

African Homecoming



Pan-African Ideology
and Contested Heritage

Katharina Schramm

AFRICAN HOMECOMING

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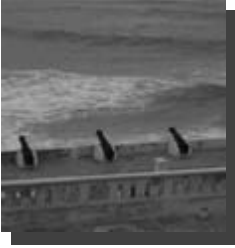
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AFRICAN HOMECOMING

PAN-AFRICAN IDEOLOGY AND
CONTESTED HERITAGE

KATHARINA SCHRAMM



Walnut Creek, California



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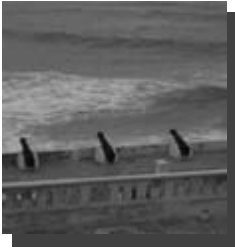
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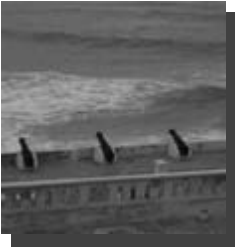
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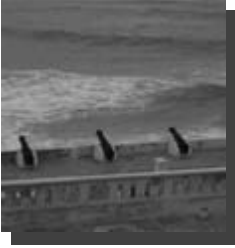
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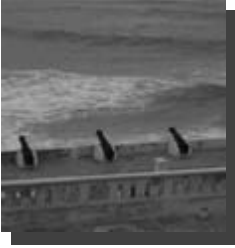
SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The aim of this Critical Cultural Heritage Series is to define a new area of research and to produce a set of volumes that make a radical break with routinised accounts and definitions of cultural heritage and with the existing, or “established,” canon of cultural heritage texts. In a fundamental shift of perspective, the French intellectual Jacques Derrida’s rallying call to “restore heritage to dignity” is to be taken as an alternative guiding metaphor by which this series critically revisits the core question of what constitutes cultural heritage and engages with the concerns (notably the moral-ethical issues) that shape and define the possible futures of cultural heritage studies. A key objective is that this series be of transformative value in the sense of outlining and creating new and future agendas within cultural heritage discourse using individual texts as building blocks.

Schramm’s *African Homecoming* is just such a contribution. This publication is central to the alignment of cultural heritage research with a wider scholarship committed to disrupting the Eurocentrism that continues to underpin cultural heritage theory/practice and also with a contemporary politics of recognition that is bound up in articulating new, alternative or parallel characterisations of heritage value. Schramm uses the motif of the tear employed by the African-American author Richard Wright to investigate the experience of his particular journey “back home” to Africa and also to raise questions about the politics of heritage and homecoming in Ghana. In particular,

Schramm is interested in the relationship between the growing number of African Americans and other members of the African diaspora who have followed in Wright's footsteps and who continue to travel "back home," either as short-term visitors, students, or repatriates and their Ghanaian hosts. She similarly pursues the relationship of these journeys to the various interpretations of the painful past that goes along with them. Schramm highlights the ongoing significance of the slave sites as testimonies of an experience of loss (as well as the implied hope for healing) and illustrates the emotional depth that is inherent in the encounter between Ghanaians and diasporans on the slave route. Schramm's book shows that the homecoming-drive and the associated memory work require detailed analysis if the nuances, complexities, and conflictual nature of such a context are to be properly researched and understood.

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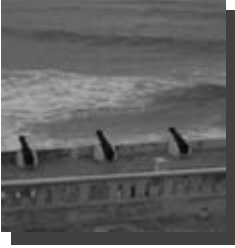
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*Katharina Schramm
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PROLOGUE

CONFRONTING THE PAST

Shortly before the Gold Coast's full independence and proud resurrection as Ghana, ancient kingdom and Africa's future Black shining star, Richard Wright, the well-known African-American writer, traveled through the country. In his travel account *Black Power* (Wright 1954), he describes the thoughts that ran through his mind when Dorothy Padmore, wife of George Padmore, who was one of the leading Pan-Africanists of the time, suggested that he visit the Gold Coast. What was he to expect? The trip was a venture away from his (by now familiar) European exile—into the unknown. He writes on his conflicting emotions as he was touching “a dark and dank wall” deep inside of him, constantly circling around the question, “*But am I African?*” (*ibid.*: 4; emphasis in original). Was there anything like a common heritage that would bind him to the Africans whom he was about to meet? If so, what did it consist of? Would it emerge as a familiar way of talking, dancing, or thinking? In what ways was he part of it? How would the people receive him? Would they regard him as a lost and now returned brother? Did he feel like a brother to them? Or would he accuse the descendants of those who stayed behind for selling his ancestors into slavery? What was going to happen when he could see and touch “the crumbling slave castles where my ancestors had lain panting in hot despair?” (*ibid.*: 6).

The problematic question of the meaning of an African identity retains its sense of urgency throughout the book. His first-hand experience brought Wright closer to an answer that nevertheless remains vague. One fact,

however, seemed clear to him—there was no such thing as a commonality based on “race” as the sole denominator. Aside from the “strangeness of a completely different order of life” (*ibid.*: 37) that he encountered and that made him aware of his own “Westernness,” it was the historical experience of slavery that *set him apart* from the people whom he met on his trip. At the same time it was that very experience which *connected him* to them. The difficulties entailed in that positioning stand out clearly in his description of the slave forts of Osu (Accra), Cape Coast, and Elmina. Those were the places where the painful journey of the African diaspora had begun, and it was here that Wright completed his voyage. Standing in front of Christiansborg Castle in Accra, he tried to imagine what had happened there behind “incredibly thick” (*ibid.*: 339) stone walls, so many years ago. The confrontation with a history that had left its bitter mark on his own body and soul made him almost speechless. The images that forced themselves on him were painful and hard to bear. He writes:

The dramas that once took place in that castle were forever lost. The slaves sickened and despaired, and the white men died of yellow fever and malaria . . . : I tried to picture in my mind a chief, decked out in cowrie shells, leopard skin, golden bracelets, leading a string of black prisoners of war to the castle to be sold. . . . My mind refused to function. (*ibid.*: 340)

His “mind refused to function” in the face of those walls that had once swallowed the whispers of their human captives and the shouting of the bargaining merchants. Here, history was cast in stone, as tangible evidence. But the buildings remained silent. Clad in elegant whiteness their grimness was hidden behind the finesse of their architectural layout. And yet their presence triggered a whole flow of kaleidoscopic images in Wright. If his intellect failed, this refers only to his rejection of an attitude of detachment in thinking about the past. The history of the diaspora that was being represented here could not be grasped by relying on facts and figures. It could not be objectified. If at all, Wright seems to suggest, it could be captured only in personalized memories. Once these memories take hold of the person confronting the castles, they may begin to reveal their stories. In the last section of his book Wright tells us the beginning of one such story—of a circle not yet completed:

If there is any treasure hidden in these vast walls, I’m sure that it has a sheen that outshines gold—a tiny, pear-shaped tear that formed on the

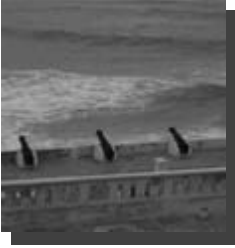
cheek of some black woman torn away from her children, a tear that gleams here still, caught in the feeble rays of the dungeon's light—a shy tear that vanishes at the sound of approaching footsteps but reappears when all is quiet, a tear that was hastily brushed off when her arm was grabbed and she was led toward those narrow, dark steps that guided her to the tunnel that directed her feet to the waiting ship that would bear her across the heaving, mist-shrouded Atlantic. . . . (*ibid.*: 341–342)

This metaphoric tear forms a lens through which I want to take a look at the politics of heritage and homecoming in Ghana. Since the early 1990s there has been a growing number of African Americans and other members of the African diaspora who have followed the footsteps of Richard Wright and have made the journey “back home,” as short-term visitors, students, or repatriates. Even more than fifty years after the publication of *Black Power*, the questions that have been posed by Richard Wright with regard to his identity as an African, and in relation to a possible interpretation of the painful past that goes along with it, have not lost their urgency. Yet there are many different ways of posing them, as well as many different answers given, by this new generation of homecomers and their Ghanaian hosts.

The image of the tear by which Richard Wright seeks to grasp the ongoing significance of the slave sites as testimonies of an experience of loss (as well as the implied hope for healing) aptly illustrates the emotional depth that is inherent in the encounter between Ghanaians and diasporans¹ on the slave route. It was the conflictive nature of this encounter, which seemed to contradict the rhetoric of kinship and commonality that first got me interested in the subject of “homecoming.”

The more I learned and the more I thought about it, I came to realize that what I was confronting was by no means a structure of clear-cut positions that only needed to be uncovered by the anthropologist. Rather, it was a diffuse conglomeration of views and opinions that were floating around diverse discursive lines and that had different practical and political implications. Sometimes these views clashed or were contradictory, at other times they overlapped and were even at peace with one another. The aim of this book is to point out these various trajectories and to attempt an interpretation.

Yes, I maintain, the slave sites may speak to the visitor. But what she actually hears and how it affects her depends on many factors, including her own social and personal background. On that matrix she may form an interpretation of the past, so that it makes sense to her present.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

AFRICAN DIASPORIC HOMECOMING AND THE AMBIVALENCE OF BELONGING

*Sound scatters light through darkened ages, come to / shed the silence of
a trance – / your name // bears silence past dreaming, past ages past, /
past reckoning years, past recreating / past abandonment // Come over
children’s voices one muted glance calls / come. Come anyway, / come
one step across chasms come between // come home. (Abena P. A. Busia,
“Sound Scatters Light,” in *Testimonies of Exile*)¹*

Richard Wright’s account of his Gold Coast journey marks a broader discourse over an African (American) identity paradigm, the shape of which is not clearly delineated but rather flickering and blurry. It is uttered from a position of twofold exile. First, there is the exile of a Black American intellectual, who, just like his contemporaries James Baldwin and Louis Armstrong, took refuge from the racism of United States provenance to the seemingly more tolerant, and therefore at least tolerable, climate of cosmopolitan Paris in Europe.² But, as Paul Gilroy has pointed out, this relocation was not just the result of a flight from the pressures that racism had forced on him. It was also linked to a search for selfhood that would help to transcend the very boundaries of “race” in a

Poetry from Busia, Abena P. A., “For ‘Freeman,’ 1988,” in *Testimonies of Exile*. Accra: Woeli 1990, p. 58 (P.O.B. K601; Accra New Town, Accra, Ghana).

broad, anti-imperialist alliance. Gilroy describes the idiom in which the latter desire finds its expression as the “ambivalence of community” (Gilroy 1993: 146; cf. Campbell 2006: 296–312). This ambivalence appears as a state of betwixt and between. On the one hand, there is Wright’s skepticism regarding the biological essence of the “race”-concept. Yet, on the other hand, despite such profound doubts in the physical reality of “race,” Wright acknowledges the specificity of the Black (American) situation. To Wright, this particularity is rooted in the history of the transatlantic slave trade *as well as* contemporary politics, and it produces the permanent challenge of situating oneself within that contextual framework.

His mixed feelings regarding the suggestion to visit Africa can therefore be traced to a second exilic proposition, namely, that of the African diasporic condition. Here, exile began with the exodus of Africans from the continent as a result of the slave trade. The biblical references that reverberate in the notion of exodus are crucial here, because they metaphorically link the fate of Black people to that of the Jews and the associated diasporic history of traumatic dispersal and eventual return to a (mythical) center or homeland. Richard Wright was cognizant of that linkage. And despite the fact that he felt continuously alienated during his journey through the Gold Coast and consequently doubted the possibility of an intrinsic connection between him and the African “homeland” and its inhabitants, the very questions that he posed at the beginning of *Black Power* testify to his awareness of the complex historical and political entanglement that accounted for his own presence in America, and later Europe, in the first place.

What eventually helped Wright to make the decision to venture on his African journey was primarily his interest in the radical political transformation from colonialism to freedom, for which the Gold Coast stood in 1953. Formally still a colony, the country could boast of a Black Prime Minister and an all-African cabinet. All signs suggested that full independence was within close reach. These developments were compatible with Wright’s own internationalist outlook. Being a radical modernist, he was less concerned with the idea of a spiritual reawakening that could be sought in ancient African “traditions.” In an open letter to Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah, he therefore urged him that “AFRICAN LIFE MUST BE MILITARIZED!” (1954: 347, original emphasis) and called on Africans to leave behind any ballast that might interfere with progress, including “tribal culture that militated against cohesiveness of action” (1954: 343).

Wright regarded the past that he saw embodied in the remnants of “tribal culture” as well as in the relics of the slave trade as a source of antagonism dividing Africans and diasporans. At the same time, however, he saw it as an

ultimate point of connection from which one ought to advance into a joint future. Wright could not emphatically speak of “homecoming” to describe his experience; yet the yearning for home as a coming to terms with one’s own historical and political placement is noticeable in his writing.

More than fifty years later, after numerous people from the diaspora had traveled to Ghana or even stayed on, another African-American author published her own account of a journey through this country. Saidiya Hartman, in *Lose Your Mother*, ventures on a search for strangers, investigating the history of the slave trade and the impact it has made on her own (diasporic) identity. She outwardly rejects the comforting illusion of homecoming as the achievement of closure. Instead, she emphasizes the finality of rupture and loss: “Neither blood nor belonging accounted for my presence in Ghana, only the path of strangers impelled toward the sea” (2007: 7). To her, Africa and Ghana do not represent the “Motherland” in the sense of rekindled kinship but rather in the sense of the place where those kinship ties were broken and the slaves’ mothers were forever lost.

What she shares with Wright is a profound skepticism of the grandeur of African chieftaincy. Whereas Wright saw the institution as a remnant of a pre-modern past that needed to be overcome, Hartman contrasts the involvement of the great empires and their rulers in the slave trade with the fate of the commoners, the strangers, those who were not among the powerful—especially in the northern part of Ghana. The commonality that she seeks is with those who suffered from and fought against the slave trade; but she also accepts that this unity is not immediately recognized or to be taken for granted.

Those two journeys serve as chronological cornerstones for my narrative. Whereas Wright’s book marks the beginning of a long engagement of diasporans with independent Ghana, Hartman writes on the background of this specific history of diasporic return, especially in its late-twentieth-century guise. Return, here, should not be understood in a literal but rather in a metaphorical sense, because it is characteristic of a prominent public discourse, widespread among Ghanaian and diasporan stakeholders, that speaks of roots, kinship, shared heritage, and the possibility of a cultural and psychological renaissance. Hartman’s explicitly critical stance toward these issues makes the contours of the popular homecoming-discourse stand out even more.

African Homecoming is an investigation into how this public discourse has emerged in the first place and how it is acted out and negotiated in practice, mainly in the fields of tourism, politics, and everyday communications. Three interconnected aspects are of particular importance in this endeavor. First, there is the idea of Africa as the Motherland—an imaginary place where references to a prelapsarian past and heritage in both its bucolic as

well as its glorious manifestations converge with the memory of the slave trade as traumatic rupture. Second, there is the notion of homecoming, in which diasporic identity is seemingly dissolved, yet actually affirmed. These two signifiers cumulate in a third term, namely, that of the African family, which mixes the genealogies of race and kinship and carries the ambiguities of both. When I use those emic terms, I do not take them at face value but rather aim at unraveling their contested meaning by approaching them from different angles.

My initial interest in homecoming started from the perspective of the Ghanaian nation-state and its renewed rhetorical self-location within a Pan-African setting that categorically embraced the classical African diaspora³ as a frame of reference. The invitation to African descendants to “come home,” if articulated by an African state, extends the conceptual scope of diaspora while at the same time concretizing it.⁴ Home as an imaginary place is thus thoroughly transformed, and Africa ceases to be solely an inspiration for social movement outside its geographical limits (cf. Lemelle & Kelley 1994). Instead, it is turned into a concrete site of encounter between various people and ideas. Even if the national boundaries of Ghana may be of secondary importance for the articulation of a “homing desire” (Brah 1996: 180) on part of diasporan returnees, they provide a very concrete historical and institutional framework against which this desire gets constantly checked (see Markowitz 2004: 26). Consequently, the analysis of that encounter, which the present study attempts, is tantamount to a grounding of diaspora-theory in the sphere of social interaction.

HERITAGE/POLITICS

A major theme in the affirmation of the African family is the idea of a shared heritage that extends back to the time before the transatlantic slave trade. The spectrum of identifications reaches from a tale of cultural origins in Ancient Egypt (cf. Asante 1990; Diop 1974) to the more general manifestations of an African “way of life” as it is expressed in clothes, food, and, for that matter, African values. The underlying ideology of Black commonality can be regarded as a globalized cultural form that is reiterated in various cultural, political, and religious idioms, as, for example, in Rastafarianism, Afrocentric popular culture, and the cultural nationalism of postcolonial African nation-states. Although all these expressions of Africanness rely on a shared symbolic repertoire, there is also potential for disruption and conflict, since heterogeneous actors may stake different claims on that heritage (or disagree on what it should comprise).

This dynamic of a shared rhetoric and divergent practices becomes even further complicated in the homecoming-enterprise that is under discussion here, because homecoming constitutes an arena where individual, local, national, and transnational/diasporic imaginations of belonging intersect. Heritage plays an important role on all these scales. Moreover, it “is capable of being interpreted differently within any one culture at any one time, as well as between cultures and through time” (Graham 2002: 1004). This interpretative scope and the tensions that go along with it become strikingly evident in homecoming, when cultural symbols from Ghana are recast as expressions of an authentic African heritage.

In this process of appropriating particular cultural elements from their initial contexts of production and turning them into heritage, multiple reifications occur, as artifacts and performances are first identified, then purified, objectified, and canonized as heritage (cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 64; Rowlands & de Jong 2008: 24). From a multitude of cultural articulations a few have been selected to represent the repertoire of a distinctively Ghanaian national culture (see Schramm 2000a). The produced patrimony simultaneously serves purposes of political legitimation and social inclusion but also encompasses the “commodification and marketing of place products” (Ashworth & Graham 2007: 3) in the highly competitive tourism sphere. Diasporic homecoming takes place in-between those poles; it is characterized by the constant oscillation between insider and outsider perspective, cultural identification and tourist gaze, political incorporation and alienation.

In his policy-oriented analysis of the contemporary heritage industry as a whole, Gregory Ashworth has remarked that

a successful foreign heritage tourism is dependent not on the sale of the heritage of the destination country to visitors from the consumer country but, on the contrary, on the resale in a different guise of the consumers’ own heritage in an unexpected context within the destination country. (1994: 24)

In other words, in order to be satisfying, a visit must speak to the traveler’s needs and anticipations. Because homecoming builds on the assumption of a shared heritage and as such combines a personal identity quest (cf. Timothy 1997) with collective political aspirations, the congruence of expectation and experience is often overwhelming to the visitors—leading to very emotional responses. This emotional depth is also noticeable whenever there is a mismatch of imagination and reality on the ground. And the situation gets even more complicated, because the disturbing referent of the slave trade

continuously disrupts any nostalgic appropriations of the past and gives rise to conflicts over adequate representation (see Dann & Seaton 2001; Handler, Gable, & Lawson 1992).

The problem of heritage display and authentication, so central to many discussions in the academic field (cf. Bruner 1994; Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994; Handler & Gable 1997; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998), is dealt with extensively throughout this book. Of central concern in this endeavor are the processes of meaning-making by which the past is made relevant to the present for and by different individuals and groups of people (cf. Bond & Gilliam 1994).

