Chapter 3
Bridging the Ivory Tower Professional History, Scholarship, and Public Engagement in Ghana

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Introduction

The postcolonial university in Africa is the most fundamental institution in the development of rational thinking, knowledge creation and application, and dissemination. This is where human resources for national development are cultivated and nurtured. It is also a place for developing and fine-tuning political and cultural ethos of people as members of a body politic and associational life (Altbach 2005). The University of Ghana and the Department of History has been playing this role since its founding. In the latter part of the 1940s, a succession of fortuitous events laid the foundation for the growth of higher education in British Africa. These included series of reports from the British government as well as a push from British academia. It should, however, be pointed out that these initiatives from the colonial government were partly as a result of decades of agitation for educational reform in British West Africa, beginning in the Gold Coast in 1920 with the National Congress of British West Africa.[1] The reports included the Asquith and Elliot Reports of 1945, and the Scarbrough Report of 1947. The Asquith Report was the general policy regarding the development of higher education across all British territories while the Elliot Report was specific to expanding tertiary education in West Africa.[2]

[1] The National Congress of British West Africa was founded in 1920 by J. E. Casely Hayford and other young educated Africans who wanted a strong African legislative representation as well as reforms in various areas, including education.

[2] In 1943, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Stanley appointed Sir Cyril Asquith to chair a Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies. The Commission proposed an Inter-University Council which will represent all British universities, and also invited the University of London to join the Council. One of the purposes was to do the groundwork for the establishment of tertiary institutions in the colonies. The Majority Report of the Elliot Commission (1945) was more specific by recommending the establishment of tertiary institutions in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria.

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Additionally, European academic agitation for increased recognition of the study of Africa and its history coincided with the founding of the University College of the Gold Coast. In the 1940s, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) impressed on the British government to apportion more funds for research into Oriental and African studies. Subsequently, a commission was set up under Lord Scarbrough in 1945 regarding this matter. The Scarbrough Report was important in the creation and recognition of African History as a field in the United Kingdom. It had recommended that the Universities of London, Oxford and Cambridge build on their expertise in "Colonial Studies" to aid the training of civil servants who seek careers in Africa (Watterson 2008). Consequently, John D. Fage and Roland Oliver, two of the leading pioneers in professionalizing African History, were beneficiaries of funding made available as a result of the Scarbrough Report. Roland Oliver was appointed as a lecturer at SOAS in 1948 while John Fage took up a lectureship at the University College of the Gold Coast in 1949. Indeed, Oliver spent 2 years researching in East Africa after his appointment at SOAS (Oliver 1997; Fage 2000). In the Gold Coast, John Fage was determined to continue the work of W. E. F. Ward and the history teachers at Achimota as well as the Anthropological Department of the Gold Coast Civil Service, which was devoted to collecting the oral traditions of the peoples and societies of the Gold Coast.

The foundation of African History as a legitimate field was further given impetus in the 1960s and 1970s. John D. Fage and Roland Oliver, with the assistance of Cambridge University Press, launched the *Journal of African History* in 1960. This journal became an important outlet for disseminating knowledge on African societies and history. Coincidentally, during the Cold War, the United States government realized the importance of having specific and sometimes intimate knowledge of regions and societies around the globe. Consequently, United States universities invested in and became leaders in Area Studies programme, including African History and/or African Studies. Scholars who studied Africa's histories, societies and cultures highlighted African agency in the various strands of narratives which captured the continent. Thus, a combination of good circumstances for the study and teaching of African history placed the University College of the Gold Coast in a propitious position at its inception.

The fortunes of Africa's institutions of higher education may be gauged by the various phases they have gone through. According to Paul T. Zeleza (2009), the development of African universities, like the University of Ghana, has gone through three eras: a golden era, a crisis era and a recovery era. The golden era which spanned the 1950s to the late 1970s, was a period of nationalist euphoria and an introduction of African agency in knowledge production. The late 1970s to late 1990s saw a period of crisis due to widespread and cataclysmic economic decline, followed by austere economic measures. Higher education suffered severe reduction in subvention during this period, leading to the mass migration of academics to North America, Europe and other African countries. The period of recovery began in the late 1990s alongside economic and political liberalization. Zeleza's periodization aptly describes the fortunes of the Department of History at the University of Ghana. It is our hope to explore the three eras under the themes of professional history, scholarship, teaching, and public engagement.

