultures are susceptible to adjustments. Modifications should however be internally generated and conscientiously guided by indigenous ethos and rationality in a way that would allow the complex to retain its basic values and identification. Blind imitation of the rudiments of foreign cultures would be detrimental to the dignity of the African’s sense of cultural uniqueness and verve, because “any human relationship cast in the model imitator mould tends towards a superior-inferior stratification of attitudes. It is psychologically difficult for a model to regard an imitator as his equal”.<sup>107</sup>

105 Sarbah: *Fanti National Constitution*, pp.234–235.

106 Sarbah, cit. in Wilson: *Origins*, p.301.

107 Coleman: *Nigeria*, p.147.