The official discourse of homecoming as it is articulated by diasporan visitors as well as by their Ghanaian hosts builds on an image of Africa as the source of an identity that was once whole but got suddenly and radically disturbed by the slave trade and the forced settlement of Africans in the New World. African Americans' visit to the continent, and especially to the slave dungeons, is often presented as a chance for healing and reintegration of that fragmented (African) self. Notions of a pure African heritage play an important role in this conception of homecoming. What I am interested in are the constructive processes by which such essentialisms are produced, reaffirmed, and contested in cultural representation. If Ferdinand de Jong and Michael Rowlands state that "heritage may provide a technology for healing" (2008: 133) in postconflict societies, this book concerns the question of the scope and limits of such healing. I consequently pay attention to the inconsistencies and contradictions that unavoidably open up between rhetoric and practice. Thereby, the inner dynamics of (Pan-African) ideology can be reconstructed. In such an approach, which looks at the breaks and asks about the reasons for their occurrence, ideology ceases to be a monolithic bloc. Instead, it is understood as a creative process, which is, above all, constantly renegotiated and performed in new varieties. Thus this approach looks at the multiple ways in which people act as political, economic, social, and cultural agents. Through their actions people either affirm or oppose, even reject, the premises of ideology. Just like my interlocutors, therefore, I move beyond ideology as discourse and ask about its translation into the concrete. The multiple diasporic dimensions of homecoming play a major role in this interpretation.

CIRCUMSCRIBING DIASPORA

In a recent article, Rogers Brubaker demands to regard diaspora first and foremost as a "category of practice" before making use of it as an analytical type. To him, the danger in a lot of scholarship lies in substantializing the term by treating diaspora as if it were a "bounded entity" rather than "an idiom, a

stance, a claim” (2005: 12). Taking this critique into account, the present book studies a concrete diasporic practice, namely, homecoming, in the light of specific historical developments as well as a wider discourse of commonality and community. Central to my analysis are the many fissures and ambiguities that become apparent in these homecoming-encounters.

This ambivalence has already been emphasized in the depiction of diaspora as an expression of the dynamics of routes and roots—a critical pairing that, to my mind, has retained its analytical value despite its being excessively used over the past two decades. The very notion of diasporan travel to Africa, or, for that matter Ghana, necessarily entails both dimensions: it is a *movement* in search of some kind of *emplacement*, a story of origins that nevertheless employs multiple genealogies and leads in many different directions. Although the rhetoric of the African family is characterized by essentialist notions of rooted identity and cultural authenticity, the homecoming practice points to the constructive processes by which these notions are produced, the efforts by which they are maintained as well as the various levels on which they are contested—thus diaspora appears to be a relational concept (cf. Brown 2005).

Black British authors such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy are among the pioneering scholars who have broken away from the dictum of a “rooted identity” in favor of a more diverse and “routed” sense of self and community that is—and has always been—subject to multiple influences and historical determinants. Implicitly (sometimes explicitly) writing back to the academic variant of ideologies of community that favor essentialist notions of collective unity and sameness (that is, a perception of identity as a stable and perpetual constant, as something that could be retrieved unimpaired from a remote past),⁵ they adopt a (de)constructivist view and point to the fissures and fusions that make up contemporary collective identities as well as to the processes of identity production and representation. Placing their theories within the framework of antiracism, both Hall and Gilroy view identities as always situated in a network of sociopolitical relations. Stuart Hall writes:

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But . . . far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous “play” of history, culture, and power. . . . Identities are *the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.* (1990: 225, my emphasis)

In this understanding, diaspora (and the African diaspora in particular) serves as an analytical concept through which the nonessential and yet

historically determined character of identities in the plural can be exemplified. Taking the Caribbean as a point of departure, and starting from the concrete example of contemporary Caribbean film, Hall speaks of three “presences” that have constantly shaped the positioning and repositioning of Caribbean cultural identity. These he calls, by analogy with Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire, *Présence Africaine*, *Présence Européenne*, and *Présence Américaine*.⁶

The African presence, to him, does not refer to race or color alone; nor does it hint at an intrinsic, essential connection with the continent. Instead, it is the “site of the repressed” (*ibid.*: 230), thoroughly transformed through processes of displacement and the violent experience of slavery, yet also working as a cultural catalyst that has ultimately shaped religious life, artistic expression, and social relations of Caribbean societies. Africa, according to Hall, is not a place to literally go home to, not least because the continent has not been left untouched by history (though he is not interested in spelling out these historical transformations). Africa retains its importance because it constitutes an “imaginative geography and history” (Edward Said, quot.: 232) indispensable for conceptions of identity in the New World: “This is the Africa we must return to—but ‘by another route’: what Africa has *become* in the New World, what we have made of ‘Africa’: ‘Africa’—as we re-tell it through politics, memory, and desire” (*ibid.*: 232; original emphasis; cf. Scott 1991).

Présence Européenne, in contrast, is a site of power and dominance. It signifies racism, exoticism, exclusion, imposition, and expropriation (*ibid.*: 233). Yet it cannot be shaken off as an external force, since it has ultimately become constitutive to Black identities as well. The European presence speaks of ambiguities—violence and resistance, refusal and recognition, profound otherness and simultaneous identification. It resembles W. E. B. Du Bois’s (1903) notion of “double consciousness.” Its influence is irreversible, but this does not mean that its hegemony, its “imperial eye,” is forever predestined. Hall calls for a transcending of the power to represent and define what *Présence Européenne* stands for in a “tense and tortured dialogue” (*ibid.*: 234), so that, finally, “we can place it, without terror or violence, rather than being forever placed by it” (*ibid.*: 233).

The third presence, *Présence Américaine*, is the place where the “fateful/fatal encounter was staged between Africa and the West” (*ibid.*: 234). It is here that displacements of various sorts are symbolized: the extinction of the pre-Columbian inhabitants who were conquered by Europeans, the displacements of slavery as well as those of contemporary migration. Here we find the beginning of diaspora as both space and condition that implies hybridity, heterogeneity, and diversity. This diaspora experience is defined “not by essence

or purity, but... by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite difference" (*ibid.*: 235). In that understanding, nostalgia for the prelapsarian, the wish to return to the past, the myths and memories that are attached to a pristine point of origin are always part of a symbolic reservoir from which to forge present cultural identities and affiliations. Afrocentrism, in this interpretation, can perhaps be seen as an example for this politics of memory, but it fails to make use of the creative potential entailed in the recognition of diasporic hybridity, be it in its academic or popular guise.

Hall's idea of the triple presence that forms the constitutive base for contemporary Black diasporic cultures has been taken up and developed further by Paul Gilroy. In his highly influential study on *The Black Atlantic* (Gilroy 1993) he develops his concept of the African diaspora as a counterculture of modernity. He opposes the rhizomorphic structure of the historical construct of a Black Atlantic, which he regards as a result of the incessant crisscrossing of ships, people, and ideas, against dualistic or monocausal conceptions of (national) identity as they can be found among Europeans (scholars as well as politicians), but also increasingly in the Black and Africana Studies departments of the U.S.-academy. Gilroy accuses these proponents of notions of cultural purity of a grave omission in the conceptualization of their respective identity paradigms, since they both ignore the history of slavery. Whereas a lot of Europeans would repress the question of responsibility and keep silent about the centrality of slavery and Black (intellectual and labor) contributions in the origination of what we call modernity, many Black nationalists would also fail to acknowledge the extreme rupture that has been caused by the slave trade and chattel slavery in their celebration of ancient glories and a superior Black civilization. To Gilroy, however, slavery marks the profound antinomies of modernity, namely, those of rationality and violence, enlightenment ideals and racism, which, though formally opposed are nevertheless intrinsically linked (see also Bauman 1989).

Gilroy's book has received a lot of critical attention. Some authors, like Michael Echeruo, have opposed the strict antinationalism and the focus on hybridity that runs through the pages of *The Black Atlantic* as an attempt to arrive at "the golden age of nothingness" (Echeruo 2001: 5; cf. Lavie & Swedenburg 1996: 12), wherein racial particularity would be no longer relevant. They argue that it would be impossible to escape racial classifications and the racism that goes along with it: "No matter how far you travel, you are still black" (Houston A. Baker, Jr., quot. in Echeruo 2001). Echeruo writes against Gilroy's conceptual variant of the "tense and tortured dialogue" (Hall 1990) between Europe and its African "Other." To Gilroy, it seems, this dialogue bears more chances than adversities. It stands for enrichment rather than

deprivation, as his discussions of the travel experiences of African-American intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Richard Wright clearly suggest. Moreover, he argues that the very attempt to shake off the Western influence together with European attire and thereby to arrive at the true, African self remains stuck in the conservative logic of Western Enlightenment discourse (cf. Mudimbe 1988). In Gilroy's eyes, it is the diaspora experience, which, by its ongoing and consciously articulated *critical relationship* with Europe, is able to break away from this dilemma. Echeruo, in contrast, sees the emphasis on fragmentation as a result of a profound crisis of the Western Enlightenment tradition. To him, it is not the Black presence in Europe and America that has caused this crisis; it concerns the West alone. In this view, therefore, to join the chorus of hybridity means to betray the Black/African capacity for agency and self-determination.

Both Gilroy and his critic state that identities are politically formed and determined. Yet, whereas Gilroy envisions a future in which racial boundaries could be transcended (see also Gilroy 2001), Echeruo maintains that "in matters of identity you cannot not belong" (2001: 9). To him, there exists a principal sense of belonging, which he traces to the idea of Blackness. Loyalty toward this primary community should determine one's actions. This difference of academic positions is not merely confined to a scholarly debate. Writing on identity turns out to be tightly caught up with the respective authors' own political and ideological identifications. The impossibility to conceal one's personal position when writing about identity politics has proved to be a major challenge for my own approach to the field, since many of the persons I was confronted with were familiar with (and versed in) the academic debates that formed the background for my specific research interest. Therefore, the need to constantly formulate a standpoint affected me in a very direct manner (see Schramm 2005).

Yet this issue of positionality has led to a second criticism of Gilroy's approach, which refers to his inherent elitism. In his focus on (male?) intellectuals and their personal journeys across the Atlantic (imaginary as well as literal) by which he seeks to lay open the multiple trajectories of diasporic movement, he has little concern for the lives and struggles of ordinary people (cf. Friedman 1997). Whereas this criticism is justified, especially because it helps to relativize the anti-essentialist paradigm, we could also fairly leave the author to choose his or her subject of study—and Gilroy makes his interest in the *intellectual* history of the Black Atlantic quite clear (1993: 6). Nevertheless, even if viewed in that light, there remains a blind spot in Gilroy's concept: Africa itself is missing from the rich kaleidoscopic imagery that Gilroy employs to illustrate his idea of a Black Atlantic.

If Africa appears at all, it remains stuck in the role of a mythical referent of Black diasporic memory. Whereas Gilroy may be credited for “developing a framework for diasporic analysis in which ‘all roads do not point to Africa’” (Jacqueline Brown, quot. in Monson 1995: 7), such a framework has the disadvantage of losing sight of the “homeland” as a real place of engagement (see Weingrod & Levy 2005: 14). Even though Gilroy explicitly states that the continent should not be regarded as a static or homogeneous entity, he is not interested in Africans themselves as agents who are affected by and respond to the various challenges posed by the diasporic condition. Neither the consequences of the slave trade on African societies (cf. Argenti 2007; Baum 2001; Diouf 2003; Larson 2000; Piot 1999; Shaw 2002), nor the influential role of the diaspora for representational regimes and collective imaginations in Africa itself (cf. Gaines 2006; Gershoni 1997) have been considered in his notion of Atlanticism. Moreover, the persuasiveness of the longing for return as it is articulated in homecoming as discourse and movement is not given adequate attention.

DIASPORIC RETURNS

In recent years several authors have begun to address the problem of return in various diasporic constellations (see Levy & Weingrod 2005; Markowitz & Stefansson 2004). This new preoccupation with the idea and the reality of the homeland and its production and various appropriations by diasporan actors should not be regarded as a sign of neoconservative regression behind the achievements of postcolonial diaspora-studies, but rather as an attempt to take these farther and avoid the dangers of simplistic anti-essentialism (see Stefansson 2004; Werbner 1997). Similarly to the diasporic project of “building homes away from home” (Clifford 1994: 302), the movement toward an imaginary homeland can be analyzed in terms of a creative social process “that lead[s] [people] on unsettling, but also potentially relieving, paths of return” (Stefansson 2004: 3). These paths, or “spaces in between” (Weingrod & Levy 2005: 21) homelands and diasporas, are constantly redrawn and situationally produced. As Ahmed and colleagues write, “uprootings and regroundings are constituted through the reconfiguration of space, just as the redrawing of boundaries can generate new processes of uprooting and regrounding” (2003: 5). Mobility (and not closure or stasis) appears as a major factor in this process (cf. Basu 2004; Coles & Timothy 2004; Louie 2001; Routon 2005), and yet movement is not regarded as an end in itself, as suggested in the metaphor of homelessness (Rapport & Dawson 1998; Robertson 1994), but rather linked to concrete places, landscapes, and social spheres. In all these passages,

home is not a given; it does not have an essential meaning “in advance of its making” (Ahmed et al. 2003: 8).

The ways in which home is produced (and contested) in the context of diasporic returns have been the subject of a number of ethnographic accounts. Investigating Irish networks of relatedness, Catherine Nash demonstrates how Irish descendents, especially in the United States, employ genealogy (from family archives to DNA testing) in order to establish a linkage with Ireland as home-place. She shows how a sense of kinship and belonging is produced and discursively shared among diasporans and how it is often challenged in the homecoming practice, where “reciprocity is not guaranteed [and] assumptions of affinity can be tested and resisted” (2008: 70). Despite these contestations on the ground, the Irish government as well as tourism officials share in the rhetoric of commonality and make a big effort in attracting diasporans, mainly for economic reasons. In her analysis, Nash illustrates the close entanglement of politics, memory, and commercialization in this particular homecoming-endavor.

Another example, namely the homecoming of Scottish descendants, is discussed by Paul Basu. He focuses on the “imagineering” (2007: 67) of the Scottish homeland through the joint efforts of resident and diasporan actors. In the Scottish case, two strands of memory intersect that are both linked to the scarred landscape of the Scottish Highlands. On the one hand, Basu’s “roots tourists” (*ibid.*: 20) seek to connect with the mythical “clanland” (*ibid.*: 122) of *Braveheart*-provenance—a search that is closely linked to the nostalgic depictions of the heritage industry. On the other hand, the landscape stands for the nineteenth-century Highland clearings, which many homecomers associate with a personal history of painful loss and victimhood.

In both cases, the protagonists of homecoming are engaged in a search for “guilt-free ethnicity dissociated from the power of whiteness” (Nash 2008: 59). The desire to return to an ancestral homeland is therefore intrinsically linked to the politics of (multicultural) belonging in immigration societies such as the United States. African Americans and other members of the African diaspora, such as (British) Caribbeans, are also part of this discursive universe, but their politics of identity are articulated from a different subject position: that of a long oppressed racial minority, with slavery and the Middle Passage representing an ultimate rupture that has disconnected concrete kinship ties. Thus, African diasporans’ homecoming is from the very start a symbolic one that takes place within the limits of present-day national borders but that does not always maintain these as a major point of reference.⁸ Instead, Africa as a whole is being performed in such diasporic imaginations and cultural representations (Ebron 2002).

One area where these affinities are enacted is the religious sphere. In her work on the African Hebrew Israelite Community that has built up a “Village of Peace” in Dimona in the Israeli Negev desert, Fran Markowitz (1996, 2004) demonstrates how this group has created “Israel as Africa” and “Africa as Israel” by matching their religious and racial identities with the geography of the Holy Land. She shows how their return movement, which has taken place outside the tourism sphere, entails a clash between an imaginary homeland and the present-day nation-state of Israel, with its institutions, regulations, and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

Kamari Maxine Clarke (2007) studies the Yorùbá movement in the United States as a religious network and expression of transnational racial politics. In Òyótúnjì African Village in South Carolina, specific African (American) genealogies are (re-)created through divinatory “roots readings” and the production and sale of Africanized heritage items. The diasporan adherents have over time refashioned Yorùbá religion and turned it into a globalized religious form and articulation of racial identity. Clarke investigates their relationship with ethnic Yorùbá and the Nigerian nation-state in terms of “ancestral citizenship” that is authenticated through journeys to West Africa. In these travels, questions of cultural ownership and representational authority become as apparent as those of the politics of difference and belonging.

Writing on the history of the Vodun festival in Ouidah, Peter Sutherland (1999, 2002) looks at the African-diasporan encounter from yet another angle, as he tells the story of a local transformation of diasporic history by African protagonists. According to him, the Beninoise Vodun practitioners seek to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the state by emphasizing the religion’s transnational dimensions. In this process, “the Whydah [*sic*] commemoration of slavery deprives the distant peoples of the African diaspora of their histories by reifying them as ancestors and descendants in a postcolonial temporal logic of identity” (2002: 80). Fictive kinship ties as well as religious affiliations are employed in a vision of the future that fixes diasporans in the role of philanthropic tourists. The memory of the slaves’ suffering thereby gets pushed to the background.

Whereas the festival reconstructs Ouidah as a sacred center of Vodun culture, the town’s importance as a large slaving port (Law 2004) gets symbolized in a newly designated, UNESCO-sponsored monument of The Door of No Return (La Porte de Non-Retour)—an Arc de Triomphe-like structure that symbolizes a circular diasporic movement, incorporating the return of the slaves’ descendants. This monument is reached through a pathway, La Route des Esclaves, that combines references to the history of the slave trade with evocations of Vodun through sculptures and shrines (cf. Rush 2001)—a

combination that has caused some authors (Law 2008; Singleton 1999) to argue that the Beninoises view themselves as part of the diaspora (through religious and spiritual connections), while also actively acknowledging their role in the slave trade (yet without moral inhibitions). In absence of fortified structures as they exist in Ghana or Senegal, the commemoration of the slave trade in Benin rests solely on ritual performances—either in terms of ancestral and spiritual worship in Vodun, or in terms of the re-enactment of the departing slaves' circling around the so-called Tree of Forgetting and Tree of Return, respectively (see Law 2008; Rush 2001). Through such performances in the present, the historical significance of Ouidah and the Route des Esclaves gets authorized and authenticated.

Another famous memorial is the Maison des Esclaves on the island of Gorée in Senegal (cf. Ebron 2000; Hinchman n.d.; Katchka 2004; Nicholls 2004). Even though its relevance as a major slave port has been contested (see Austen 2001), Gorée unquestionably serves as an important memorial icon for all kinds of visitors who wish to address the slave trade and its aftermaths—from Pope John Paul II to Hillary Clinton and numerous diasporan travelers. Much of the literature on Gorée has focused on this tension between fact and fiction, authenticity and authentication, as well as on the dynamics of racialized positionalities and historical representation in a more general sense. Undoubtedly, the materiality of the Maison des Esclaves and its Door of No Return plays a crucial role in its evocative power (de Jong 2009), as does the elevation of Maison des Esclaves to World Heritage status by UNESCO in 1978. Similarly to the Ghanaian slave forts, which received World Heritage status a year later, the House of Slaves serves as tangible evidence that the slave trade actually happened. It retains this role, even if slave exports from other areas, such as the Bight of Benin or Congo/Angola took place on a much larger scale—but left no comparable material relics. And yet, as Kinsey A. Katchka argues, owing to its very prominence Gorée “has become a historical abstraction that can be relocated elsewhere” (2004: 3)—to a more convenient museum site, for example. The symbolism of the Door of No Return is produced in only a few places—most notably Gorée, Elmina, and Cape Coast—but it can be transferred to other sites (for example, the beach of Ouidah) and still maintain its meaning and significance.