In the present, professional historians and their discipline elicit two kinds of reaction in Ghana. The first reaction is that of awe and admiration for historians who spend their working years combing through manuscripts, oral histories and statistical data, and in a Rankean way, to show how the past really was. The second reaction, which is not as charitable, regard historians as academics and scholars who have long outlived their usefulness to society. Those who hold this view often cite the lack of continuous scholarly engagement by historians in Ghana, their unwillingness to revise teaching methods, and their show of apathy to "mundane" issues outside academia. This perception places historians practising their craft in Ghana and the discipline in the cross-hairs, and does great injustice to the advances made in the discipline through teaching, scholarship and public engagement. The outreach activities of the Historical Society of Ghana, as well as individual members of the Department of History, to engage the public on national issues have been commendable. The professional lives of A. A. Boahen and I. Odotei, for instance, illustrate historians who ably handled teaching, scholarship, and public engagement very well.

Finally, it is our aim to point out that the relevance of history as a discipline in the social sciences, the historical profession, and the Department depends on two stakeholders: the university as an institution and professional historians in the Department. The relevance of history as a discipline lies in the ability of professional historians to effectively communicate through conscientious research and publication, teaching and continuously engaging the public. Secondly, this ability may be enhanced by the University through university-funded faculty development programmes.

Professional History, Scholarship, and the Classroom

The recognition of Africa and its cultures as a legitimate area of study was not without its lows. The most cited and infamous example was a comment made by Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, Hugh Trevor-Roper (1965), while delivering lectures aired by the BBC at the University of Sussex. According to him, the African past is the study of "unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant parts of the globe." In his view, available history of the continent is a narrative of European presence and activities in Africa. The rest is darkness, and "darkness is not a subject of history." In defence of Trevor-Roper, he was a product of his time and was only expressing a general and insidious view held by many about the African continent. Eventually, the growth and acceptance of studies on Africa in universities on the British Isle and North America in the 1960s and 1970s had a rippling effect on the newly established history departments in universities across Africa. Similarly, on the continent, the new nationalist African governments charged African universities with training personnel for the Africanization of the civil service. For instance, in Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah's government particularly took pride in the universities, seeing them as places to lead the rediscovery of the

African personality (Manuh et.al. 2007). Thus, study areas like the Asante, Akyem Abuakwa, Akuapem, Akwamu, Fante, Dagomba, Konkomba and Gonja which were primarily the preserve of anthropologists, ethnographers and archaeologists, began attracting keen historical inquiry by the 1960s.

As indicated earlier, the historical discipline in the Gold Coast benefited from a string of propitious events as well as from the dedicated energies of individuals who fell in love with the cultures and histories of this British colony. For the purposes of this chapter, we have divided these individuals into two groups—native Gold Coasters' and expatriates from the various parts of the Empire. This corpus of colonial historical writing included the works of native and nonprofessional historians such as J. E. Casely Hayford, Nana Agyeman Prempeh I, J. M. Sarbah, Attoh Ahuma, Kobina Sekyi, and J. B. Danquah.[3] Casely Hayford's *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (1903) shed light on the workings of native institutions and argued for greater autonomy for them. Of equal importance is Asantehene Agyeman Prempe I's impressive *The History of the Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself* (2003), a culmination of Asante royal oral tradition and the fear of obscurity, if not written down. In the eye of the professional historian, Casely Hayford's work was compromised by the colonial intellectual milieu within which it was produced, while Asantehene Prempe I's work was tainted by his "Oyoko bias," as J. K. Adjaye puts it.

On the other hand, the works of the expatriates also featured prominently, especially that of W. W. Claridge, W. E. F. Ward, R. S. Rattray and E. Meyerowitz. According to Ward, everyone "who writes on Gold Coast history should begin, after the fashion of the country, by pouring a libation and sacrificing a sheep in honour of Dr. Claridge" (Ward 1967). Indeed, W. W. Claridge, a medical officer in the Gold Coast Colonial Service, wrote the colossal *History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti* (1915), a second attempt at a comprehensive history of the Gold Coast. Although impressive in volume, this work was tainted by the colonial enterprise and his close affinity to the colonial government in the Gold Coast. In a Whiggish manner, Claridge, although full of praises for the Asante, saw British colonial rule as a teleological step towards progress, and one not to be resisted (Wilks 1996). A third attempt at a history of Ghana was made by Ward's *A History of Ghana* (1948) but this was only a mini version of Claridge's work. The works of Rattray and Meyerowitz, although important, had more anthropological relevance than historical substance.[4]

The new drive in historical inquiry from the 1960s was spearheaded by the Department of History, University of Ghana, as well as those based in other departments and universities, but allied to the Department. There was A. A. Boahen, K. Y. Daaku, J. K. Fynn, R. Addo-Fening, A. van Dantzig, J. Hunwick, A. A. Illiasu, and J. K. Adjaye from the Department, D. Kimble of the Institute of Adult Education, T. McCaskie of the Centre for West African Studies, Birmingham, and R. Rathbone of the School of Oriental and African Studies. In September 1953, Ivor

[3] It is worth mentioning that one of the earliest attempts at writing a comprehensive history of the Gold Coast by a native was the work of C. C. Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast* (1895).