This brief discussion shows that homecoming to Ghana, both as tourism and long-term engagement, is clearly not an isolated phenomenon but forms part of a larger network of transatlantic crossings. However, at least among African Americans, who are the main protagonists in this movement (as well as of this book), Ghana is probably the most popular destination. This can be attributed to a number of reasons, from the fact that it is an English-speaking

country to its historical role as a center of Pan-Africanism, its reputation of long-term political stability, the many tangible relics of the transatlantic slave trade, and not least to the sustained efforts of the Ghanaian state to promote Ghana as a target for diasporan travel (and investment).

Consequently, there is a growing body of literature on the encounter of diasporans and Ghanaians on the slave route. A few authors have contemplated their own experiences in Ghana in form of autoethnographic travelogues (Eshun 2005; Harden 2007; Hartman 2002, 2007; Richards 2005; cf. also Okofo 1999). In these reflections, questions of personal identity are interwoven with wider debates on racialized historical subjectivities—all in light of the public discourse on the African family and the memory of slavery in Ghana. Dallen Timothy and Victor Teye (2004) describe this discourse among diasporans as a search for closure—a conclusion that certainly does not correspond with my own findings, since most of my African-American interlocutors rather wanted to keep the subject of slavery open for debate.

With the exception of Kwame Essien (2008), who is interested in the experience of the group of diasporan repatriates (that is, those people who have actually relocated to Ghana from the diaspora, according to him the largest such community throughout West Africa), and Elom Dovlo (2002), who describes the religiously motivated return movements of African Hebrew Israelites, Rastafarians, and members of the Nation of Islam to Ghana, most authors have confined their ethnographies to the tourism sphere. Central to many of these discussions are the conflicting representations of the slave trade at Cape Coast and Elmina Castles (and Dungeons).⁹ Christine Mullen Kreamer (2006), who has worked as a consultant for the new exhibition at Cape Coast Castle, describes the conflict in terms of diasporans' demands to focus exclusively on the slave trade and the consequent lack of attention to local concerns (cf. Reed 2004; Singleton 1999). Edward M. Bruner (1996), one of the first anthropologists to pay attention to African-American heritage tourism to Ghana, focuses on the struggle over meaning and ownership at the castles, too, but he also reflects on the problem of racialization that comes to the fore in homecoming. Brempong Osei-Tutu (2002, 2007) highlights the tensions between commemoration and commercialization in the representation of the slave trade, as does Cheryl Finley (2001, 2004). Elizabeth Macgonagle (2006) shifts the attention away from the large structures at Elmina and Cape Coast to the smaller forts and their everyday local usage, which, according to her, stands in sharp contrast to the official discourse and its concern with the African diaspora and the emotional needs of African Americans.

Often, in this literature, the positions of Ghanaians and diasporans are presented as diametrically opposed to each other (see especially Hasty

2002; Kreamer 2006; Singleton 1999). Given the prominence of tourism in the mediation of homecoming, Ghanaian interest in diasporan homecoming appears as thoroughly economically motivated, whereas African Americans emerge as disinterested in the lives of contemporary Africans and, indeed, as preoccupied with a spiritual search for their roots. Their search, however, leads to disappointment as the full welcoming embrace is denied to them.

In my study I trace a different story line, arguing that the inherent ambiguity of homecoming should not lead to the assumption of total incommensurability between Ghanaian and diasporan positions. First, both groups are extremely heterogeneous, and there are many unexpected areas of overlap between the different positions. Moreover, these positions are never static but in constant flux. Second, the oppositional view ignores the larger historical and political dynamics underlying the homecoming phenomenon by reducing it to a matter of tourism alone. In contrast, I insist on a more encompassing approach that pays attention to other spheres of interaction, such as economics, (cultural) politics, and religion. Third, the postulation of an insurmountable gulf between Ghanaians and diasporans, even if it is articulated from a firm anti-essentialist angle, entails the danger of essentializing difference, thereby undermining the possibilities of Black political solidarity (cf. Benton & Shabazz 2009; Gaines 2001; Werbner 1997b).

This is a concern that I share with authors who have mainly focused on local memories of the slave trade and their transformations in view of its recent popularization via tourism (Akyeampong 2001; Bailey 2005; Greene 2003; Holsey 2008). As Akosua Perbi (2004) has shown, the practice of indigenous slave raiding and trading has deeply affected Ghanaian societies and families. The fact that people do not like to speak about it today does by no means indicate that they are not aware of it. It is rather due to the complex relationship between descendants of slaves and of slave owners who are often connected through affinal kinship ties (cf. Akyeampong 2001).

Counteracting the notion that Africans have no interest in the history of the transatlantic slave trade, Ann Bailey traces an oral narrative of complicity, vulnerability, and resistance that has affected a community in southeastern Ghana. According to Bailey, "these fragments of narrative in Africa correlate strongly with narratives of the African diaspora in both concrete and metaphorical ways" (2005: 22). In her monograph "Routes of Remembrance" (2008), Bayo Holsey takes this thesis further, when she views both the practices of sequestering and of centering the slave trade among the coastal residents of southern Ghana as signs of resistance against a dominant European discourse of African marginalization and as evidence of a shared Black subjectivity. Holsey carefully demonstrates the effects of the slave trade on

communal and kin-relations in Ghana and the silencing strategies surrounding it. Regarding the more recent official commemorations, Holsey is very critical of the “romantic narratives of black triumph” (*ibid.*: 168) that dominate the official rhetoric of the Ghanaian state (but also, one wants to add, of diasporan stakeholders; see Richards 2005: 632). She contrasts them with more critical “narratives of protest” that are advanced by a group of educated Ghanaian youths in dialogue with diasporan visitors. In these conclusions, however, Holsey’s initial claim to study the “public, explicit constructions of the past” (2008: 8) is not explored to the fullest, since she does not consider the production and multilayered performance of the trope of the African family as a central aspect of this “refashioning of the slave trade” (*ibid.*).

APPROACHES TO THE FIELD

In 1995, I had my first encounter with the rhetoric of the African family in Ghana. It was in February during Black History Month, when I watched a performance of the dance drama “The Slave Trade” on the university campus at Legon and listened to the various speeches that emphasized African brother- and sisterhood and the commonality of a shared heritage on which to build a joint future. The dancers on stage were singing “We shall come back home one day” to the tune of Pete Seeger’s “We shall overcome.” In the same year, the UNESCO/WTO (World Tourism Organization) Programme for Cultural Tourism on the Slave Route in Africa (Accra Declaration 1995) was launched in Accra and boasted investment in and consequently heritage tourism to the slave sites. When I returned to Ghana in 1998 for a period of twelve months of fieldwork, the “homecoming” of the diaspora was widely discussed in the media and among tourism and cultural officials. During my following visits to Ghana in 2002, 2005, 2006, and 2007, respectively, new programs and heritage initiatives were started, and new slave sites were incorporated into the itineraries of tour operators, festival planners, and individual travelers. Moreover, homecoming has been debated outside the realm of cultural tourism with regard to investment policies and citizenship rights.

Homecoming, as I discuss it here, therefore not only designates a specific travel practice but also refers to a public discourse, encompassing national as well as transnational dimensions. I show its deep embedding in bureaucratic structures (such as the Ministry of Tourism¹⁰ and the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre) as well as its many intersections with the concerns of Ghanaian intellectuals, which again were connected to broader academic debates. In addition, I demonstrate that homecoming involves highly mobile actors whose travel experience ranged from charter tourism to repatriation.

The historical trajectories on which homecoming was built all form part of a global network of relations, including my own societal background.

Such an intricate practice could not be localized in one particular, enclosed research site (cf. Gupta & Ferguson 1997). Because of that I favored a more multisited ethnography (Marcus 1995) in my fieldwork. This meant to incorporate different localities that played a crucial role in homecoming. Accordingly, I was switching between Accra—the administrative center where most of the official institutions and decision makers were to be found—and Cape Coast—location of Cape Coast Castle and one of the most important and prominent sites of memory in connection with the history of the transatlantic slave trade.¹¹ In addition, I looked at a variety of institutions (the National Commission on Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, the Du Bois Centre for Pan-African Culture, the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, and so on) and events (local and national festivals, events with a specifically Pan-African outlook, such as PANAFEST and Emancipation Day, colloquia, conferences, and so forth) that had an impact on the evolution of the homecoming-discourse and its rendering into practice.

In my view, this approach posed a challenge to the priority that is often still attributed to participant observation as *the* privileged method in anthropology. In my research context, an insistence on participant observation was difficult to sustain for two reasons. First, the people I mainly worked with were busy professionals, and my opportunity to *participate* in their routines was restricted to public events, archival sources, and our various communications, ranging from highly formalized interviews (as, for example, with the Minister of Tourism and other high-ranking bureaucrats) to more confidential and personal conversations. The second reason lay in the fact that the topic of homecoming was extremely charged, emotionally as well as politically. The people in the field were well aware of global power hierarchies and maintained a very critical stand regarding White Euro-American hegemony, with which I was clearly associated owing to my academic and personal background (see Schramm 2005). Moreover, a visit to the slave dungeons had an utterly different meaning for most visitors from the African diaspora than it could ever have for me as a White person. Insistence on participation would have been hard to sustain in this context. This restriction, however, did not foreclose my ability to communicate with various interlocutors about our different perspectives. But it challenged me to always come up with my own views and opinions; it meant that I could not maintain a “neutral stance.”

Marcus suggests a number of techniques by which to tackle the challenges posed by new subjects of study, namely, those arising from the increasing “circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (1995: 96). Among these is the idea “to follow the plot,” which Marcus describes as

Processes of remembering and forgetting produce precisely those kinds of narratives, plots, and allegories that threaten to reconfigure in often disturbing ways versions (myths, in fact), that serve state and institutional orders. In this way, such narratives are a rich source of connections, associations, and suggested relationships for shaping multisited objects of research. (*ibid.*: 109)

In my case, however, it was not the (Ghanaian) state alone that produced hegemonic versions of the past, since its narratives were, on the one hand, formulated in opposition to a dominant Western tradition, and, on the other hand, they had to compete with those of diasporan actors who were sometimes actively enforcing a particular rhetoric of truth onto the homecoming-discourse. Therefore, the question arose as to how to identify the conflicting historical narratives in the first place and, second, how to determine the ever-shifting, dynamic relationality of various memories and counter-memories between discourse and everyday practice.

This complex field-situation is reflected in my theoretical analysis of contemporary homecoming, which is historically framed throughout. History becomes important as a double referent. On the one hand, the past and its narration are crucial topics around which the entire homecoming-discourse revolves. Actors in the field, especially those who situated themselves within the broad spectrum of Pan-African ideology, understood history not as a neutral form of representation but rather as the site of an ongoing struggle. In their Pan-African discourse, conventional his/story was to be denounced and should make room for our/story,¹² a story to be told from an African point of view. This story refers to the terror of slave trade inasmuch as to the more remote past of glorious African civilizations as well as to contemporary global politics. The “rhetoric of truth” is of vital importance in those debates over adequate historical representation (see especially Chapters Four and Five). On the other hand, as Edward M. Bruner (1996) has aptly shown, one cannot speak of unity among the various stakeholders over the concrete form and content of that “story to be told.” In addition, I extend the problematic of representing the past beyond the scope of the slave castles and the tourism sphere, even though those do serve as a point of departure for my discussion.

A second dimension of history in this study concerns my own attempt to achieve a depth of focus in interpretation by reaching out to the historical background and prerequisites for the contemporary phenomena that I observed in Ghana. Taking the discourses and conflicts as they emerged in the field as a starting point, I have investigated their routed, sometimes twisted and warped, trajectories from past to present and back again. This tracing refers to the history

of the slave trade (see Chapters Four and Five) inasmuch as to the origins of Pan-Africanism (see Chapter Two) or to the inspiring event of Ghanaian independence (see Chapter Three). In addition, the study provides insights into the concrete evolution of contemporary debates and events over the past two decades. However, the present work is not a historical study, since I, in conjunction with the people in the field, have dealt only with those aspects of the past that are, in my view, relevant to the present. The measures of anthropology have determined my access to the historical data just as they have shaped my relations to the many people, events, and debates that I came across in the field.

The structure of the book follows the traces of homecoming—as an idea as well as a process. My exploration leads into the spheres of practical intersection and discursive overlapping of different aspects of the phenomenon. I show the multifarious character of the encounter between African diaspora and homeland by opening up a specter of perspectives, ranging from the Ghanaian state and its bureaucracy to diasporan repatriates. Other actors include Ghanaian intellectuals, youths, and traditional authorities, as well as African-American tourists. Voices from the past are made audible through the recourse to historical accounts, archival material, letters, visitors' books, and the like. Films, photographs, and advertising brochures and the fleeting moments of performances and the distinct rhetoric of public discourse have all been part of the mosaic that I have attempted to fit together in this study on the politics of heritage and homecoming in Ghana.

Homecoming is, above anything else, negotiated in the sphere of the emerging tourism industry in Ghana. Indeed, the contested nature of the incorporation of Pan-Africanism and slavery into a commercial framework runs through all the chapters. Still, tourism is not the only important dimension of the homecoming-endeavor. Equally significant are the debates over memory and heritage (see Chapters Four and Eight, respectively), as well as the transformed meaning of Pan-Africanism in contemporary politics (Chapter Nine) and the spiritual and ritual associations that go along with homecoming (see especially Chapters Six and Seven). Singular events, places, and discourses are not analyzed in isolation; rather, I have attempted to show how each facet is dialectically interlinked with the other parts.

Chapter Two starts with a critical engagement with some of the predecessors of Pan-Africanist ideology. I investigate the canonical work of Edward Wilmot Blyden, Marcus Garvey, and W. E. B. Du Bois, all of whom have contributed immensely to the conceptualization of political and cultural Pan-Africanism. Many of their ideas were still very prominent in the homecoming-discourse; similarly continuous was the ambivalence that runs through their conceptualizations of "race" as well as their relationship with

Africa as an imaginary homeland, on the one hand, and diverse concreteness, on the other.

Moreover, all three personalities exerted great influence on the independence movement in Ghana and its first president, Kwame Nkrumah. During his reign, cooperation and solidarity with the diaspora were actively sought, and many diasporans, including Du Bois, came to Ghana to offer assistance in the project of nation-building. Chapter Three therefore explores the development of Pan-Africanism from idea to movement and looks into the early manifestations of diasporan return to Ghana and its reverberations in the return wave of the 1990s.

While these early connections are definitely an important factor for the prominence of Ghana as a destination of homecoming, most African Americans come to Ghana because of the many slave forts and castles that are located along its coast and speak of the violent diasporic dispersal. These structures embody many things at once: they are viewed as relics of different historical periods, as gravesites and memorials of the slave trade, but also as valuable tourism assets—a constellation that has caused a number of conflicts over adequate historical representation. Chapter Four traces the history of the so-called whitewashing-debate, in which the different positions collided. This reconstruction is followed in Chapter Five by a tour through the different stations of Cape Coast Castle as it appeared during the time of my fieldwork. This description is contrasted with different voices from the field. The chapter asks how their interpretation of the past differs from official representations. Whereas at a first glance those differences may appear as *a priori*, I show that in practice there are many congruencies among the various positions. The question arises if there is any such thing as an adequate representation or commemoration of history—and the slave trade in particular. I explore this question through the prism of the materiality of place-memory.

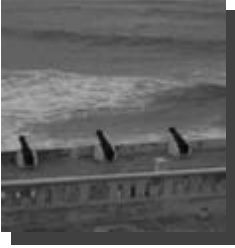
The journey of African Americans to the slave sites (and, for that matter, diasporic homecoming in general) has often been described as a pilgrimage. In Chapter Six, I develop a theoretical framework of pilgrimage tourism in order to better grasp the dynamics of that movement. To point out its specificity, I correlate the emic notion of pilgrimage with the aspect of commercial movement and explore the structural conditions as well as imaginary potentials that enable this kind of travel. In Chapter Seven, I concentrate on a particular event, Emancipation Day 1998, when the pilgrimage metaphor was explicitly employed. The central element of the celebrations was the re-interment of two slave ancestors in African, that is, Ghanaian, soil. In my analysis of the event and its aftermaths I argue that the search for an authentic African self, which motivates many of the African descendants to come to Ghana, must be

analytically linked to the simultaneous affirmation of a diasporic identity. It is through this interrelation that the homecoming is filled with meaning.

In Chapter Eight, another cultural festival comes into view. PANAFEST is a biannual festival that proclaims to “unite the African family” and to work toward the “re-emergence of African civilization.” In my analysis, I focus on the various ways in which a common identity of Black people is asserted by means of the recourse to a glorious past. I am interested in the processes of commodification that underlie the definition and construction of cultural heritage, be it in relation to the nationalist project of cultural politics or to the commercial realms of the tourism industry. The evocation of ancient African civilization is emblematic for a certain understanding of African identity that not only is dominant among diasporans who attempt to fulfill their desire for homecoming but that also forms an important part of the heritage-conception of the Ghanaian state. In my detailed analysis of PANAFEST '99, I aim to show the innate ambivalence that lies in the declaration of African commonality, based on an ancient heritage. I discuss the position of intellectuals in contemporary Pan-African discourse as well as the various uses and interpretations of potent cultural symbolism during performances. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the festival from an actor-centered perspective.

Chapter Nine focuses on the political sphere and on the ways in which Pan-African ideology is translated into practice. In order to comprehend the discrepancies and open contradictions that characterize the recourse to Pan-Africanism in the contemporary Ghanaian setting, I make use of a theoretical framework of a strategic use of essentialisms. The examples of the W. E. B. Du Bois Memorial Centre for Pan-African Culture, a “central place on the margins,” and the Fifth African/African-American Summit, a major gathering of politicians and business executives that took place during the time of my fieldwork, serve to elaborate on the issues of repatriation and what I call the economic turn in Pan-Africanism. The chapter asks about the realities of homecoming as contested relationships of belonging.

Throughout these encounters, *diaspora* takes on different meanings, depending on who is speaking. Actors in the field may expose an understanding of the term that is at absolute variance with that expressed by postmodernist anthropology. Moreover, even if returnees do deny a diasporic classification, precisely because they follow an ideal of *reintegration* with their “African self,” I argue that the very process of homecoming may *reinforce* the diasporic affiliation as well as open up new sets of identifications. My analytical standpoint cannot be a matter of choice between one and the other, or, in other words, between essentialism and hybridity as distinct modes of identification and theorization, respectively. Instead, I attempt to show the complexities behind each claim.