[4] See R. S. Rattray's *Ashanti* (1923), *Religion and Art in Ashanti* (1927), *Ashanti Law and Constitution* (1929), and Eva Meyerowitz's *The Sacred State of the Akan* (1951).

Wilks arrived in the Gold Coast to teach philosophy at the Achimota campus of the University College of the Gold Coast. By 1960, he had become enamored by the various histories of the Gold Coast and this led to a study of the Akwamu, Akuapem, Asante, Gonja and other ethnic groupings. He went on to become one of the foremost experts on Asante history, priding himself on people referring to him as an Asante nationalist. As a break from the corpus of colonial historiography built by Claridge, Ward, Casely Hayford and others, the nationalist historiography of independent Ghana sought to re-calibrate agency in the Ghanaian historical process.

Adu Boahen (Boahen 1964, 1986) led the way among Ghanaians in the Department by authoring *Britain, the Sahara and the Western Sudan 1788–1861* and *Topics in West African History*. These works sought to challenge and overturn the "Hegelian and Trevor-Roperian fallacy" that pre-colonial Africa has no history (Adjaye 2008). In *Topics in West African History*, Boahen retold African history by interweaving narratives of African heroes and heroines as tireless and crafty warriors, diplomats, empire builders and pioneers. Later, Adu Boahen was to expand on some of these themes in *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, where he "paints a picture of Africans strongly defending their sovereignty, using wars and diplomacy where necessary" (Falola 2003). In addition to Boahen's works, there was an emergence of local histories, including K. Y. Daaku's (1970) study on the coastal states, J. K. Fynn's (1971) one on the Fante and Asante, and M. A. Kwamena-Poh's (1973) study on the Akwapem.

The quality of teaching in the golden era was comparable to any first class university, and this explains why many foreign students interested in the African past made Legon their first choice. The list includes R. Rathbone, an exchange student from SOAS, and T. McCaskie (1995), who earned his MA at Legon. Additionally, as part of Ghana's agenda to provide excellent human resource for its universities, the Department of History at Legon developed a programme which sent out brilliant and promising individuals to study the histories of other regions, societies and nations. This training program for prospective faculty was to create a community of historians with diverse expertise. For instance K. Darkwa studied East Africa and Ethiopia, I. Odotei studied Danish and European history, R. Addo-Fening studied Australia and Asia, E. Ofori Adu studied Japan; James Tingay studied US history, and K. Baku studied European Intellectual history.

The golden era, unfortunately, came to an end due to economic stagnation, political instability and their attendant social problems. This period witnessed serious disruptions in the academic calendars due to student unrests and an exodus of teaching and administrative staff to other countries. For instance, Nigeria's strong economy made it an attractive destination for Ghana's academics, while some of the expatriates left for positions in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the historical profession, J. K. Adjaye (2008) notes that problems which haunted the advancement of historical scholarship during the era of crisis were carried over into the era of recovery. Problems such as the loss of trained historians to countries in North America and Europe, and the lack of resources and infrastructure to support scholarship and teaching at home still persist. The same trend may be noticed in institutions of higher education in Nigeria, especially the University of Ibadan.

A. Olukoju (2002) summarizes it eloquently by pointing out that academics "were distracted from their primary assignments of teaching, research and supervision of students' research, and were made to dissipate energy confronting official neglect and wrong-headed policies." This situation also severely incapacitated the quality and even quantity of publication output of academics in Nigeria. A more debilitating instance occurred in Ghana in the 1980s. The Ghanaian state's attempt to recover from sharp economic decline gravely affected scholarship and teaching at the University of Ghana.

In the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century, significant progress has been made in sustaining professional history, scholarship, and teaching in the Department. Recent Ghanaian historiography has been able to exhibit the various lenses through which the Ghanaian experience may be viewed. This has accounted for the increased interest in social and environmental history, led by scholars such as Emmanuel Akyeampong (2002, 2003), J. K. Adjaye (2004), and Akosua Perbi (2004). There have also been important local and political histories from Robert Addo-Fening (1997), D. E. K. Amenumey (1989), N. J. K. Brukum (2005), K. Baku (2005), Jean Allman (2000), Sandra Greene (1996) and Richard Rathbone (2000). Equally important is the birth of a new corps of historians in the Department who were molded in the years of recovery, and who have had both in-house as well as external training.[5] The works of N. Y. B. Sapong and C. Amoah-Boampong emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary approach to historical inquiry, which borrows freely from history, anthropology, political science, economics, geography, literature and archaeology. Sapong (2009), in his study of social movements in Ghana, argues that they formed the linchpin in Ghana's successful transition to democracy and the Fourth Republic. He traces the trajectory of successive social movements from the protest against Acheampong's UNIGOV idea to the late PNDC era, outlining their importance to political consciousness and the crafting of the 1992 Constitution. Amoah-Boampong (2011), on the other hand, examines the complex and sometimes contentious relations between the state and agricultural producers in Ghana. Using the case of Kuapa Kokoo Farmers' Union as an example, she contends that although the state wins most of the encounters, it is unable to suppress the ability of agricultural producers to be meaningful actors in the marketplace.

Additionally, in an interesting and much needed work, Emmanuel Akyeampong (2003) interrogates the "interaction of environmental folk wisdom and scientific knowledge in the explanation of coastal erosion and environmental decline along the Anlo coast." He argues that "the dearth in knowledge and the absence of a coherent official policy on coastal wetlands and fisheries in colonial and independent Ghana lent Anlo knowledge of their environment official audience if not credence." It is quite intriguing to consider the Anlo interpretation of the ecological disaster waiting to happen if nothing is done to remedy the environmental decline in Keta

[5] N. Y. B Sapong and C. Amoah-Boampong studied under J. K. Fynn, R. Addo-Fening, A. A. Perbi, N. J. K. Brukum and K. Baku before leaving for graduate training in the United States of America.

and other areas. This interpretation blames the colonial and postcolonial state for embarking on projects such as the Takoradi and Tema harbors, and the Akosombo hydroelectric dam, while neglecting the Keta area. In the following year, Akosua Perbi (2004) revisited the ubiquitous issue of slavery and published her seminal work on the history of indigenous slavery in Ghana. This monograph began as an MPhil thesis, and later as a Ph. D. dissertation. Through an extensive use of sources, including oral histories and archival materials, she examines the political economy of Ghanaian slavery and points out that chattel slavery was alien to slaves in pre-colonial Ghana. All these works emphasized the dominance of Ghanaian agency in the historical narrative, and also pointed to the value of oral sources in historical scholarship.

In terms of our work as historians in the classroom, there is a world of difference between field or archival research and teaching in the classroom. What is rewarding is when one strikes a balance between research and teaching, and makes research have teachable moments in the classroom. A student taking a survey course on Africa asked the lecturer the proverbial question during a lecture on state formation in Oyo: "What is the relevance of studying the kingdom of Oyo in the nineteenth century?" We could think of the trite response, "So that we do not repeat their mistakes," but there are broader and more salient issues to take into consideration. The Department of History has been fortunate through the generations to have a corps of teachers who value an understanding of the continuities and changes in evolving human societies.

The history of Asante, Dahomey or Oyo in the nineteenth century is to be analyzed in the context of the local, West African, and Atlantic world. Our approach to teaching history moves beyond dates, events, and fact checks. We are interested in explaining and analyzing the complex web of interactions which developed in the nineteenth century, for instance, between local societies, kingdoms and Europeans. Within these interactions, we explore issues like industrialization, the nature of the Atlantic economy, urbanization and African agency in the historical process.[6] Again, to break away from the stereotypical "history is the study of the past" or "history is a record of one damn thing after another," faculty members believe that historical awareness and understanding is crucial to the process of becoming a responsible citizen. We strongly believe that historical knowledge is a necessary ingredient in nation-building. Thus, students are encouraged to acquire skills such as critical thinking, analysis, verbal expression, and effective writing.[7]

As a teacher, Adu Boahen deemed it important for both the teacher and the student of history to be also critics of society. With this conviction, he was a constant critic of Ghana's military juntas, especially Acheampong's Supreme Military Council (SMC I) and Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). In 1976,

[6] This was a "Question and Answer" time during a lecture delivered by N. Y. B. Sapong on "State Formation in West Africa," as part of the course HIST 213: Africa and the Wider World in the Nineteenth Century.

[7] Mission Statement from a brochure published by the Department of History to commemorate the University of Ghana's Home Coming and Educational Fair in 2011.

the Supreme Military Council under Acheampong lobbied to promote the idea of Union Government (UNIGOV), a tripartite system of government to be composed of the military, the police and civilians. The politically aware Ghanaian public saw this arrangement as a ruse to keep the military in politics, and therefore rejected the idea of UNIGOV. Several movements and political parties rose to oppose UNIGOV. One of the most notable was the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice, which was formed in 1978. The founders of this movement included General Akwasi A. Afrifa, William Ofori Atta, Komla Gbedemah and Adu Boahen. Additionally, in the 1980s, Adu Boahen often criticized the PNDC government for initiating a "culture of silence" and fear in Ghana. Similarly, he delivered a series of lectures which were published under the title, *The Ghanaian Sphinx*. In this book, Adu Boahen analyzes Ghana's successive governments since independence, and was particularly critical of the various military juntas that overthrew the elected governments of the First Republic to the Third Republic. It did not come as a surprise when he took the bold and daring step of helping to build a political party—the New Patriotic Party (NPP). He went on to become the presidential candidate for the NPP but he lost in the 1992 presidential elections to the incumbent Jerry Rawlings of the National Democratic Congress (NDC).