CHAPTER TWO

THE LAYOUT OF AN IDEOLOGY

CLAIMING THE AFRICAN HERITAGE IN EARLY PAN-AFRICANISM

Under the harsh and inhuman conditions of the plantations in the New World, people of a heterogeneous cultural background, who had originally spoken different languages and had adhered to different beliefs, had forcefully been turned into African (and later Black or Negro) slaves. They had been denied their right to history and their status as cultured human beings. Nevertheless, slaves had been able to forge new communities and to evolve a new Black folk-culture.¹ If Africa was acknowledged in this cultural universe, the continent often featured as a spiritual or metaphysical entity.² In songs and, above all, in the emergent religious culture of Blacks, Africa served as a point of reference to which the slaves' hopes for redemption could be attached. The biblical prophecy "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia [standing for Africa as a whole] shall soon stretch her hands unto God!" (Psalms 68.31) became an important means of self-assurance, because it entailed the promise of an end of suffering and the belief in cultural resurrection.

When slavery was finally abolished, the concrete attachments of many New World Blacks to the African continent had been severed. Moreover, the racist ideology that had accompanied slavery and continued to run through the American postbellum society resulted in the negative stereotyping of Africa as a cannibal-infested darkness. Many Black Americans held on to such a derogatory image of the continent.³ Nevertheless, this attitude was also opposed

by a growing number of outspoken and visible community representatives to whom African ancestry was by no means a stigma of failure but rather was a source of pride. Yet this did not mean that the nascent Black nationalism featured a unified opinion about the place of Africa as a *physical reality* in the lives of American Blacks. As Robert G. Weisbord observed, the connection of the diaspora to the continent has been, and continues to be, “a complex and multifaceted conduit” (1973: 7).

In the following historical excursion I attempt to throw some light on the ambivalent role of Africa that has characterized the Pan-African project from the beginnings. In addition, I uncover some of the basic ideas that have formed the framework of the Pan-African project and that can still be said to determine the Pan-African rhetoric as employed in the homecoming-discourse in Ghana today. These ideological foundations are discussed in relation to the lives and work of three major proponents of Pan-Africanism, each of whom has been extremely influential in his own time as well as beyond: Edward Wilmot Blyden, Marcus Garvey, and William Edward Burghard Du Bois.⁴

“THE AFRICAN PROBLEM AND THE METHOD OF ITS SOLUTION”: EDWARD WILMOT BLYDEN (1832–1912)

One of the greatest forebears of the Pan-African movement was Edward Wilmot Blyden. He was born in 1832 on St. Thomas of the Danish Virgin Islands. His parents were free and, as Hollis Lynch has put it, of “‘pure’ African ancestry” (1978: 4). For Blyden, t/his “racial purity” was a source of pride, and the idea of race as an essential identity formed the basis for much of his thinking and political writing.

Blyden was convinced that every race had its predestination and that every race had to make a genuine contribution toward the development and well-being of humankind. He operated in the framework of essentialist conceptions of race, since it was much in vogue in Euro-American popular and intellectual discourse at the time (Mudimbe 1988: 114). However, he rejected the assumed hierarchy of race—with Europeans on top and Africans at the bottom—that was upheld by Eurocentric and evolutionist writers such as Arthur de Gobineau (1853–1855). When considering the influential status of Blyden’s ideas in the ideological formulations of Pan-Africanism, we must pay attention to both the intellectual cul-de-sacs as well as the new horizons laid out in his work.

Blyden pointed out that the great achievements of Europe (whose arts and civilization he surely admired) could not be attributed entirely to its own merit. Rather, they were accomplished on the backs and shoulders of other

people. Therefore, he could not have “unlimited respect” for a “people with a passion for taking away the countries of others and dignifying the robbery as conquests; and whose systematic cruelty has been shown for ages, in chaining, buying, and selling another race” (1971g [1887]: 159). Blyden decried the inhumanity of the slave trade. It had deprived Africa of its human and creative potential and had left it in a state of stagnation and insecurity. The slave trade had not brought civilization to Africa, as its defenders would want to make the world believe; indeed, the contrary was true. Blyden stressed that when the first Europeans landed on the West African coast, they encountered a people living “in a condition not very different from that of the greater portion of Europe in the Middle Ages.” Of course, internal feuds and conflicts did exist, but they never did reach the same intensity and destructive force as “under the stimulating influence of the Slave Trade” (1971d [1869]: 141).

Those who had been forcefully taken away had been denied their humanity. They were taught that they had no history outside the history of slavery and servitude. Their African heritage was denounced and denigrated. If at all, the continent was portrayed as a vast wilderness, inhabited by savages who had never contributed anything substantial to the advancement of humankind. As a result, according to Blyden, a lot of Negroes⁵ in America, especially the educated, “suffer from a kind of slavery in many ways far more subversive of the real welfare of the race than the ancient physical fetters. The slavery of the mind is far more destructive than that of the body” (1971e [1872]: 228).

Blyden was convinced that, for the Black race to advance, it was necessary to restore African self-esteem. To him, this self-confidence should be founded on the greatness of ancient African civilizations. In a travel account of his journey to Egypt he describes his feelings when he first encountered the imposing pyramids:

I felt that I had a peculiar “heritage in the Great Pyramid” . . . built by that branch of the descendants of Noah, the enterprising sons of Ham, from whom I am descended . . . I seemed to hear the echo of those illustrious Africans. I seemed to feel the impulse from those stirring characters who sent civilization into Greece. . . . Could my voice have reached every African in the world, I would have earnestly addressed him in the language of Hilary Teage: “Retake your fame!” (*ibid.*: 152–153)

In his opinion, this acknowledgment of their great past would lead Black people into a great future.

Yet, according to Blyden’s philosophy, this was but one element of the African redemption. While Blyden emphasized the African grandeur,

he at the same time saw the “power of endurance” (1971i [1893]: 200) as the greatest strength of the race. In an arousing lecture to the Young Men’s Literary Association of Sierra Leone, Blyden developed his concept of the African Personality, which, more than fifty years later, would be taken up by Kwame Nkrumah to serve as the cultural foundation of the new, continental Pan-Africanism. A central element of this personality, which Blyden regarded as an inherent quality of the African, was his ability to face and withstand great suffering. Equipped with the rhetorical skills of his background as a Christian clergyman (he was a Presbyterian minister), Blyden paralleled the destiny of the Black man [*sic!*] to that of Jesus Christ: “The glory of the African . . . has been the glory of suffering—the glory of the cross—the glory of the Son of Man—the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But . . . the Cross precedes the Crown” (*ibid.*: 203). One of the most striking biblical references to suffering is the exodus of the ancient Israelites from Egypt—a crucial narrative that has been appropriated widely in Black movements from early Pan-Africanism to the Rastafarians and the Black Hebrew Israelites. Here, the biblical story becomes associated with the African destiny, and the mythical Exodus finds its parallel in the transatlantic slave trade and subsequent bondage.

If we follow this logic, we see that the male New World Negro embodied Blyden’s concept of the African Personality in its purest form. It was he who had survived the Middle Passage and who—despite all the anguish and misery that he had to go through—was able to retain his strength. While his African brothers were left in a state of chaos and stagnation, the American Negro acquired skills and new knowledge that should now be brought forth in the development of the continent. Blyden was convinced that American Blacks were predestined to take on the role of an avant-garde in the new Africa, leading the continent out of doom.

And yet, he saw a great danger looming over the Black race—the danger of being absorbed into another race, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Blyden warned that there was a tendency among Africans in the diaspora to ignore their origins. His major attack was directed at the “mulatto leaders” of his time, who saw their future in America. He accused them of treason to the cause of the race. The criticism that he directed toward them took on a cynical note when he wrote:

Some of these coloured men, so lofty in the superiority of their benevolence, and so rich in the generosity of their hearts, are proclaiming themselves cosmopolites, as unwilling to recognize any distinction of races and countries, and are gladly welcoming and rejoicing in those abnormal

and humiliating processes by which the Negro is being absorbed by the Caucasian. (1971b [1862]: 17)⁶

His “romantic racialism” (Appiah 1992: 101) with its emphasis on purity brought Blyden in close proximity to White racists who vehemently and violently opposed the idea of a multiracial America. Like them, Blyden accepted the idea that America was the land of the White people (without mentioning Native Americans). Consequently, in his view, Africa naturally belonged to the Black people. He saw no reason for African Americans to fight for equality within the American society. Even though he was repelled by the racism of the American South—the segregation, Jim-Crowing, and lynching—he believed neither in the possibility nor in the desirability of change. The situation in the North was not any better, because here Black people were pushed to deny their Africanness and to strive to become somebody else. Blyden was convinced that the only solution for them was to go and “possess the land” (1971b [1862]: 27).

This was his most important goal—the repatriation of the “Black man” to the African fatherland, “his natural home” (1971c [1862]: 18). Blyden pioneered this return movement—in 1851 he moved to the recently founded Republic of Liberia, and in 1871 he relocated to Sierra Leone, where he died in 1912. To Blyden, the idea of repatriation was inseparable from a civilizing mission of the American Negro in his land of origin. Blyden, as a devoted Christian, favored an independent African church that would take into account African forms of worship and thereby gradually “bring them [for example, the ‘backward’ Africans] to a knowledge of the truth” (*ibid.*: 19). He admired Islam for its capacity to incorporate African peculiarities and still maintain its religious substance. A similar development he hoped to achieve for Christianity. But the assumed leadership role assigned to the American Negroes went farther than that. With unmistakable paternalism Blyden spoke of the “call of providence to the descendants of Africa in America.” He demanded that they took pride in their ancestral land. It was theirs

to betake themselves to injured Africa, and bless those outraged shores, and quiet those distracted families with the blessings of Christianity and civilization. It is theirs to bear with them to that land the arts of industry and peace, and counteract the influence of those horrid abominations which an inhuman avarice has introduced—to roll back the appalling cloud of ignorance and superstition which overspreads the land, and to rear on those shores an asylum of liberty for the down-trodden sons of Africa wherever found. (1971b [1862]: 25)

Blyden was in favor of colonization. Yet it should not fall on Europeans to strip the continent of its wealth so as to develop the *European* nations and industries—it was on the Africans to use their potential to develop their own nation. From his account, however, one gets the impression that the creative and intellectual input for such a development would come solely from enlightened American Blacks, and the continental Africans would contribute only the land and its rich resources while receiving the blessings of civilization from the Black colonists.

But it would not do justice to Blyden to leave it at that. Although he was full of zeal for the idea of colonization, he also admitted that there were qualities in the African character that needed to be sustained so as to achieve true development, which was not going to follow European role models but would rather lead to a “distinct race perception and entire race devotion” (1971h [1890]: 51). The African’s sense of family and community, his working juridical systems with righteous chiefs as the true voice of the people, his natural spirituality and superior morality were among the features that Blyden pointed out to make up the true essence of the race, which he posed in sharp contrast to perceived Western egoism and individualism.

Blyden’s attitude toward Africa was full of ambivalence and even outright contradictions. The continent, to him, was the cradle of humanity and civilization, a source of self-respect and pride for Black people all over the world. Yet these achievements belonged to a distant past and had not much to do with contemporary Africa. He claimed the culture of Ancient Egypt and the pompous representations of the Pharaohs as his own heritage and did not mention that this greatness rested on the labor of slaves (cf. Gilroy 1993: 207). However, it was precisely the glory of suffering and the biblical power of endurance that distinguished the African Personality from the character of other races. He pointed out that Black slaves had made great contributions to the sustaining and enrichment of Europe and the Americas; yet he argued that they had no place in those respective countries. He believed in the self-reliance and self-determination of Africans; but he also argued that they needed to be colonized (by Blacks) to achieve their true independence. He advocated the need for Black people to acknowledge their African heritage and identity but still maintained his own Westernized lifestyle as the standard of “civilization.” For example, while he demanded that Africans should stick to their African costumes, he never wore anything but a three-piece suit (Wyse 1993: 356). He rejected the racist stereotypes about “savage Africa”; nevertheless, he was appalled by the “wild ferocity” of native “savages” encountered by the first Liberian settlers (1971a [1859]: 136). He accused the native inhabitants of their continuous participation in the slave trade yet ignored the involvement of some diasporan returnees in that very trade.

Many, if not all, of these contradictions stem from the persistence with which he held on to the idea of racial purity, essence, and segregation. This separate existence, however, was more of a political doctrine than a lived reality for him. In his rejection of the so-called mulatto leaders in the United States, who had lost touch with their African selves and strove to become Americans with equal rights, he overlooked the fact that he himself was influenced and formed by the ideas of his time and the society he grew up in, which was, after all, a Western society (cf. Trouillot 1995). And of course this Western society itself—especially in the Americas and more specifically in the United States—was, as Blyden had rightly stated, not the outcome of a pure “White genius” but rather consisted of numerous influences and manifold contributions by different groups of people.

Despite this apparent social plurality, the nineteenth century witnessed a rise of ideas of purity and national essence. It was an age of invented traditions (Hobsbawm 1983) and the consolidation of the newly arising nation-states. Blyden’s cultural nationalism and racial ideology, therefore, were the result of an intellectual dialogue with his contemporaries. It was not the voice of “ancient Africa” that spoke through him but that of a newly emergent Black American middle-class who sought a place and a purpose in the world.

Blyden exerted great influence, on his contemporaries as well as on twentieth century Pan-Africanists. Many of his thoughts were taken up by continental Africans who were involved in the anticolonial struggle—on a cultural as well as on a political front. Thus, his ideas re-emerged in the writings of *négritude*⁷ as well as in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s (1986) famous expression of the “decolonization of the mind.” Kwame Nkrumah’s entire politicocultural program was firmly built on the concept of an “African Personality.” Among Afrocentric scholars, both in America and Africa, references to a Black cultural essence as well as to the great heritage of Egypt and the ancient African empires are very common. Repatriation, again, has also become an option for quite a few diasporans who do not feel at home in the racist societies in which they were born. However, the contradictions apparent in Blyden’s oeuvre are not resolved in those posterior formulations. They remain a source of productive tension in the various manifestations of homecoming.

“AFRICA FOR THE AFRICANS”: MARCUS GARVEY (1887–1940)

Marcus Garvey, too, stemmed from the Caribbean. He was born in Jamaica on August 17, 1887 (see Martin 1976). Both his parents were “full-blooded Negroes” (Padmore 1971 [1956]: 65)—a fact that Garvey never ceased to emphasize. To him, truly, Black was beautiful, and he encouraged others to

take pride in their race and to keep it pure. For Garvey, the “curse of many colors” (1969 [1923]: 37) was a result of the slave trade and needed to be effaced like a blemish from the minds and bodies of Black people. As did his predecessor Blyden, Garvey detested people of “mixed blood,” especially those who represented the intellectual and political elite of American Blacks. This suspicion would later culminate in fierce attacks against W. E. B. Du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a controversy to which I return below.

Garvey’s father is said to have been of Maroon ancestry, “of Koromantee stock” (Padmore 1971 [1956]: 65). This reference is important, since Garvey, throughout his life, emphasized the heritage of resistance, symbolized by the image of the brave and self-determined Maroons. The potential of resistance constituted an important counter-image to the dominant White discourse (be it of an outwardly racist and oppressive or of a more paternalistic kind), since it gave back voice and agency to Black people. Because of that capacity for identification, the motif of insubordination played such a significant role in Garvey’s (self-)representation as a “Black Moses” and liberator of “the Black race.”

As a young man, Garvey traveled extensively throughout southern and Latin America before he moved to London in 1912, where he worked for Duse Mohammed Ali in the editorial office of the *African Times and Orient Review*. This journal was fairly influential. As its title suggests, it propagated Afro-Asian solidarity as well as the concerted efforts of all colored people(s) against a common European oppressor (Langley 1973: 127). Garvey’s experiences in London shaped his nascent Pan-Africanism. It was here that he encountered the ideas of African nationalism—through his work at the *Review*, his meeting and conversing with continental Africans as well as his reading. He became convinced that the fate of American Blacks was inevitably linked with that of colonized Africans. To Garvey, true independence could be achieved only through their concerted efforts (cf. Essien-Udom 1969: 36).

In 1914 Garvey returned to Jamaica, where he founded his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), which was to become the largest (political) mass movement of Black people that the world had seen so far. Following an invitation by Booker T. Washington,⁸ whom Garvey admired, he moved on to the United States. Garvey arrived in Harlem in 1916. By that time, Washington had already died, but Garvey found the ground prepared for his movement to flourish. A lot of Blacks had migrated here to escape the open racism and slavery-like conditions of the American South. Nevertheless, they soon became disillusioned, realizing that the North had not much to offer, apart from racism in a different guise. This situation prevailed until the Civil

Rights Movement began to bring about change. The protagonist of Ralph Ellison's famous novel *Invisible Man* vividly describes this reality:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook. . . . I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fibre and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. . . . (It) is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. *When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.* (Ellison 1999 [1947]: 7; my emphasis)

Here, Ellison takes up W. E. B. Du Bois's dictum of "double consciousness" and turns it upside down. Du Bois had characterized the dilemma of American Blacks as a "sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others" (1996b [1903]: 102). Yet, instead of locating this distorted perspective within the Black Self, Ellison ascribes it to the usurpatory look of its opposite, namely, the dominant White society, which does not recognize the Black Self but constructs it as Other—an Other onto which everything that the dominant majority wants it to be can be projected. Against this situation, which was prevalent throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Garvey and his organization offered a means of reclaiming a *voice* and a *visible presence* for Black Americans.

Therefore, when Garvey established the first UNIA-branch in New York City in 1917, the name and the program of the organization soon evoked great enthusiasm and hope among many Black Harlemites. The promise was the resurrection of the "mighty race" that could accomplish anything once it would have retrieved its true substance. The motto under which UNIA was to gain its fame was "One God! One Aim! One Destiny!" For Garvey and his adherents, the destiny of the Black race lay in Africa. The continent was the legitimate (and only) home of Black people; it was the Promised Land, the destination of a spiritual as well as a physical return movement. Just as the Jewish people cried for Palestine, "Negroes are raising the cry of 'AFRICA FOR THE AFRICANS,' those at home and abroad" (Garvey 1969 [1923]: 34, emphasis in the original).

Taking up the ideas of Blyden, Garvey urged Black people to acknowledge their African heritage. His emphasis was on the achievements and the ancient glory of Egypt, Ethiopia, and the legendary city of Timbuktu. Garvey turned the stereotypes upside down:

When Europe was inhabited by a race of cannibals, a race of savages, naked men, heathens and pagans; Africa was peopled with a race of cultured black men, who were masters in art, science and literature . . . men

who, it was said, were like the gods. . . . Why, then, should we lose hope? Black men, you were once great, you shall be great again. (*ibid.*: 77)

But Marcus Garvey did not advertise an escapist orientation toward the past. In order to leave behind the degrading situation in which Africans all over the world found themselves, they should not only *hope* for redemption but *work* for it. To him, it was long past due that Blacks took it upon themselves to better their situation, instead of perpetually relying on White people's good will and paternalism. Before there was real equality among the races, Garvey was convinced, there was no point in working together with Whites, because it would always lead to Black subjugation (*ibid.*: 26). Therefore, he advocated the development of Black industries and a capitalist infrastructure for the segregated Black communities. The economic advancement that Garvey had in mind was not meant to enable Black Americans to become full U.S.-citizens with equal rights as their White compatriots. Those were only the foolish aims of integrationists, whom he denounced as traitors to the race. Instead, Black people should use their acquired skills and capital to work for the uplift of Africa, their only eternal homeland. Yet his vision for the future was not that of a community of equals. Instead he dreamed of a time when "Africa [would] give to the world its black Rockefeller, Rothschild and Henry Ford" (1969 [1925]: 68).

For Garvey, race superseded class. He was skeptical about trade unionism and communism, because he felt that workers' solidarity would undermine the cause of racial salvation. He believed in a "universal suspicion" (1969 [1923]: 23) among the different races, and he was convinced of the intrinsic prejudice of Whites against Blacks. White people would do everything to defend their privileged position. In Garvey's view, they had all the right to do so, because "two ambitious and competitive races cannot live permanently side by side, without friction and trouble and that is why the white race wants a white America and the black race wants and demands a black Africa" (1969 [1925]: 121). In 1924, Garvey envisioned the large-scale repatriation of American Blacks within fifty years. To fulfill this aim, UNIA proposed "friendly co-operation with all honest movements seeking intelligently to solve the race problem" (*ibid.*). In the course of those considerations, Garvey even converged with representatives of the outwardly racist Ku Klux Klan. Certainly this meeting did not bear any concrete results, but for his opponents, especially among liberal Blacks, it was a further indication of Garvey's demagogic irresponsibility and dangerous machinations (Du Bois 1996d [1923]: 274).

After Garvey's death, his wife Amy Jacques-Garvey qualified the Back-to-Africa-paradigm, when she declared that Garvey was misunderstood and that he was far more concerned with a spiritual return to Africa (quot. in Essien-Udom

1969: 61; cf. Langley 1973: 70). Nevertheless, Garvey's attempts at physical repatriation need to be taken seriously, even though they did not find a concrete manifestation. Not only did Garvey repeatedly emphasize the need for a large-scale return movement, but he also sent UNIA-delegations to Liberia to negotiate a return scheme; he urged the League of Nations to confer the former German colonies to Black American settlers, and so on. The idea of physical repatriation formed a vital part of his ideology and was presumably responsible for his great success. A lot of the people who supported Garvey were pulled toward his movement precisely because of the prospects for an eventual return to the Motherland.

Garvey had a feel for mesmerizing big crowds. His ingenious appropriation of potent symbolism, such as his fancy uniform and Napoleon-style hat, as well as his vigorous rhetorical talent, and last but not least the message itself, which spoke of racial pride and self-reliance, brought together tens of thousands of people under the red, black, and green flag and Black star. In 1920 Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association held their first annual convention in Harlem. The date for the opening of the meeting was carefully chosen—it was August 1, the day when slavery was abolished in the British colonies in 1834/1838. An enthusiastic audience of between 25,000 (Geiss 1968: 210) and 50,000 (Padmore 1971 [1956]: 72) people celebrated Garvey on the occasion of this first convention. Garvey was elected Provisional President of Africa with an annual allowance of \$22,000 (Essien-Udom 1969: 39). With an imperial gesture, he conferred on some of his followers titles such as Duke of the Nile and Earl of the Congo, thereby accentuating the entitlement of African descendants to the land and to the rich heritage of the African continent.

Garvey's biggest triumph and at the same time his biggest defeat was the project of the Black Star Line Steamship Company. The business corporation was set up in order to purchase Atlantic vessels and steamers that were supposed to facilitate a vibrant commercial network among Black communities all over the world—an independent Black economy (see Bande 2008). Lots of people supported the idea and bought shares in the company. However, the business venture failed, the Black Star Line went bankrupt, and the capital of faithful investors was lost.

Also unsuccessful were the concrete attempts toward repatriation that were ventured on by UNIA. In 1920 Garvey had sent a delegation of UNIA representatives to Liberia to explore opportunities for settlement there. From this trip two reports resulted. The official one was full of praise for the Liberian government. The second report, the so-called Garcia report, was harshly critical of the oppressive style of leadership that was exerted by the Americo-Liberian oligarchy over the African natives (Geiss 1968: 210). "Corruption and slavery" (Padmore 1971 [1956]: 78), criticized by the delegation, were

not what Garvey and his movement aimed at. Of course, in accordance with the widespread notion of development that he shared with his European contemporaries, Garvey was content that there was a need for American Negroes to “assist in civilizing the backward tribes of Africa” (1969 [1925]: 38). Nevertheless, he strictly condemned any attempts of “bombastic Negroes” (1969 [1923]: 72) to exercise “an over-lordship” or “a haughty superiority over the fellows of his own race” (*ibid.*: 70, 71).

Notwithstanding the articulated criticisms, UNIA did not cease to pursue the projected repatriation scheme to Liberia. Funds were being raised; machines and other items were bought to enable the establishment of a new community of settlers on the land that had been allocated to them in a provisional agreement with the Liberian government (Padmore 1971 [1956]: 77). Despite the initially positive prospects for the project, it was doomed to failure. For one thing, there was the alliance between the colonial powers and U.S. authorities, which impeded the mission’s success (Bair 1994: 123). Liberia’s neighboring colonies had been extremely suspicious of Liberia’s apparent cooperation with UNIA. To them, Garvey’s cry of “Africa for the Africans” amounted to a real threat, when he blatantly stated:

Why should we allow Belgium, Portugal . . . and England to build up and rehabilitate their bankrupt nations and civilization out of the wealth and resources of our country? They have no room for us in their countries, and surely we have absolutely no room for them in our country. (1969 [1925]: 68)

Garvey’s publications, especially his weekly newspaper *The New Negro*, were prohibited throughout West Africa, and their possession was in some cases punished with lifetime imprisonment (Esedebe 1982: 78; Padmore 1971 [1956]: 74). For that reason, the European colonialists warned Liberia to stay away from the Garvey movement. Besides, the Liberian government had also gotten hold of the unfavorable Garcia report and now feared a large-scale influx of radical UNIA activists into the country. It withdrew its support (Geiss 1968: 211).

Unquestionably, Garvey’s militant radicalism and racist rhetoric had contributed in no small way to the mistrust, even enmity of those who opposed him. Open contempt against Garvey was not only expressed by White colonialists who feared his “Black rage,” but it also came from members of the Black/colored intellectual elite in the United States. The controversy escalated into an open campaign against Garvey and his movement that led to his arrest (Geiss 1968: 211). In 1925 he was sentenced to five years in jail for using

the U.S. mail to defraud (by sending UNIA shares via mail). After his early release in 1927 he was deported to Jamaica as an undesirable alien.

Garvey died in London in 1940. All his attempts to revive UNIA had failed—with the breakdown of the Black Star Line, the silencing of its most important political leader and internal mismanagement and corruption, the Association had disintegrated. It was not until the rise of Black Power and the concurrent African striving toward independence that Marcus Garvey regained his reputation. Even though the organization itself remained fragmented, his ideas were taken up in the workings of the Nation of Islam (cf. Essien-Udom 1969) and other advocates of Black nationalism. Kwame Nkrumah, for example, explicitly acknowledged Garvey's influence on his own thoughts: "I think that of all the literature that I studied, the book that did more than any other to fire my enthusiasm was *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*" (Nkrumah 1957: 45; emphasis in the original). When Ghana gained its independence, the new state appropriated the effective Garveyian symbolism—not only in the name of its national shipping company, the Black Star Line, but also in form of the Black Star itself, which became the centerpiece of the Ghanaian flag. Moreover, Nkrumah openly invited diasporans to return to the Motherland and to make Ghana the destination of that move.

Despite all his shortcomings, Garvey was able to build a mental bridge between the African diaspora and the continent, and he was probably the most influential Pan-African agitator of his time (Bair 1994: 123). Even today, Garvey continues to be popular among diasporan and continental Africans alike. His name reverberates in the realms of popular culture, especially in reggae and rap music, and in the sphere of political subculture. In Ghana, for example, there exists the so-called Marcus Garvey Youth League, an organization founded by a British-born repatriate, the late Adrienne Akosua Steward. Together with other factions, such as the Twelve Tribes of Israel, it forms part of a Pan-African-oriented network of youth groups, which is tolerated, but not actively controlled, by the Ghanaian state.

The discourse and practice of homecoming, the many facets of which are represented and analyzed in this book, suggest that the call for Africa as the real home of Black people has not lost its appeal. As Molefi Kete Asante has stated: "'Africa' signifies an escape from racial discrimination and an epitomized pride in heritage. The metaphor becomes the message" (1987: 155).

FROM RACE TO "RACE": W. E. B. DU BOIS (1868–1963)

W. E. B. Du Bois was a contemporary of Edward Blyden as well as Marcus Garvey—and he survived them both. In contrast to Garvey he was not a great

orator, but a great writer. He left a broad oeuvre of tremendous importance, and he may rightfully be called the most outstanding intellectual proponent of the Pan-African idea. His long life span from 1868 to 1963 covered the years from early emancipation in America⁹ to the early years of African independence. This evolution is also reflected in his work, which is extremely broad and multilayered.

Du Bois's conception of the Black predicament and his prospects for a solution differed in some respects from those of Blyden and Garvey. However, it is a difference in degree, rather than in kind. Today all three men occupy a special place in the ancestral hall of "Pan-African giants" (Lemelle 1992: 76). Certainly, W. E. B. Du Bois articulated his goal of a Black/African renaissance in less radical terms than did, for example, Marcus Garvey. The conflict between Garvey and Du Bois was fought out with poignant rhetorical blows. Even today, implicit or explicit reference to their irreconcilable rivalry serves to mark the opposing edges of the Pan-African ideological continuum. Yet their alleged differences were not as sharp as one could assume from the disparaging language they used on each other. The goal of "Africa for the Africans" resonated with Du Bois's own aspirations, even though to him it meant something different from massive repatriation. In his vision of "a new African world state," American Blacks would occupy a special position as consultants and bearers of progress. There was, however, no need for them to leave the diaspora:

The Negroes in the United States and the other Americas have earned the right to fight out their problems where they are, but they could easily furnish from time to time technical experts, leaders of thought, and missionaries of culture for their backward brethren in the new Africa. (1996c [1920]: 518)

This missionary impulse, similarly to Blyden's, relied on a notion of development that basically followed Euro-American models. Just like his predecessor, Du Bois attributed the role of leadership in this process to "the American Negro," whom he had characterized in one of his first essays with enthusiastic fervor: "There does not stand today upon God's earth a race more capable in muscle, in intellect, in morals, than [him], if he will bend his energies in the right direction" (1996a [1887]: 46).

What united Blyden and Du Bois further was their sophisticated style of argumentation and their elitist consciousness. Whereas Garvey mastered the tunes of a propaganda that warmed people's hearts, Blyden and Du Bois directed their efforts at people's minds. The biggest conceptual divide between

them can be located in their different treatment of the question of race and racial identity. Even though Du Bois, in his early writings, shared the preoccupation with a Black racial destiny (in later years he would put more emphasis on a broader solidarity among the oppressed peoples of the world), he always vehemently rejected the idea of racial prejudice and superiority. He despised any attempts to simply “oppose white supremacy and the white ideal by a crude and equally brutal black supremacy and black ideal” (1996d [1923]: 268). Above all, he firmly believed in the need for, and also the possibility of, integration. Even in the above-quoted “conservation of races,” where he speaks of American Negroes as the most “capable race,” he simultaneously calls on Blacks and Whites to “develop side by side in peace and mutual happiness, the peculiar contribution which each has to make to the culture of their common country” (1996a [1887]: 46).

Clearly, Du Bois saw the place of American Negroes in America, the nation to which they had contributed immensely—with their labor as well as their music and folklore. To him, this belief did not mean to give up his “Africanness.” On the contrary, to arrive at equality, it was necessary to develop the Black communities from within. This included the acknowledgment of their African heritage inasmuch as the recognition of the other parts making up their past and present. Such a diversified heritage was not just a matter of multiracial ancestry, as in Du Bois’s personal case. In his opinion it was the condition that all American Negroes, no matter what their color, found themselves in—they were caught in a “double consciousness:”

One ever feels this twoness —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (1996b [1903]: 102)

Paul Gilroy (1993) has taken up this metaphor of double consciousness as a starting point for his own analysis of the diasporic condition. To him,

Du Bois's concept is fruitful, because it already anticipates a notion of the African diaspora as a complex network of routes instead of singular roots in distant and idealized Africa. The motif of travel (for example, routes) is particularly significant, and Gilroy points out that Du Bois had been exposed to the world's many influences, which had consequently molded his personality as well as his thought. Indeed, Du Bois had enjoyed an excellent education. He studied at Fisk University, a traditionally Black college. Later, he became the first African American ever to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University. He went to Europe, studied at Humboldt University in Berlin, and sincerely admired Bismarck and even Heinrich von Treitschke. Eric J. Sundquist writes:

Readers of Du Bois have located his intellectual roots in the Puritan substructure of American thought, the grand historical tradition derived from Hegel, and the late-nineteenth-century flowering of pragmatism.... No single intellectual tradition explains Du Bois, but all played a part in the unique perspective and searching intensity that he brought to bear on the problem of the color line. (1996: 10)

Du Bois was convinced that the racist system of America needed to be overcome so that all its citizens could advance. However, integration did not mean melting into the White society. Such a merging was not possible anyway, since, as Du Bois so adroitly described it, it was this very society that denied Black Americans equal access. He therefore demanded race organization and solidarity, which ought to become visible in separate institutions: newspapers, colleges, business organizations. What he had in mind was the development of an "American Negro Academy" (1996a [1887]), which would boast of the best of what the Black community had to offer. He rejected the modest educational philosophy of Booker T. Washington and his Tuskegee Institute, because, in Du Bois's eyes, it confined Black people to a low position on the social ladder. His alternative was the elitist concept of the "talented tenths" (1903), a Black avant-garde that would eventually lead the masses to higher grounds.¹⁰

Du Bois insisted that ideas of racial purity, as Blyden and Garvey had expressed them, could not capture the peculiarity of the situation of Blacks in America. This, to him, became particularly clear if one compared the hierarchy of race in the Caribbean to that in the United States. What Du Bois had described as "the problem of the twentieth century," namely, "the color line" (1996b [1903]: 107), was drawn according to completely different parameters in the two social contexts. In the West Indies, a strict scheme of color differentiation prevailed. "Mulattoes" were privileged over their blacker kinsfolk and

often despised them. In the United States, the situation was different. Here, the whole “darker group” was subsumed under the same “caste legislation, . . . which applied to a white man with one Negro great-grandfather as well as to a full-blooded Bantu” (1996d [1923]: 268). As a result, “colored folk as white as the whitest came to describe themselves as Negro” (*ibid.*). Race, in Du Bois’s understanding, amounted to a socialpolitical category, not to a clear-cut biological constant.

Du Bois made that statement in an attempt to discard Garvey’s attacks against him and the NAACP. Garvey had repeatedly claimed that Du Bois was out to destroy the race (1969 [1925]: 57). To him, Du Bois embodied the very “so-called leader” whom he regarded as race-traitor (1969 [1923]: 29), somebody who eagerly imitated Whites (1969 [1925]: 24). Du Bois, who was senior to Garvey, reacted to the criticism with a paternalistic tone, which infuriated Garvey even more. So when Du Bois described him as “a little, fat black man, ugly, but with intelligent eyes and big head” (1996d [1923]: 265). Garvey took that as an example of Du Bois’s intrinsic feeling of light-skinned superiority and further proof that he “hate[d] the Negro blood in his veins” (1969 [1925]: 57).

Garvey’s raw propaganda could not match Du Bois’s subtle intellectualism. Over the long period of his working life, Du Bois constantly expressed his own ideas and, despite his attachment to a social utopia, was also inclined to revise them. For example, in his autobiography *Dusk of Dawn* (1975 [1940]), he pondered the evolution of his own ideas about race and realized that he had been born into a century, in which the dominant ideology considered “the walls of race [to be] clear and straight” (*ibid.*: 116)—an assumption that, as I have shown above, influenced his thinking as a young man. Now, however, with grown maturity and wisdom, he viewed his ties to Africa in a much more political sense:

One thing is sure and that is the fact that since the fifteenth century these ancestors of mine and their other descendants have had a common history; have suffered a common disaster and have one long memory. . . . the physical bond is least and the badge of color relatively unimportant . . . ; *the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult*; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas. It is this unity that draws me to Africa. (117; my emphasis)

In his well-known study of African cultural philosophy, *In My Father’s House*, Kwame Anthony Appiah criticizes this insistence on a sociohistorical

connection as a mere covering up of its still underlying biological determinism (1992: 41).¹¹ He does not see any alteration to have occurred in Du Bois's various conceptualizations of race. Moreover, he regards Du Bois as "in his heart . . . an intrinsic racist" (*ibid.*: 45), that is, as being unable (and unwilling) to escape the very "badge of color" and the accompanying moral doctrine of racial destiny. Appiah scrutinizes Du Bois's work and discovers little more than a romantic racial essentialism. Eloquently, Appiah points out the inconsistencies in Du Bois's argumentation. Thus, he questions the comparability of the situation of "discrimination and insult" experienced by Du Bois in the industrialized West, by a colonized African, or by somebody in "yellow Asia." Even if there was some common experience, why should race, not their common struggle against imperialism, be the bond of solidarity among oppressed people? Why would it be necessary to insist on a particular identification with Africa? To Appiah, "that . . . is just the choice that racism imposes on us—and just the choice we must reject" (*ibid.*: 42).

Appiah writes from a perspective that seeks to overcome race as a social determinant. Even though he does recognize the mechanisms of racist oppression, or the reality of racism, he is convinced that it would be erroneous to hold on to the racial classifications on which the discrimination rests, since this would mean to continuously reproduce the system in a kind of vicious circle (cf. Fields 1990). Whereas this argument as such is justified and agreeable, it seems somewhat inconsistent with regard to the work of Du Bois. For example, Appiah's radical opposition toward Du Bois's essentialism leads him to the assertion that "American culture . . . undoubtedly *is* his" (1992: 41, emphasis in the original). Yet, we are left to ask, what makes up this cultural property; where lies the difference between an American and, let's say, a Ghanaian or an Asante cultural set-up? Where does Appiah draw the boundaries? Where and when did the rupture occur? He claims that Du Bois, because of his biological determinism, "cannot ask if there is not in American culture . . . an African residue to take hold of and rejoice in, a subtle connection mediated not by genetics but by intentions, by meaning" (*ibid.*: 41–42; cf. Scott 1991). However, this aspect of conscious intention had already been taken into consideration by Du Bois himself, who insisted that "the soul is still individual if it is free; the group is a social, sometimes an historical fact" (1996d [1923]: 68).

Appiah reduces the political aspirations that guided Du Bois's intellectual strivings to a "talk of race" that dissolves into nothingness once it is subjugated to the critical analysis of the philosopher. However, he pays too little attention to the "heritage of slavery," inasmuch as to Du Bois's definition of a "black man" as "a person who must ride 'Jim Crow' in Georgia" (*ibid.*: 68).

His critique of Du Bois's intrinsic racism, though vital and substantial in many parts, leaves little room for appreciating the political impact of Du Bois's ideas.¹² However, Du Bois, along with other Pan-African thinkers, was not just reveling over unrealistic dreams; he *did* actually exert great influence on the movements that changed the face of the world in the 1950s and 1960s, namely, the American Civil Rights Movement (Horne 1986: 223–253) and the African anticolonial liberation movement.