The Department of History, Scholarship and Public Engagement

The Department's engagement with the wider Ghanaian, African and international community over the decades has been spearheaded by individual professional historians as well as the Historical Society of Ghana. The Historical Society of Ghana (HSG) was founded in 1951 as a not-for-profit organization of professional and nonprofessional historians practising their craft in Ghana and/or interested in research and propagation of the history of Ghana and Africa. It is significant that by 1960, when a company's code was proposed for Ghana, the HSG was the only not-for-profit professional association in existence. As such its constitution was adopted as the template regulations for not-for-profit companies in Ghana, and published in the Companies Code 1963, Act 179. The HSG is headquartered in the Department of History at Legon. It also served as the main avenue for the Department of History to fulfill its social responsibility of connecting its research with society. This outreach activity was under the auspices of leading scholars and nationalists such as J. D. Fage, A. A. Boahen, J. B. Danquah, K. Sekyi and N. K. Nketia. In order to achieve its aims, membership of the society was broad and open to amateur and professional historians, ancillary disciplines and the general public who have a passion for history. Kwame Gyebi Ababio, Essumejahene of Bekwai was one of the foundational members on 1st November 1952. He was later followed by members such as Akhter Khalid Ahmad of the Ahmadiyya Mission in Kumasi, Vincent Isaac Adjakwa, an Akwapim poultry farmer, the Honorable Mr. Acolatse, Supreme Court judge, Mrs Jacqueline Honesh, a housewife, Mr. Stewart Jamieson, of the

Australian High Commission and a clergyman, Revered Isaac Sackey of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Mission.[8]

The first two decades of the existence of the Historical Society of Ghana was during the heydays of African universities when they were filled with the excitement of independence and the triumph of African nationalism. It was also the period when government generously funded research in the universities of Ghana and provided subvention for the running of subject associations. The Society ran a journal called *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* (THSG), which was the leading journal on Ghanaian and African history. It also served as the model for publication outlet for the Historical Society of Nigeria. So successful was the publication of the THSG that in 1960 it commenced publishing *Ghana Notes and Queries* annually which served as a "clearing house" for the ideas and comments of historians both professional and amateur.

At its Annual General Meeting in 1972, the HSG voted to commence publishing the West African Journal for History Teachers (WAJHT) to provide a forum for discussing general and specific problems and aspects of the history syllabus at secondary schools and teacher training colleagues. Additionally, it was resolved the WAJHT would publish articles covering three broad areas, namely methods and problems of history teaching, specific topics of the history syllabus of schools and colleges and the results of research into oral traditions by both staff and students of schools, colleges and universities.

Publication was a crucial niche to make the work of the most prominent historians such as Wilks, Boahen, Hill and Rodney more accessible to non-specialists and general readers. These scholars published ground breaking researches and re-oriented the historical discipline from its Eurocentric and Trevor-Roperian ideas of history to "promote the study of the history of Ghana, and the adjacent territories in West Africa and of their peoples…"[9] Soon it became the publication avenue of choice by all seeking to promote scholarship in Ghanaian and African history. Indeed the THSG commanded such deep respect in the first two decades of existence that one could not properly stake a claim to historical scholarship on Ghana and Africa if one was not published in the *Transactions*.

Polly Hill's (1963) seminal work on migrant cocoa farmers in southern Ghana, which investigated the historical movements that informed the genesis and development of cocoa farming and the role of capital in this process was presented initiallly in "The History of the Migration of Ghana Cocoa Farmers," an article in the 1959 edition of THSG. In this article, Hill debunks the conception of a homogenous peasantry and shows that investments in cocoa farming were made by a class of capitalistic farmers who invested in land with the profits they accrued from the oil palm industry in the nineteenth century. Hill's study also challenged the conventional notions that West Africans began to engage in large-scale economic enterprises due to the opportunities created by the imposition of colonial rule. Indeed, the economic

[8] Gold Coast and Togoland Historical Society, Membership Register, 1951.

[9] Historical Society of Ghana, "Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Historical Society of Ghana," 23rd June 1957.

framework commonly associated with cocoa production was rooted in institutions that predated colonialism.