CHAPTER THREE

EARLY CONNECTIONS

PAN-AFRICANISM AND GHANA'S INDEPENDENCE

One of the main centers of the anticolonial struggle was the Gold Coast under the charismatic leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. His strong advocacy for Pan-African unity, even with its strong continental focus, not only excited his compatriots for whom he demanded “Independence Now!” but it also turned him into a role model for diasporan Africans. Many were inspired by his political philosophy, and they detected useful parallels for their own struggle for equality in the United States and elsewhere. To some, the Gold Coast’s independence as Ghana in 1957 almost equaled a call of providence—it signaled that it was time to leave America behind and to join hands in the development of the young African nation. Thus, from the mid-1950s until Nkrumah’s overthrow in 1966, there existed a small, but visible and active, community of African Americans in Ghana (cf. Campbell 2006: 315–364; Gaines 2006; Walters 1993: 89–126). Some of them left after the coup; others stayed on a little longer; a few made Ghana their permanent home.

These early connections form important antecedents for the more recent homecoming that is the main focus of this study. Next to the materiality of the slave castles along the Ghanaian coastline, which I discuss in the following chapters, the highly symbolic value of Ghana as the first independent Black African nation¹ is still a major rationale for the choice of Ghana as a destination for homecoming. While the political pan-Africanism that shaped the relations between Ghana and the African diaspora during the 1950s and 1960s

may have given way to a more tourism-oriented approach in the 1990s and beyond, some of the dynamics between “homing desire” (Brah 1996: 180) on the one hand and the experience of “social distance between returnees and stayees” (Stefansson 2004: 9) on the other was already discernable.

I begin this chapter by outlining the broad features of the African independence movement before turning to the “revolutionist returnees” (Angelou 1991), as the diasporans called themselves, their social life and political practice in Nkrumah’s Ghana.

THE FIFTH PAN-AFRICAN CONGRESS IN MANCHESTER: SETTING THE PACE TOWARD AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE

In 1945 an extraordinary event marked the renaissance of Pan-Africanism and pushed it forward into a new direction. In October of that year, the Fifth Pan-African Congress was held in Manchester (see Adi & Sherwood 1995). For the first time, continental Africans began to act as major players in the Pan-African arena, which hitherto had been dominated by diasporan Blacks, both in terms of the numbers involved and of the issues presented.² Whereas previous gatherings had made little political impact, the Africans’ call for concrete action now became impossible to ignore.

The Second World War was an important turning point leading to the maturation of this new Pan-Africanism. Ayodele J. Langley writes:

It was gradually becoming clear, as . . . colonial peoples were called upon to contribute more in men and materials to the defence of the British Empire, that the result of participation in such global conflict would be the sharpening of African race-consciousness and encouragement of demands for a reassessment of the old doctrine of *Pax Britannica*. (1973: 347)

The Empire was shaking and slowly began to break up (Hargreaves 1988). This situation was sensed and gripped by the various groups and committees concerned with the fate of Africa, such as the Pan-African Federation, the West African Students Union or numerous Black trade unions. Their demands were directed at the immediate independence of Africa from colonial rule. In their understanding, Pan-Africanism and African Nationalism were two sides of the same coin. This was a momentous turn in quality, since it indicated a new practical relevance and broad appeal of the ideology. With the Manchester Congress, Pan-Africanism was transformed from an idea into a mass movement.

The congress took shape under the management of George Padmore.³ Delegates were sent from Africa, the West Indies, and Britain. W. E. B. Du Bois,

the key figure of twentieth-century intellectual Pan-Africanism, was nominated permanent chairman of the conference. Participants included many of the future leading figures of the independence movement throughout Africa. Not only Kwame Nkrumah took part, acting as secretary to the congress, but Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria), and Hastings Banda (Malawi) were also among the participants.

The transformation of Africa from colonial to self-determinant status seemed immanent. What distinguished this conference from its predecessors was not only the strong African component but also its uncompromising militancy. Nkrumah was of the opinion that

the main reason why it [the congress] achieved so much was because for the first time the delegates who attended it were practical men and men of action and not . . . merely idealists contenting themselves with writing theses but quite unable or unwilling to take any active part in dealing with the African problem. . . . It was this Fifth Pan-African Congress that... brought about the awakening of African political consciousness. It became, in fact, a mass movement of Africa for the Africans. (Nkrumah 1957: 53, 54)

In this statement Nkrumah symbolically appropriates one of the key slogans of diasporic Africa-consciousness: Marcus Garvey's powerful motto "Africa for the Africans." Whereas throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the Pan-Africanist ideology had privileged the diaspora as the force that could eventually redeem Africa (see my discussion in the previous chapter), it was now the continental Africans who took their faith in their hands and who could inspire even their diasporan counterparts.

After the congress, Nkrumah's own career as one of the most radical leaders of the anticolonial struggle in Africa was progressing at an incredible pace. Immediately following the conference, he, together with Isaac T. A. Wallace-Johnson from Sierra Leone, founded the West African National Secretariat, which sought to overcome colonial boundaries and to establish a firm union of African people (Wallace-Johnson & Nkrumah n.d.). The core principles of Nkrumah's continental Pan-Africanism were already detectable in those early objectives of the Secretariat.

FROM GOLD COAST TO GHANA: NKRUMAH'S POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY

In 1947 Nkrumah returned to the Gold Coast after twelve years abroad.⁴ It was to take another ten turbulent years before the British administration

would finally and completely hand over power to an African government. Then, on March 6, 1957, “at long last, the battle [had] ended,” and the country became free. Dressed in a smock—a garment from the Northern territories—and thereby signaling his commitment to the cultural and political unity of the new nation, Nkrumah, together with some of his associates, climbed the grandstand that had been erected on the Old Polo Ground in Accra. The podium was decorated in the colors of Ghana: green, gold, and red. The Black star, Garveyian symbol of African resurrection, was prominently displayed on both sides of the wooden stairs (and it became the centerpiece of the national flag). Prime Minister Nkrumah was cheered by an excited crowd who hung on his every word. Then, in the course of the declaration of independence, he spoke a famous sentence, which would forever be associated with his name: “Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked to the total liberation of the African continent!” This proclamation was heard not only in Ghana but all over Africa as well as beyond. It implied a great promise as well as a huge chore. The effort that Nkrumah put into the fulfillment of this claim brought him both respect and disapproval, at home and abroad. Some people viewed him as a great Pan-Africanist; others suspected him of being power hungry.⁵

Under Nkrumah’s presidency Ghana became a focal point of the Pan-African movement, and the Pan-African ideology formed the basis of much of Ghana’s foreign as well as domestic policy. Thus, for example, the concept of African Personality, which paid reference to Edward W. Blyden’s earlier cultural nationalism, was pivotal to early Ghanaian cultural policy. Its premier purpose was to bestow a sense of self-worth and equality on Africans. And, one could argue, precisely because it was vague could it be usefully applied within national as well as international (that is, in relation to continental cooperation) and transnational (that is, in relation to the African diaspora) contexts. Above all, it propagated the return to African values and uniqueness, defined along a vague racial identity that could also be applied to diasporans:

African personality is synonymous with the concept *African self*. . . that *human self* which has its specific geographical, historical, cultural, political, and economic setting in Africa, and this is what distinguishes it from other human selves which have different settings in other parts of the world. . . . Man cannot be truly at home in an imported environment that does not reflect his language, his customs, his dress, his food, his music, song and dance, his aspirations and the like. . . . [Therefore] European or American systems can never be those of Africa. (Sithole 1961: 14; emphasis in the original)

The creation of a “new man of pan-Africa” (Mazique 1965: 36) was to be the result of a full adherence to the African Personality. Nevertheless, if one looks more closely at the concrete tasks that the Ghanaian government had to face, the process of nation-building demanded radical breaks with established ethnic (and thus cultural) affiliations. How were those two objectives to be harmonized?

The issue of a national language is an interesting one, since it exemplifies the dynamics accompanying the achievement of sovereignty. On the one hand, English was perceived as the oppressor’s language. The rhetoric of cultural nationalism condemned it as a foreign medium, utterly unsuitable to communicate the African sense of self. On the other hand, it surely was a practical instrument to communicate beyond regional and ethnic borders. Whereas missionary schools had preferred to teach their students in the local languages, only under Nkrumah was English introduced as the language of first schooling (Birmingham 1997: 30). In order to put his modernizing drive on a solid cultural foundation, the concept of African Personality did therefore not solely rely on traditional cultural references as points of departure. Nkrumah recognized a “triple heritage” of Africans that incorporated Euro-Christian and Arab-Islamic influences (Nkrumah 1970; cf. Mazrui 1986). If those were brought into synthesis, with “the underlying principles of the traditional African experience serving as [its] salient features” (Williams 1984: 122), social progress could be achieved.

But in a more general sense, the colonial legacy was hard to shake off, since its arbitrary borders were maintained as the foundation of the new state. Thus, for example, secessionist attempts by a large majority of Ewe-speaking people to join their relations in Togo were suppressed on the grounds that such a move would lead to the disintegration of Ghana. Unity was the ultimate goal, and the nation was regarded as but a way station on the route toward continental unity.

Nkrumah projected a United States of Africa to rise at the horizon. He was convinced that it was only through such a broad alliance, which would cover all spheres—political, economic, military, and financial—that Africa would be able to withstand the onslaught of imperialist interests and neocolonial exploitation (cf. Nkrumah 1963a; *Voice of Africa* 1963). Inner-African cooperation, therefore, was a significant feature of Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism. It was not only proclaimed but also actively sought, thereby acquiring a new dimension for the Pan-African project, namely, that of practical action (cf. Hadjor 1988: 88). For example, the Ghanaian state supported the liberation struggle of other African colonies financially as well as logistically—a commitment that commanded great respect by outsiders but that was also

skeptically perceived inside Ghana, since it indicated a lack of attention toward interior affairs.

Yet Nkrumah was determined to move on into the direction of African unity. In April 1958 Ghana hosted the Conference of Independent African States in Accra (Conference of Independent African States 1958). At that time, eight governments were represented: Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, and Ghana. Only a few months later, in December 1958, another international conference was held in Accra: the All-African People's Conference. This time, participation was made up of independent organizations as well as official governmental delegations. Its tone was far more radical than that of the April convention. The conference declared that, after independence, the next step toward a "Commonwealth of free African states" was regional cooperation on the basis of "geographical contiguity, economic inter-dependence, linguistic and cultural affinity" (All-African People's Conference 1958: 2). The Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union, founded in 1961, may be regarded as one such attempt to move from theory into praxis (cf. Nkrumah 1963: 142–143). However, the confederation was only short-lived and never went beyond the level of declarations and resolutions.

Another attempt toward continental unity was the creation of the Organization of African Unity, which met for its constituent assembly in Addis Ababa on May 25, 1963. Even though the initiative to form the organization stemmed from Nkrumah, this political body was far removed from a United States of Africa; it did not even represent its embryonic state. It was rather the result of a compromise between radical and more conservative forces among the independent African states. Even though its charter suggested wide-reaching continental cooperation, its actual decisive power was limited, and its member-states remained preoccupied with domestic issues.

Nevertheless, the late 1950s and early 1960s may rightfully be called a phase of African political awakening. Pan-Africanism had reached a new stage. St. Clair Drake points out the distinction between what he calls "traditional Pan-Africanism," with its emphasis on racial solidarity and a common heritage, and this new "continental Pan-Africanism" (1993), which rather sought to unite all African peoples, including Arabs, in the struggle against their common colonial oppressors.⁶

Although his focus was clearly on political rather than cultural nationalism, Nkrumah nevertheless played both strings of the Pan-African chord, and he was consequently able to integrate the diaspora into his concept of a solidarity of the oppressed. Having lived in America for ten years, he was familiar with the situation of Black people there. As St. Clair Drake writes: "Nkrumah was not prepared to see the Atlantic as any more of a

significant barrier to black unity than the Sahara” (1993: 475). In 1968, two years after he was overthrown, Nkrumah wrote a pamphlet in which he explicitly states that the struggles of Black people in the diaspora and those on the continent were of one and the same nature (Nkrumah 1968). Even during his term of office, when his Pan-African focus was more on continental affairs, he openly invited Africans from the diaspora to come to Ghana and to offer their help in the running of the country. Quite a few people followed his call.

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND GHANAIAI INDEPENDENCE: EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY

Ghana’s independence had multiple repercussions in the diaspora, and the United States in particular. To some extent, it invigorated the Pan-African drive among politically conscious African Americans. Yet, with Penny M. von Eschen (1997: 181), one could also argue that, in general, the political significance of Ghanaian independence was not sufficiently analyzed at the time. At least this aspect was not of great importance to a majority of African Americans, who were preoccupied with their struggles at home, that is, within the United States (Meriwether 2002: 159). And still, Ghana’s independence had a wide-reaching appeal, simply because it catapulted Africa back to the mental map of American Blacks:

The independence of Ghana did revolutionize the thinking of the Afro-Americans about themselves and about their place in America. Ordinary Afro-Americans, seeing toga-clad Ghanaians speaking before the United Nations and being received at the White House, started to reevaluate their relationships to Africa and took great pride in its new status. (Skinner 1993: 33)

A new preoccupation with Black authenticity, which was linked to the recognition of Africa as the *cultural* homeland of African Americans took root and found its expression in the realms of popular culture, where African-inspired clothing, hairstyle, and home-decoration became the visible icons of Black identity (Weisbord 1973). While this type of cultural nationalism took Africa as a source of inspiration, its actual point of reference undoubtedly remained in the United States. However, there was also another dimension of the new connectivity, which took a far more concrete shape—namely, the actual repatriation of diasporan Blacks to Africa and Ghana in particular, a move that was inspired by a sense of political solidarity.

The independence ceremony had already been witnessed by a large segment of African-American visitors, Martin Luther King, Jr., among them. W. E. B. Du Bois, who had been invited to join the celebrations, had been denied his passport by the U.S. authorities. When he was finally allowed to travel again, he took the chance to visit Ghana on the occasion of Nkrumah's presidential inauguration in July 1960. Then, in 1961, he and his wife, Shirley Graham Du Bois, decided to relocate in Ghana. Du Bois became Nkrumah's guest of honor, and the Ghanaian state allocated him a house and all amenities, so that he could work on the long-envisioned project of an "Encyclopedia Africana." At the end of his life he chose to leave America, the country that was so reluctant to grant equal rights to all its citizens. Eventually, Du Bois even renounced his American citizenship and officially became a Ghanaian.⁷ In a letter to the Ghanaian Minister of Interior, he explained his wish in very emotional terms:

My great-grandfather was carried away in chains from the Gulf of Guinea. I have returned so that my dust shall mingle with the dust of my forefathers. There is not much time left for me. But now, my life will flow on in the vigorous young stream of Ghanaian life, which lifts the African Personality to its proper place among men. And I shall not have lived and worked in vain. (quot. in Graham Du Bois 1971: 353)

On August 27, 1963, Du Bois died in Accra. It was the eve of the famous March on Washington, where Martin Luther King, Jr., would speak of his "dream," his vision of a just (American) society, in which Du Bois's earlier aspirations of integration without assimilation reverberated. Du Bois himself seemed to have lost his hopes that this dream could ever materialize and had opted for exile—an exile that also carried the romantic allusion of an ensuring and welcoming embrace by "Mother Africa."

Another prominent expatriate was George Padmore (originally from Trinidad) who joined Nkrumah's government in 1958, where he became the Head of the Bureau of African Affairs. Initially, Nkrumah had wanted to grant him a proper cabinet post. However, this idea was met with resistance from within the government, so that Nkrumah was forced to create the Bureau of African Affairs as an external institution. Despite those obstacles, the Bureau played a vital role in the coordination of the Pan-African conferences as well as in the collaboration with African liberation movements. Padmore did not live long enough to witness the "Year of Africa," 1960, when a great portion of the continent became independent in one great momentum. He died in 1959. Today, his tomb is situated only a few miles away from those of Nkrumah and

Du Bois. The three great figures, resembling a Pan-African troika, united in death on Ghanaian soil, are now symbolizing the high times of the movement. Their gravesites mark important stations on the newly created Pan-African map of Ghana, and they have become incorporated into the itinerary of many groups and individuals who are visiting the country.

Nkrumah had called on many of his American and London personal associates to come to Ghana. Another one of them was Ras T. Makonnen from British-Guyana. Nkrumah knew Makonnen, who had adopted his Ethiopian name in the 1930s, from the times of the Manchester Congress. When Makonnen had arrived in Ghana in 1956, shortly before independence, he soon became involved with the Bureau of African Affairs as well as with the Hotels and Tourist Corporation. In his autobiography Makonnen (1973) notes a close connection between Pan-Africanism and Zionism. This association was not merely a metaphorical one; the state of Israel became one of the biggest supporters of the young Ghanaian nation (cf. Levey 2003). For example, it sponsored the Black Star Line, Ghana's shipping company, in whose name the Garveyian dream of an eventual homecoming of Africans to their Motherland reverberated; a dream resembling Theodor Herzl's Zionist striving. Makonnen stayed in Ghana until 1966. When Nkrumah was overthrown, he was put in jail for his loyal attitude toward him. Through the personal intervention of Jomo Kenyatta, he was set free and consequently moved to Kenya, where he took a post at the Ministry of Tourism and became a Kenyan citizen.

In those early years of Ghana's independence, diasporan Africans were involved in all fields: politics, education, health, and industries. By the late 1950s Ghana had become, "a magnet for radical African Americans supporting Nkrumah's politics of nonalignment, socialism, African continental unity, and revolutionary transformation" (Gaines 1998: 140). Many of them had been actively involved in the early Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Their individual motivations to abandon that place and to become part of a different struggle may have varied. Yet what is discernable from several accounts that are available on that history (Angelou 1991; Drachler 1975; Dunbar 1968; Lacy 1970; Lewis 1999; Makonnen 1973) is a common desire to leave behind the racism and hypocrisy prevailing in the United States. Bill Sutherland, who had come to the Gold Coast as early as 1953,⁸ summarized his own motivation in clear terms: "For me to continually go to jail, get my head beaten in order to be a part of this [American way of life], I just felt that it simply wasn't worth it" (interview in Dunbar 1968: 91).

Most of the African-American expatriates, at least those whose history is known, came to Ghana to offer their help. They wanted to contribute to the experiment of the first independent African state, and they were devoted to

making it a grand success—a model to which Black people everywhere could relate. Contemporary Africa, and not solely the achievements of a distant past, should now become the focal point of Black self-esteem (cf. Williams 1961). Dr. Robert Lee, who from the mid-1950s up till today has been one of the central figures of the African-American community in Ghana, emphasized this desire to make a positive contribution, when he told me about his reasons for moving to Africa:

I came to live in Ghana not because I was running away from the US but . . . because Ghana was trying to recover from three or four centuries of traumatic experiences.... [I came] in support to the efforts made by Africans... to free themselves from the domination of other people. . . . [We] were bringing skills here. (interview 09.13.1999)

Of course, there were also African Americans who came to Ghana on U.S. government assignments or as representatives of business-corporations (cf. Obichere 1975). Other diasporans moved to the countryside, mainly to work as farmers or teachers without major political ambitions.

Yet the most visible group was that of the “revolutionist returnees,” who gathered around the African-American journalist Julian Mayfield (see Gaines 2006). According to Ronald W. Walters (1993), this group of radical political activists and intellectuals did not easily melt into the Ghanaian society but was recognized as a distinct community, characterized by its absolute identification with the Nkrumah-regime and the Pan-African ideal that it stood for. They had not forgotten the struggles of Black people in the United States. For them, this liberation struggle was of the same relevance as the continental endeavor toward independence that they had come to support. Malcolm X’s visit to Ghana, which took place in 1964 and was largely facilitated by the expatriates, must be seen as most significant in that regard. He was *their* leader and voiced *their* concerns.

Malcolm X was considered as an enemy of the state by the U.S. establishment. Nevertheless (or, one could perhaps say, accordingly) he was given a warm reception in Ghana.⁹ He offered a series of lectures, met with an international range of politicians and diplomats, addressed the Ghanaian parliament, and had a personal audience with Kwame Nkrumah, to whom he expounded his plans to take the case of Black Americans before the General Assembly of the United Nations, a step for which he sought the support of African leaders. When he spoke before a large audience at the University of Ghana, Malcolm X (1991) mobilized all his rhetorical skills to articulate the plight of Black people in America. He linked their

situation to the African experience of colonization and argued forcefully and persuasively:

I'm from America but I'm not an American. . . . I [am] one of the victims of America, one of the victims of Americanism, one of the victims of democracy. . . . [F]or the twenty million of us in America who are of African descent, [there] is not an American dream; [there is] an American nightmare. (1991: 11)

Malcolm X stated that he felt at home in Ghana. This sense of belonging was not confined by colonial/national borders but stretched out to the whole of Africa. In his speech he narrated how in Nigeria, at the University of Ibadan, he had been given a new name, *Omowale*, meaning “the child has returned/come home” in Yorùbá. He said that he felt honored and accepted by this gesture. Malcolm X’s speech was met with enthusiastic applause. Among the Marxist-oriented group of Ghanaian students who had organized this forum, the views that he had expressed were shared, or at least respected. Yet his homecoming was but a symbolic one. Back in the United States, he advocated cultural, philosophical, and psychological migration to Africa in order to establish a spiritual bond with the continent, while remaining physically in America and continuing the struggle there (Malcolm X 1975: 140).

How did the situation look for the people Malcolm X left behind in Ghana—those who had championed the physical return? In what areas were they accepted, in which ways did they remain outsiders to society? The accounts give a diversified picture, depending on the prior expectations of the returnees and on the company they chose. Most agree that they felt relief when they came to a country where they could walk the streets without harassment and where being Black was a normal state of being. Yet they also encountered many difficulties. When Maya Angelou, the African-American actress and writer, dedicated her autobiographical memoir of her time in Ghana (from 1962 to 1964) to “Julian [Mayfield] and Malcolm [X] and all the fallen ones who were passionately and earnestly looking for a home” (1991), a slight tone of non-fulfillment is discernable from those words. That they were “looking for a home” did not automatically imply that they were accepted by Ghanaians. Of course, Angelou and others found company in like-minded Ghanaians, but that did not mean that their social status was secured. Especially those who professed radical views were often regarded with suspicion and contempt by the Ghanaian environment and were consequently referred back to their own community and were thus isolated. They were perceived as strangers, and,

worse, as Americans. The racial commonality sought by many of them was not self-evident. Ronald M. Walters, himself a committed Pan-Africanist, observes that “the frustration among Black Americans was often the strongest when the rejection came from Ghanaians, because it meant . . . to affirm that which they had attempted to reject—their Americanness” (1993: 106).

The rebuff against African Americans came from different sides and had different reasons. Bill Sutherland mentioned several factors held against them. Sometimes, they were confronted with the accusation of being the “fifth column” of American imperialism or simply of being spies. There were also fears that African Americans would come with a colonizing attitude and behave like the Americo-Liberian oligarchy (interview in Dunbar 1968: 99). At the same time, Ghanaian professionals jealously observed their terrain, regarding diasporan Africans as rivals for skilled jobs. Despite Nkrumah’s call for diasporan involvement in the process of nation-building, there were no institutions that would have helped people to adjust to the unfamiliar environment. Neither were Ghanaians made sufficiently aware of the situation of Black people outside Africa. If they were in support of Pan-African ideas, the continental orientation was dominant.

However, the misunderstandings were not only the result of Ghanaian lack of interest or understanding. Priscilla Stevens Kruize, who had come to Ghana as a teacher and educationist and whom Ernest Dunbar had interviewed in the late 1960s, articulated her own sense of estrangement. While back in the United States she had closely identified with Africa and Ghana in particular, she now discovered how much her *African American* identity meant to her. Thus she explained why she had given up wearing African clothes once she had come to Ghana: “Here, you see, you lose your identity when you fit into the group. I am not for losing my identity. . . . If I put on a Ghanaian dress, I am taken for something else—a Ghanaian—and not accepted as I am” (interview in Dunbar 1968: 66–67). Her insistence on being different may be attributed to the fact that she was constantly being classified as a foreigner. The name that was given to her was not that of “the child [who] has returned”; rather, she was called *oburoni*—that is, White person, or stranger: “Nothing offensive in itself. They have no word for me. Although I’m dark, *they* think I’m light” (interview in Dunbar 1968: 61; emphasis in the original).

Most of the Black expatriates also mention experiences in which the gap between them and their hosts lost its relevance. For Bill Sutherland, it was the opportunity to be a part of the greater Pan-African activity and to work with the leaders of that movement. For Dr. Robert Lee, it was the realization that language could serve as an important communication bridge, so he began to learn. He also acknowledged that he could better relate to people of a similar

educational and professional background, so those were the people he sought as his friends and confidants. The following quote by Bill Sutherland is revealing, because it is voiced with an awareness of the many obstacles as well as the many rewards involved in the return. When asked about his advice to African Americans who would want to move to Africa, he answered:

Those who knew Richard Wright, who came seeking his own salvation in Africa, say he was putting too much of a burden on the country. One can't expect a country to solve a problem that is a personal one. If one is seeking a psychological home, then one may automatically project upon that country the home one seeks. But if it doesn't answer his need, that doesn't mean that the *country* is lacking. (interview in Dunbar 1968: 109; emphasis in the original)

However, in the late 1960s, the opportunities to work toward a better understanding between African Americans and Ghanaians became restricted, because, in February 1968, the era of close cooperation came to a halt. While Nkrumah was on a state-visit to China, the military, led by Colonel Kotoka and Major Afrifa, seized the opportunity to take control of the country (see Rooney 1988: 251). The silencing of political opponents as well as the personality cult surrounding him had led to growing discontent with his leadership among the Ghanaian population. The great promises of independence had not materialized—Ghana's economy was declining. The living conditions of the majority of the people had not improved, whereas prestigious projects were continuously being pursued.

In the period following the coup, everything that was associated with Nkrumah was demolished—from his statues to his ideas. Pan-Africanism became discredited for the time being, and no references were made to Pan-African ideas in public. The diasporans, most of whom had maintained close ties with the Nkrumah-regime, were regarded and treated with growing hostility. Consequently, the “actual skillful groups left after the coup d'états, they were all [of the] idealist type; they just didn't understand what this coup d'état business was all about . . .” (Dr. Lee, interview).

Dr. Robert Lee and his late wife Sara Lee were among the few people who stayed on. In the following years there was no significant influx of people from the diaspora into Ghana. Of course, there were exceptions. The African Hebrew Israelites, for example, established a small community in Madina, a suburb of Accra, as early as 1976. Their return was more religiously than politically motivated, and they, like some Rastafarians who also decided to resettle in Ghana, did not assume a prominent position in public (Dovlo 2002). And,

of course, there were always people who got married to Ghanaian spouses and in the process decided to make Ghana their place of residence (cf. Lake 1995).

By the mid-1980s Nkrumah became rehabilitated. The Rawlings administration¹⁰ in particular carefully recycled his image and presented itself as the legitimate heir of his ideas. By such a move the Ghanaian state hoped for a greater international visibility, since Nkrumah was still well-known and much appreciated in the diaspora. Here, and in the United States in particular, Pan-Africanism had become popular again, mainly in form of a cultural identification with Africa by many African Americans. This development can partly be attributed to the rise of an educated Black middle class as one of the major achievements of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. It is this group that has the financial and symbolic capital to develop and pursue an interest in Africa. As Remel Moore, during my fieldwork the first African-American director of the Du Bois Centre, stated:

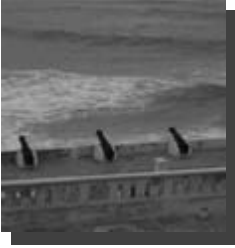
It's an evolution. I think people who are Black middle class now came from the Black under class a generation or two ago. It is their parents who talked a lot to them about their roots. And that's why they have it and now they are able to pursue that. The people who are presently in the underclass or lower class . . . in the US do not have the ability. They also don't have the time to think about these things. If your everyday thought is how I'm going to get my next piece of bread . . . feed my child . . . get transport money so that I can go down to the welfare office, then you are not thinking about going to Africa [*laughs*]. . . . It's kind of a privilege to be able to do that. (interview 12.17.1999)

And even though it is still only a minority of people who can afford to preoccupy themselves with Africa, there is nevertheless a growing awareness of African themes and symbols in the realms of Black popular culture.

Although this interest on part of the diaspora has certainly played an important role in the Nkrumah revival, there were also other reasons. In Ghana, Nkrumah's name had regained a positive evaluation after twenty years of contempt. His person and his politics were now mainly associated with the achievement of independence and symbolized African capability and self-reliance. In face of the challenges that went along with the end of the Cold War and increasing globalization in all fields, those qualities were much welcomed by the Ghanaian state.

Consequently, the government made symbolic gestures in order to confirm its claim to represent Nkrumah's legacy. A visible manifestation of the

new appreciation was the construction of the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park on the terrain of the Old Polo Ground (where the independence ceremony had taken place) and the accompanying re-interment of Nkrumah's remains in an impressive mausoleum. Accordingly, the invitation to Africans from the diaspora to come to Ghana was renewed. Even though it was mainly directed at tourists and investors, it nevertheless attracted a broad range of people, some opting for repatriation. So, by the end of the 1990s, when my fieldwork took place, the diasporan community in Ghana had once again regained its political visibility and distinction. They considerably shaped the international perception of Ghana as a destination for homecoming and took an active part in the many disputes over the proper commemoration of the slave trade that was at the heart of the whole idea of return. Ghana's forts and castles were central assets in this debate.



CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORY CAST IN STONE

REPRESENTING THE SLAVE TRADE AT GHANA'S FORTS AND CASTLES

To slap the past with a name / To bring the story to its senses / To engage
the living heat / To beat urgency out of the last gasp / The familiar con-
fessing its blank secrets // Flake them for blood / For the walls are the
dust of flesh. (Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang, "Castle Wall, wailing wall,"
in *Cape Coast Castle, A Collection of Poems*, 1996)

Ghana's coastline is dotted with the remains of European fortifications—
from Benyin in the west to Keta in the east. It is the highest concentration of
such buildings in the whole of Africa.¹ The density gives an impression of the
fierce competition among different European powers along this narrow strip
of coast (ca. 500 km) from the 1500s onward. Portuguese, Dutch, English,
Swedes, Danes, Prussians, French—all of them left their traces here, in their
insatiable quest for gold and slaves.

Today, most of those structures are in ruins; others that are still intact are
being used as lodges (Gross-Friedrichsburg), prisons (until recently, Ussher
Fort), or administrative centers (Christiansbourg Castle, the seat of Ghana's

Poetry from Opoku-Agyemang, Kwadwo, "Castle Wall, wailing wall," in *Cape Coast
Castle: A Collection of Poems*. Accra: Afram Publishers 1996, p. 67 (P.O.B. M.18,
Accra, Ghana).

government).² The visible forts and castles have been selected as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO as far back as 1979. Especially Cape Coast and Elmina Castles, which are situated only 10 kilometers apart from each other, have become famous beyond the national borders—perhaps even to a greater extent than within Ghana itself. Since independence they (together with most of the other European fortifications) have been under the custody of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) and were, for that matter, accessible to the public. Yet it was only at the beginning of the 1990s that both castles have been fully turned into museums by the Ghanaian state. By doing so, the authorities have reacted to a growing influx of tourists into the country while at the same time hoping for an increasing interest in those sites by an even greater number of visitors yet to come. African Americans in search of historical linkages to the Motherland are particularly welcomed. They appear as an important market niche in Ghana's National Tourism Development Plan (Ministry of Tourism 1996: Chapter 5; cf. Timothy & Teye 2004: 114). While it is acknowledged that this group of travelers has a specific interest in the slave trade and that (to them) the forts and castles stand as reminders of this tragic history, the buildings are at the same time regarded as "attractions" that are expected to generate a profit.

Out of this constellation arises a tension between the need for commemoration and the commercial tourism framework in which this desire is framed. As Paulla Ebron (2000) has demonstrated in her discussion of a MacDonald's-sponsored tour of African Americans to Senegal and Gambia, roots tourism as such is always implicated in a commercial framework, and the desire for commemoration and the subjective identities associated with it are themselves deeply interlinked with global capitalist culture. To her, the search for racial authenticity and commercial heritage campaigns are not opposed to each other but rather mutually constituted. Yet in the public debates surrounding the renovation of the Ghanaian slave castles, this entanglement was not acknowledged. Instead, when the restoration work at Cape Coast and Elmina Castles was in full progress (around 1993), a heated debate over adequate historical representation was started.³ This controversy had far from cooled off during the time of my initial fieldwork (1998/1999). It involved museum and tourism workers, restaurateurs, international donor agencies and foreign specialists, African Americans who had repatriated to Ghana, Ghanaian intellectuals and prominent figures, as well as short-term visitors and the U.S. media. The conflict led to the accusation that the castles had been whitewashed—and that history itself had been corrupted in the process. The intensity of the argument can be said to have shaken the proclaimed commonality with "our brothers and sisters from the diaspora" that was (and continues to be) at the core of the tourism rhetoric. It exposed the complexities and difficulties of homecoming.

In this chapter, I trace the history of this argument by discussing the multiple perspectives of local decision makers and African-American stakeholders and their Ghanaian supporters.⁴ I demonstrate how their different aspirations and representational demands evolved and how and why they either were integrated or clashed.

“THE TOURISM HEARTBEAT OF GHANA”: CAPE COAST AND THE CENTRAL REGION

On the three-hour drive from Accra to Cape Coast, the capital of Ghana’s Central Region, one comes across lush vegetation, small villages and marketplaces, and a few kilometers of palm-lined beach. Shortly before reaching the town of Cape Coast, one can spot a dilapidated but still imposing fort on a hilltop high above the sea. This is Fort Amsterdam, and the adjacent township is called Kromantse. Kromantse—the name calls into mind a history of diasporic resistance. Old sources speak of “a stout stubborn people... the *Cormantines*” (Snelgrave 1754: 168). The so-called Cormantin-Negroes formed a great portion of the *maroon* societies in Jamaica and elsewhere.⁵ However, there is not much time to take a look at the fort—the bus has already passed and continues its journey westward.

Cape Coast itself is a pleasant locality, surrounded by a gentle range of hills. It abounds with colonial architecture, even though many of the buildings are in a bad condition.⁶ Until 1877, when the capital was moved to Accra, the town was the center of the British administration in the Gold Coast, with Cape Coast Castle as the government seat. In addition, there was a lot of missionary activity in Cape Coast, resulting in a high concentration of churches as well as educational institutions. The town is still renowned for its excellent academic-track secondary schools. Thus, Cape Coasters proudly point out that former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan graduated from one of their schools (*Mfantsepim*). The school campuses, laid out on a grand scale, form a striking contrast to the poor and crowded housing conditions of the fisherfolk whose huts squeeze against the ocean front and the lagoon.

Today, the Central Region boasts of the title “tourism heartbeat of Ghana.” Not without reason: Articles on the Central Region’s many attractions dominate national and international tourism publications featuring Ghana. Over the past twenty years, many new hotels and guesthouses have sprung up to accommodate an ever growing number of visitors. Among the attractions that are advertised today are the forts and castles, the colonial buildings of Cape Coast, and Kakum National Park and canopy walkway.

The first initiative to exploit the region's tourism potential came from a group of local decision makers who were concerned with the development of their area. Toward the end of the 1980s the political climate in Ghana had stabilized, and the number of foreign arrivals to the country—mainly consisting of business travelers—had drastically increased, owing to the government's final consent to IMF/World Bank conditions, the initiation of Structural Adjustment Programs, and the resulting favorable conditions for private investors.⁷ Yet Cape Coast and its surroundings were still in a poor state. In contrast to other regions in southern Ghana, that abound in gold and timber, the Central Region cannot boast of such wealth in natural resources. Tourism appeared as a solution to achieve economic betterment for the local population.

In accordance with the newly initiated national tourism policy (1987), a scheme was developed by the Regional Administration in close cooperation with the Ghana Tourist Board. In 1989 this Tourism Development Scheme for the Central Region (TODSCER) came out with a pre-feasibility report that was meant to seek funding for the development of the region's diverse tourism potentials. To guarantee sustainability, the tourism sector was to be incorporated into a broader social and economic framework. Therefore, in 1990, the Central Region Development Commission (CEDECOM) was founded as part of an integrated development program for the region (CERIDEP). Among the areas that this objective sought to enhance were investment promotion, poverty alleviation, environmental management, and the promotion of women in development. From 1990 to 1997 the project benefited from financial support by multi-donor sources, such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), as well as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Because of its comparative advantages in terms of accessibility and investment opportunities, the Central Region seemed to be the natural candidate for such a project, if only the attractions were adequately developed and professionally promoted. So far, visitors who primarily came to see and experience the castles at Elmina and Cape Coast took a day-trip from Accra. Not much revenue was left in the towns themselves for the local population to benefit from the growing interest that others took in those sites. To overcome this situation, the idea was to convince visitors to spend more time (and money) in the region. This was to be achieved by putting up additional places of interest (Kakum Park, Brenu Beach), by hosting international cultural events such as PANAFEST and later Emancipation Day, and by encouraging investment in the hotel and restaurant sector as well as in the cultivation of local foodstuffs, the small-scale production of handicrafts, and so on. It was hoped that tourism could be turned into a key sector for the local (and, indeed, national) economy

that would, by its very nature, pull other sectors such as agriculture along. Not mass-scale tourism, with its problematic and sometimes even devastating environmental and social consequences (Urry 1995: 133) was envisioned, but rather high-quality niche-market tourism, with a focus on (historical) heritage, (traditional) culture, and ecology (Ministry of Tourism 1996: 118).⁸

By adopting this particular focus, the Ghanaian authorities have followed a common trend in international tourism development, where cultural tourism is gaining more and more importance (Boniface 1995; Nuryanti 1996; Swarbrooke 1994). The Central Region in particular could boast of a “product mix” (O. Akyeampong 1996: 111) that was thought to be able to satisfy the demands of that specific market. Even though African Americans were singled out as a special interest group in relation to the castles and forts and the associated history of slavery, those historic sites were meant to attract visitors from all kinds of backgrounds, according to their status as UNESCO *world heritage* sites. The castles were thus treated as part of a tourism package, or, in other words, regarded as the “trump cards in the region’s tourism arsenal” (*ibid.*: 100).