A decade later, postcolonial historian of Africa and the Caribbean, Rodney utilized fruits of his research for his university of London PhD and his extensively meticulously research in West Africa to rewrite the history of regions affected by the Atlantic slave trade from the perspective of the marginalized and muted in the historical record. His publications: "Portuguese Attempts at Monopoly on the Upper Guinea Coast 1580–1650," "African Slavery and Other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the Context of the Atlantic Slave Trade," and "Reconsideration of the Mane Invasions of Sierra Leone" in *The Journal of African History* and "Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast" in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* considerably changed accepted views on Africans and the Atlantic slave trade and opened new vistas for studying slavery in Africa. Rodney's reputation as a scholar of African history started with these works which launched his professional career. Writing in the decade after the birth of independent African states, Rodney interpreted the ways in which the Atlantic slave trade drew Africa into the international capitalist order and how Africans facilitated that process. Using empirical studies from West Africa, Rodney analyzed the place of Africa in contemporary history during the initial period of the slave trade. In "Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast," he examined how certain West African states like Asante survived and prospered in spite of the tendency towards disintegration attendant upon their participation in the Atlantic slave trade. He contended that the Asante polity was able to neutralize the threat of internal disintegration for two reasons: first it participated in and controlled an intricate and extensive network of gold trade. Second, it did not resort to obtaining slaves from within its own state as Akwamu, for example, did. This "achievements of Akan states between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries sprang essentially from their African past" and enabled states such as Asante to absorb the debilitating effects of the Atlantic slave trade (1969). Rodney further asserted that "states such as Futa Djalon, Ashante, Dahomey and Benin participated extensively in the Atlantic slave trade and were undoubtedly still powerful at the end of the experience, for considerable European military forces were required before they succumbed to colonial rule" (Rodney 1969).

Finally, Rodney's publications during this period established the outline for a much larger discussion of broader issues concerning the devastating impact of the European slave trade on Africa and the role of Africans in this process. These themes were later developed with greater polemical verve in his well-known study, *How Europe Undeveloped Africa* which applied Latin American dependency theory to African history and set the agenda for some of the fundamental issues in African history and development (Rodney 1973). Additionally, during the glorious period of the HSG and the *Transactions* pioneering, illuminating researches were published on some still understudied areas in Ghanaian history such as biographical and family history; history of disease, ecology and environment as well as medicine and civil society organizations in Ghana.

From this vibrant period of academic scholarship, the HSG became defunct in 1983 in the general decline of scholarship which saw the fortunes of African

universities diminish as they experienced disruption in their academic programmes due to declining economic, social and political conditions in Ghana plus the attendant drastic reduction in public funding of universities in Ghana. During this period of economic depression, the HSG was unable to fulfill it mandate in the midst of a mass exodus of academics practicing their craft in Ghana. This situation led to the deterioration of research, teaching and infrastructure and the social neglect of the value of the scholarly enterprise as the imperative of daily survival weighed heavily on the minds of Ghanaians and academics in Ghana.

After an 18 year hiatus, the HSG was rejuvenated in 2001with financial support from the Norwegian University Committee for Development Research and Education (NUFU) to the Department of History at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and the University of Ghana for the joint project on Tradition and Modernity in Ghanaian history and development. Its Council members have since then been Professor Irene Odotei, Professor R. Addo-Fening, Professor (Mrs). A. A. Perbi, Dr. D. E. K. Baku, Dr. W. Donkoh and Per Herneas. Under new management, and in a stable economic climate, the HSG has risen like the phoenix and taken its place in national development by informing the Ghanaian public and making the work of higher education more accessible. HSG worked in tandem with the public through collaborative research projects to resolve issues of conflict, chieftaincy and governance using the medium of roundtable conferences.

Since its rebirth in 2001, the HSG has organized annual roundtable conferences not just as academic exercise but also to elicit public participation and engagement because "it was the people who had played key roles in the history of this country. They have letters that we don't have access to, they have files that we don't have, they were there when decisions were taken, when the constitutions were being written, they know the philosophies, the rationale behind the decisions. All of these are hidden from the historian and we believe that if we get these eminent citizens to come and sit with us, then when we say something about the colonial period they will own up to being eyewitnesses to the event" stated Professor Odotei.[10] These roundtable conferences touched on diverse themes such as the abolition of slavery, tradition and modernity in Ghanaian urbanization, heritage and national development and reflections on 50 years of Ghana's independence.

One of the most successful roundtables conferences took place in 2003 on Chieftaincy in Africa. This conference led to the publication of *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development* in 2006. The choice of chieftaincy was germane to Ghanaian society because traditional polity remains an important institution of governance in contemporary Ghana. In rural communities, poverty, lack of access to national agencies, and inadequate infrastructure cause rural societies to rely on traditional authorities for security, adjudication of disputes, wellbeing and finance. The Conference and the resultant publication revealed that the relationship between traditional rulers and their subjects was a crucial focal point of grassroots loyalty and an effective mechanism for rural transformation. Nevertheless, tradi-

[10] Professor Irene Odotei made this comment at the Historical Society of Ghana's annual roundtable conference in 2006 as part of the programme for the celebration of Ghana's Golden Jubilee.

tional rulers faced numerous challenges from the pre-colonial through the postcolonial era. During pre-colonial times, traditional authorities were partners with Europeans in the lucrative commercial trade in gold and slaves from the late fifteenth through the nineteenth century. The British pronouncement of the Gold Coast as a crown colony in 1901 saw traditional rulers as the vanguard of agitations against British imperialism. However, when the British realized that they were unable to administer the Gold Coast territory on their own, traditional rulers figured prominently in the system of indirect rule adopted by British authorities to administer their colonies in Africa (Lugard 1922).

In the postcolonial era, traditional states have been re-defined and operate within the modern state and conform to an increasingly globalized world characterized by emphasis on human rights, regional integration and good governance. How successfully traditional rulers are able to adapt, accommodate and adjust to these new issues was at the heart of the roundtable conference on Chieftaincy in Africa that sought to examine the continued importance of the institution of chieftaincy to Ghana's long term development.

The voices that resonated at the conference tell the story of traditional rulers from multidisciplinary perspectives and ranged from prominent personalities such as the former Chief Justice of the Republic of Ghana, Mr. Justice E. K. Wiredu and Odeneho Gyapong Ababio, the former president of the National House of Chiefs of Ghana to ordinary men and women in the Ghanaian society. This partnership between academics, the chieftaincy institution and civil society for effective sustainability and growth has enabled the HSG to bring to the fore the issue of the nomenclature of traditional rulers. Disputes about whether a paramount ruler is "king" or "chief" was laid to rest as participants and discussants came to the conclusion that the dynamic nature of traditional institutions had no precise English word.[11] The solution was to "apply terms that Ghanaian communities employ to designate those traditional leaders that are generally described in English translation as "chief" and to respect their designations and distinctions" (Odotei and Awedoba 2006). At the opening of the 2004 annual conference, the Minister of Tourism and Modernization of the Capital City, Jake Obetsebi Lamptey encouraged the Society to lend its expertise to the development of a vibrant and viable tourist industry in Ghana. Heeding this call, and as part of its History and Heritage Month celebrations, aimed at sensitizing the public on the importance of history, the HSG organized several visits to historical and heritage sites at Christiansborg Castle, Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, James Fort, all in Accra and Frederikgave slave plantation in Sesemi, Ghana. The target group of these excursions was the general Ghanaian public of all ages and social classes. The aim of these activities was to promote the development of the various historical sites for national and international tourism.

Again, at the Society's 2005 annual conference, the Honorable Minister in Charge of Tertiary Education, Miss Elizabeth Ohene, challenged the HSG to play a more active role in documenting, preserving and interpreting the history of Ghana

[11] Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikeme grappled with this difficulty of definition decades ago. See Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikeme, *West African Chiefs* (lle-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1970).

and Africa for future generations. This call emphasized the relevance of HSG's Asafo project already underway between the Departments of History at the University of Ghana and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Under the Asafo Project, HSG supervised the retrieval and copying of engendered documents on traditional leadership in Ghana located at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department in Accra. The HSG's Digitization of Endangered Books and Archival Materials Project has made available multiple copies of digitized copies of rare works to Departments of History in public universities in Ghana.

Beyond reproduction and digitization, the HSG tracked and reproduced pre-colonial and colonial publications which expressed the views of European traders, travellers, colonial officials, Christian missionaries and early educated Africans published from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. These publications are vital to the HSG because they serve as firsthand accounts of everyday life, culture and institutions of the societies that inhabited the area of present-day Ghana, irrespective of the author's biases and skewed perceptions of Africa. In a bid to continue the reconstruction of the pre-colonial and colonial history of Ghana, the HSG faced a stumbling block as many of their rare, indispensable sources were out of print and located in repositories outside Ghana. The HSG initiated contact for collaboration and partnership with *Union Academique Internationale,* which managed the *Fontes Historiae Africanae* and *Kurztitelaufnahme der Deutschen Bibliothek,* managers of *Studien Zur Kulturkunde* for the retrieval and publication of old and rare texts.

Currently, despite the vital role that history plays in the development of a society, the HSG is confronted with numerous challenges such as poor record keeping of historical documents by individuals, private and public establishments as well as the low interest in the subject of history among Ghanaians. To exacerbate this situation, Ghana's educational reforms since the mid-1980s placed history as a component of social studies. Accordingly, the study of history has ceased to receive adequate attention in pre-university education.

The HSG, which plays a national advocacy role for the discipline of history, has been deeply concerned with the status of history as a relevant discipline in national development. As such, HSG has brought to the fore, the need for appropriate interventions to address the low level of attention given to history as a discipline. Key interventions include the establishment of history clubs in schools, making accessible well researched and documented history textbooks for teachers and students, the creation of regional centres for collecting and collating local history as well as upgrading research methodology and the provision of a computer software to manage historical data. The ultimate goal of these interventions was to enhance the way history is received, recorded, taught and disseminated.

In line with the above objectives, and with funding from the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund), the Historical Society of Ghana and the Institute of Research, Advocacy and Training (INSRAT) organized a series of four-day training workshops for 245 history teachers from 125 Senior High Schools across the country. These training programmes upgraded the teaching skills of teachers and introduced them to new trends in the historiography and philosophy of history, emerging

themes and research methodology in the discipline and best practices in the teaching of history in high school classrooms. Participants were introduced to the steps in research, record management and records preservation in order to equip history teachers with the ability to easily access archival records and use the said records in teaching history. High school history teachers were also exposed to the ever changing face of technology and the effects it can have in the classroom. The increased use of computers to collect and evaluate data has done much to change the direction and subjects of historical study, and history teachers must be kept abreast of such changes. Above all, these teacher training workshops enabled the HSG to fulfill its core mission of public engagement and arrest the rapidly eroding image of history in schools and the Ghanaian society as a whole. The dissemination of accurate and relevant knowledge of history has led to greater appreciation of the value of the discipline of history as a critical instrument in shaping a high sense of national consciousness and pride in Ghana.

Six decades after its foundation, the HSG happily still continues to carry out one of its core mandates: engaging the Ghanaian public about the Ghanaian past. In a bid to deepen and extend its conver*zation*s further, the Society is planning to launch a programme "History for Everyone," which aims to bring history to the doorsteps of every Ghanaian using community radio stations, television and the print media to promote history and motivate students to offer history at the Senior High Schools and tertiary institutions. Furthermore, the Society intends to create a national biography project by constructing national history through the lives, work and experiences of its individual citizens. This long-term research project would gather materials on the lives of past and present, prominent Ghanaians at the local and national levels who made or are making significant contributions to national development. The creation of a database of national biographies enables posterity to explore historical events through the lives of the men and women who shaped all aspects of Ghana's past and solidifies HSG's continued commitment to public engagement.

Conclusion

The University of Ghana and its Department of History, from their founding in 1948 have always been centres where rational thought, careful planning and deep thinking have been and continue to be encouraged. They have at one point or another been home to some of the greatest social scientists and humanists of our time. Names such as J. D. Fage, G. Irwin, I. Wilks, D. Birmingham, A. A. Boahen readily come to mind. History and the other social science disciplines would survive the twenty-first Century because of their relevance to the individual, society, the state and the international community. However, the meaningfulness of the discipline of history, for instance, will depend on how ably the practitioners of the craft of history, communicate its relevance. Also, this may depend on the extent to which the university encourages and supports professional historians and their research.

The twenty-first Century posits very challenging problems for higher education. Recent periods of uncertainty due to external pressures of globalization, accountability, and technology gap has taken their toll on scholarship and scholarly delivery in Ghana. Universities in Africa and Latin America are experiencing disparities in resources, science and technology, and human capital in this age of globalized education (Arocena and Sutz 2005). The challenges facing higher education in Africa in the twenty-first century is really daunting. These challenges include funding, autonomy, gender imbalance, technology gap, and brain drain. Discussion of these problems is salient in view of the notion that higher education is a crucial factor in the modernization and developmental needs of Africa (Teferra and Altbach 2004). To compound the situation, the policy attitude of external donor agencies to funding higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa has been nonchalant. The effects of reduction in international trade, huge budget deficits and reduction in development assistance has made the World Bank question high government subvention of higher education in Africa. Due to policy oscillations of external donors, African universities need to find alternate sources of funding to be able to function (Banya and Elu 2001).

One area of higher education in Africa where dwindling resources are taking a drastic toll is faculty research programmes. According to Teferra and Altbach (2004), higher education institutions in Africa have practically no funds allocated to research in their operating budgets. In Ghana, funds for research and development keep dwindling. In 2000, the University of Ghana received a meager USD 1.4 million to operate its research institutes such as ISSER (Effah 2003). Regrettably, none of this money was made available to teaching departments. A study conducted during the University of Cincinnati sponsored Faculty Development Programme has revealed that the lack of resources seriously impedes the initiation of faculty development programmes. Research has shown that faculty development programmes help to prevent faculty from being outdated. Such programmes evolved around competitive proposals and university institutes. It targeted individual faculty, groups of faculty, departments, and institutes where faculty carry out collaborative work. Notable improvements in faculty developmental needs and goals after the program included increased use of technology and interdisciplinary cooperation (Camblin Jr and Steger 2000). The Social Science disciplines such as History, Sociology, Economics, Political Science and Geography will greatly benefit from the above initiatives, and perhaps help the University of Ghana recapture its former glory and attain the often vaunted world class status.

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