Several international agencies were approached to assist in the project. Conservation International (CI) helped in the design and management of Kakum National Park. Other agents became involved in the restoration of three selected forts and castles, namely, Cape Coast Castle, St. George’s



FIGURE 4.1 Tourist posing for a photograph, Elmina Castle, 2002.

Castle in Elmina, and Fort St. Jago, also in Elmina. Those were the Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities (MUCIA), the United States branch of International Council on Monuments and Sites (US/ICOMOS), and the Washington D.C.-based Smithsonian Institution. Together with Ghanaian experts (architects, museum officials, archaeologists) they started a multimillion-dollar conservation program (Buckley 1995; Sly 1995) that included the setup of a new museum to replace the old Museum of West African History inside Cape Coast Castle. In the course of the restoration work, the corrugated iron sheets of the three selected fortifications were replaced with red roof-tiles and the walls were whitewashed. At Cape Coast Castle, the decision was taken to remove structural alterations that were regarded as inappropriate additions with no relevance to the “original History of the Castle” (AM 59/119). Among these were the former customs office at the southern bastion, by then close to collapsing, as well as the cells and officers’ accommodations that had been added to form part of Cape Coast Prison inside the castle. To make the site more attractive and to provide tourists with



FIGURE 4.2 Outside Cape Coast Castle, 2002.



FIGURE 4.3 Courtyard of Elmina Castle, 2002.

an opportunity to rest and take refreshments, a private proprietor was encouraged to operate an ocean-view drinking spot/restaurant in the premises of the castle (AM 59/173). Flowerpots were arranged in the courtyards.

Comparing photographs of the castles taken before and after the restoration, the contrast is striking. On older photographs, the bastions look dark and gloomy, and these images seem to suggest the possibility that the structures might eventually crumble down and be eaten up by the sea. The pictures of the buildings shortly after the reconstruction give a different impression. The perfection of the architecture comes into view. The two castles look especially lofty and much more separated from their surroundings than they did before the project. Above all, they appear beautiful. It was this sense of beautification that triggered the whitewashing controversy. The representational dilemma that occurred in the wake of the restoration effort was not unique to the slave forts and castles in Ghana. Liliane Weissberg cites the case of Auschwitz-Birkenau, where similar questions have arisen: “Should [it] be refurbished? Should [it] be left to decline . . .? . . . How can the monument be preserved for a flourishing tourist industry?” (1999: 49).

Weissberg points at the dilemma of preservation, commemoration, and the “consumerism of trauma” (Sturken 2007: 4) that pertains at sites of violence and suffering. However, the whitewashing debate evolved not only around the question of whether or not the buildings should be preserved or left to decay. It rather

centered on the role of the slave trade in the contemporary lives of Ghanaians and diasporans, respectively. Whereas most of the former preferred to suppress the public memory of the slave trade (Akyeampong 2001; Argenti 2007; Holsey 2008; cf. also Piot 1999; Shaw 2002), the slave trade and its commemoration were central themes in the identity politics of the diasporans who came to Ghana.⁹

This conflict had a predecessor, to which I now turn. My discussion provides a better understanding of the struggle for control over the representation of history that was at the heart of the later debate.

FORT AMSTERDAM: THE FIRST BATTLE

It was by far not only Ghanaians who were aware of the castles' significance as historical monuments. As early as 1972 the "African Descendants Association Foundation" (ADAF) agreed with the Ghana Lands Department on the lease of the aforementioned Fort Amsterdam for a period of twenty-five years. This organization mainly comprised African Americans, some of them living in Ghana, others supporting it from abroad. Some Ghanaians, among them Nana A. E. Mensah, "Regent of Abandzi" (AM 27/2; 08.13.1973), were board members of the foundation. ADAF's plan was to restore the fort and to turn it into a memorial to the slave trade and the Africans' suffering and resistance. It should serve as a "Mecca for returning African Descendants" and was meant to "encourage African pilgrimages" (AM 27/3/82). The project was supported by the former U.S. ambassador to Ghana, Mr. Franklin Williams, and spearheaded by Dr. Robert Lee, who became the president of the foundation.

Dr. Lee, who was born in South Carolina, had come to Ghana when the country was experiencing its awakening from colonial domination. He was a friend of W. E. B. Du Bois and Kwame Nkrumah, both of whom he had met at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. In contrast to many of his African-American contemporaries who had made the initial move to independent Ghana, he had stayed on ever since—even after the political climate had changed so dramatically after Nkrumah's overthrow when the official enthusiasm for a diasporan involvement in Ghanaian state and social affairs had dwindled. Dr. Lee was convinced that African Americans should offer their skills to help in the development of the continent. Thus in 1999, when he was in his late seventies, he still operated his own dental practice in Accra. To him, the presence of the slave forts along Ghana's coastline served as a strong reminder of the fact that African Americans did actually come from this continent. It proved that there was a connection as well as a mutual responsibility: "This is why we, a small group of Africans [from the diaspora] living here . . . took on a slave fort as a symbol of that historical fact,

that we, the former slaves, would come back on this continent and restore a slave fort, [that] would in itself be significant” (interview 09.13.1999). Partly in order to raise funds for the restoration, the ADAF-group put on commemorative programs at the fort, such as a funeral service for the late Louis Armstrong, who is said to have traced his roots to Cormantin origins. The original proposal included an annual International African Festival of Arts to take place at Kromantse, as well as the creation of a library at the fort (AM 27/2; 02.08.1972).

Shortly after the agreement was signed, objections against ADAF’s involvement were raised by different agents. Especially the then Commissioner for Education, Colonel P. K. Nkegbe, expressed his misgivings about the lease. It was said that the term of the lease was too long; that the government was negotiating for a grant from UNESCO to recondition all the forts, and a lease to ADAF would not be in consonance with such plans; that neither the Commission for Education nor the Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) as the national custodian of all monuments in Ghana had been involved in the project; and that “before the lease processes were completed ADAF had widely publicized the fact that it had acquired the fort very much to the embarrassment of the Board as it alienated the feelings of a number of organisations that had contributed to the renovation of the fort” (AM 27/2, 08.13.1973).



FIGURE 4.4 Caretaker of Fort Amsterdam explaining history. ADAF plaque in the background, 2002.

The last two points are especially important, because they give a clear indication of the government's position toward the forts and castles at the time.¹⁰ On the one hand, the government attempted to fully control the sites and the historical representations associated with it. Eventual profits were to be shared with the respective Ghanaian institutions—a condition that, according to the files, was not met by ADAF (AM 27/2; 07.02.1973). A handwritten draft on the future relations between the GMMB and ADAF states that “the activities in the castle should be supervised by an employee of the GMMB. For example, he has to take visitors around the castle and tell him the history.... This history has to be presented as objectively as possible” (AM 27/2, n.d.). However, despite this insistence on control, the autonomy of the Ghanaian state was also limited, because the “objective presentation” had to take place in such a way so as not to irritate or discourage potential foreign donors. In case of Fort Amsterdam, it was the Dutch embassy who remonstrated against the African-American presence at the fort. During an interview in 1999, Professor Richard Nunoo, between 1961 and 1974 director of the GMMB, recalled the situation: “They felt that we were taking the money from them and then giving it to the Black Americans to use the fort. They didn't like it at all. But how much money did they give anyway? Small amounts!” (interview 10.06.1999). Yet it was not just the donations toward the reconstruction of the forts and castles that were at stake; it was also feared that ADAF could affront European and White American investors and development agents.¹¹

The provocative and accusatory manner in which ADAF addressed the topics of slavery and the European as well as African involvement in the slave trade did not conform to the appeasing and downplaying tone chosen by the Ghanaian government. The African American and Ghanaian representatives of ADAF perceived the history of the slave trade to be pressing and still unresolved. Who had profited from it? Who collaborated? What were the consequences for today? “We want to ask those questions! And we want to ask it from the headquarters [that is, the Ghanaian state] so that they hear well what is true!” (Dr. Lee interview 09.13.1999). The truth as told by the returning descendants of the slaves would differ from the stories of the former masters. In Lee's words,

The Europeans . . . profited from the slave trade. They will tell that story . . . how they themselves ended slavery. They will tell you that story . . . [*laughs*]. They won't tell you that they were the ones [who] maintained it, their own internal frictions and struggle with each other is what ended the slave trade. Not any Wilberforce,^[12] rather the economic situation at the time made it necessary to stop it!

Since the first appearance of Eric Williams's (1964) influential study on capitalism and slavery in 1944, such an understanding of the internal dynamics of the slave trade and its abolition has certainly gained acceptance among Black and White historians alike.¹³ Nevertheless, in the early 1970s, the topic was not as much discussed as today. In addition, the Quakers' genuine humanitarianism still appears as the major reason for abolition in the mainstream media—if the issue of the slave trade is taken up at all.¹⁴ ADAF felt that it was time to correct this public image and that a former slave fort in Ghana would be the right place to do so. Diplomacy or a consideration of other sensibilities and views were not its major objective.

In contrast, both the Ghanaian government and the Dutch government were more concerned with wrapping up of the tragedies of the past. To them, the fort (together with all the others) should be maintained as a monument and should serve as a reminder of the early European presence on the West African coast. The commemoration of that presence, however, should not be reduced to the slave trade but rather should encompass a broader trading relationship that could be interpreted as a sound foundation for a new partnership—without challenging the status quo.¹⁵ The plaque that was presented by the municipality of Amsterdam simply reads: “Restoration Fort Amsterdam, 1970–72/Ghana Museums and Monuments Board/With Donations from the Netherland/In Memory of the Historical Ties Between Ghana and the Netherlands.”

The two positions could not be reconciled. On 5 February 1973, the abrogation of the contract was announced in a letter to Dr. Lee, including the order that any “activities should cease forthwith” (AM 27/2; 05.02.1973). A few more meetings were held between representatives of ADAF and the GMMB, attempting to renew the lease on mutually agreeable terms (AM 27/2; 08.13.1973). But the enthusiasm for the project was broken, and nothing came out of these discussions. Years later, in 1986, the remaining funds¹⁶ were donated to the Du Bois Memorial Centre for Pan-African Culture.

“THE SPIRITS CALLED US:” EXPERIENCING THE DUNGEONS

Almost twenty years after the first ADAF initiative, a new generation of politically active African Americans came to consider Ghana as their new home. They formed a loose network of people who became actively involved in the debate over the “whitewashing” of the castles.

Starting from 1986, in the wake of growing political stability under the Rawlings regime, a group of African Americans around Rabbi Kohain Halevi, the spiritual leader of the Bereshith Cultural Institute, an organization of the Black Hebrew Israelites in New York City,¹⁷ had come on regular “pilgrimage

excursions” (Rabbi Kohain, interview 02.09.1999) to Ghana and other West African countries. The group soon established firm contacts with such people as Dr. Lee and other diasporans who were already living in Ghana at the time. Out of those linkages arose the desire in some of the participants, including Rabbi Kohain, to settle in Ghana. When I asked him about the reasons for his decision, Nana Okofo, whose wife Imahküš had been on the first trip and had encouraged him to go and see the place for himself, answered: “I didn’t choose Ghana, Ghana chose me. The spirits.... The spirits called us to Ghana—to do the work” (interview 05.09.1999).¹⁸

The spiritual encounter that he was referring to took place inside the dungeons of Cape Coast Castle. At the time of the first trips, only very few people had come down here during the many years that the castle had served different purposes:

So the stench and the musk and the dampness were still . . . prevalent there, almost the voices were still there. We had all the lights cut out . . . and we stood still. And in silence you began to [hear] one by one sniffing. We could not see each other but the tears began to come on their own in terms of what had reached and grabbed us inside of those dungeons. . . . We had people who almost had nervous breakdowns because the emotional dynamic was so charged and so heavy that it was awesome. (Rabbi Kohain, 05.09.1999)

What had triggered this strong emotional response? Apparently it was the fact that the dungeons seemed untouched that enhanced their authentic appearance—to an extent that the imagined ancestral presence became almost a physical reality. By the late 1980s none of the renovation work had been carried out. The castle walls were dank and dark. On the one hand, their gloomy appearance suggested neglect and decay. On the other hand, it insinuated their centuries-long resistance against the assault of the sea and thereby accentuated their imposing reality.

As David Lowenthal (1985) has demonstrated in his magisterial study of modern society’s preoccupation with “the past [as] a foreign country,” the mere look of age can already serve as a powerful stimulus for the evocation of conflicting sentiments among the viewers of a particular site or object. In his discussion, he states that the possible reaction to the look of age varies between repulsion and appreciation: Repulsion for being reminded of the transience of life alternates with the aesthetic appreciation of patina. Lowenthal argues that “mouldering relics [suggest] a past beyond reach” (*ibid.*: 182). To him, their fascination arises from a melancholic sense of eternal loss in

the viewer. What he has in mind is the nostalgic appropriation of the past that is so characteristic of the modern heritage industry (see Ashworth and Larkham 1994; Corner and Harvey 1991; Handler and Gable 1997; Hewison 1987; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Lowenthal 1994; Urry 1990; Welsh 1992). It is a process whereby the past is made digestible—placed at a distance, yet ready for easy consumption.

The experience that was narrated by Rabbi Kohain only partly fits into this interpretative framework. To him as well as the members of his group, the castle's and dungeons' apparent antiquity (highlighted by their seemingly unaltered state) proved that the slave trade had actually taken place and that it had lasted for centuries. In that sense the building's presence confirmed a historical truth that was constitutive for the tour members' identity as descendants of those slaves who might have passed through here. This connection did not need to be confirmed by the proof of a genealogical link (which would also have been constructed, and therefore imaginary, anyway, cf. Moore 1994; Nash 2002). Not so much the personal family history of the participants was relevant at this moment, but rather a broader notion of collective identity. To them, the slavery past was neither remote nor secluded from their present-day reality. On the contrary, it formed a vital part of their self-understanding as belonging to a larger community of Black people. The history of the slave trade and slavery explained the roots of racial discrimination, but it also spoke of resistance and survival (Fields 1990).

Rabbi Kohain's vivid recall of his experience inside the dungeons makes clear that it was not just their sheer existence or the mere fact that they "looked old" which provoked the participants' intense and forceful reactions. What he described was a ceremonial act, which unfolded its powerful effect in concert with the physical environment in which it took place. It was a combination of concrete sensual perceptions with images stemming from a collective memory of slavery (see Diedrich, Gates, & Pedersen 1999; Finley 2004; Morrison 1993), which led to the emotional appeal of that first encounter. It created a unique experience that nevertheless rested on "a common narrative and particular [previously known] symbolic expressions" (Bajc 2006: 9). In that particular place and moment, the commemorative ceremony (stepping down, cutting off the lights, holding hands in silent reverence) forged the group's unity and identity as descendants—or rather, in their understanding, as ascendants (Dillard 2002; James 1994)—of the slaves.

This interpretation is in line with Paul Connerton's (1989) understanding of the workings of social memory. In his study *How Societies Remember* he demonstrates how such ceremonies create a shared commemorative space and how an extraordinary experience is thereby generated among the members

of a particular community. He writes that “images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past . . . are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances” (*ibid.*: 3–4). For Connerton, such performative memory is indispensable for the legitimization of any social order or collective identity. To him, the dimensions of *embodiment* and *enactment* account for the continuation and the regeneration of collective memories within a group. Moreover, each individual’s experience or memory is embedded in a social framework, which determines its concrete shape and significance (cf. Halbwachs 1925).¹⁹ At the same time, those social relations are reconstructed, renewed, and sustained in each commemorative performance or ritual act.²⁰

In case of the experiences recalled by Rabbi Kohain and Nana Okofo the importance of embodiment for the commemorative purpose becomes particularly evident. The ceremonial event derived part of its power from the respondents’ physical reaction to the extreme conditions that were prevalent inside the dungeons at the time of their visit. Darkness, mould, repulsive smells—together, all these gave rise to a sense of immediacy, which created an emotional response through the physical identification with the slaves’ suffering. It directly connected the people to images standing symbolically for the collective trauma of slavery; it was part of an African-American “postmemory” that, according to Marianne Hirsch, “consists not of events but of representations” (2001: 8). Hirsch writes about second-generation Holocaust survivors, yet her conception of postmemory is very helpful for understanding Black subject formation in the face of slavery: “Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through projection, investment, and creation” (Hirsch, quot. in Keizer 2004: 6).

Ron Eyerman (2001) also emphasizes the central role of representations in what he calls the “cultural trauma” of slavery, which he regards as one of the main features of communal identity among African Americans. In his view, slavery constitutes the “primal scene” of contemporary African-American identity. It “must be recollected by later generations who have had no experience of the ‘original’ event yet continue to be identified by it and to identify themselves through it” (*ibid.*: 15; cf. Schramm 2009). This means that it was not slavery in itself, which was traumatic for African Americans as a group, but rather its memory in the face of segregation and oppression that had followed the hopeful periods of emancipation and reconstruction.²¹ For Rabbi Kohain and the members of his tour, their visit to the dungeons entailed a chance to overcome this trauma through a process of ritual healing that could be started here, where the traces of the past were most visible. At the same time, the very act of commemoration also (re)produced the trauma as it fed into the imaginary representational reservoir that constituted it.

Therefore, any such healing could only be partial—as Saydia Hartman comments on her own experience: “Inside the dungeon, there were remains but no stories that could resurrect the dead except the stories I invented” (2007: 116). To her, the Cape Coast Castle dungeons resembled “the belly of the beast” (*ibid.*: 112) and spoke of the gluttony of power that characterized the slave trade. They also manifested the ultimate break between past and present that the slave trade had caused—leaving only waste and emptiness.

Hartman describes the horror with which she reacted to the materiality of the dungeons: “The only part of my past that I could put my hands on was the filth from which I recoiled, layers of organic material pressed hard against a stone floor” (*ibid.*: 115). Her reaction, just like that of Rabbi Kohain and his group, needs to be understood in connection with the representations that have shaped our present understanding of the slave trade. Slave songs and narratives, but also the technical drawings of the slave ships’ holding space, where one Black body is squeezed next to another: human beings reduced to chattel that needs to be efficiently stored so as to generate maximal profits. Another such resource can be found in eyewitness accounts of the slave trade, especially the ones written in the wake of the abolitionist movement. From those descriptions we learn of the unbearable conditions that the slaves had to endure inside the dungeons and, worse still, during the Middle Passage. Only a few of those accounts stem from Africans themselves (see Handler 2002). An outstanding exception is the short narrative of Ottobah Cugoano, who was imprisoned inside the Cape Coast Castle dungeons before he was eventually brought to America. He recapitulates this childhood experience as follows:

I saw many of my miserable countrymen chained two and two, some hand-cuffed. . . . I was soon conducted to a prison . . . where I heard the groans and cries of many. . . . When a vessel arrived to conduct us away to the ship, it was a most horrible scene; there was nothing to be heard but the rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and the groans and cries of our fellow-men. (2000 [1787]: 123–124)

To the participants of the initial tour, these voices seemed to have been conserved by the silence that had reigned inside the dungeons over the many years of neglect. Now, the imagined sounds forced themselves onto the tour members’ minds. Moreover, the rotten smells of mucus and decay, which surrounded the group during their first visit, also served as a stalwart imaginary stimulus. They resonated with the descriptions to be found in the abolitionists’ reports, such as that of Alexander Falconbridge, who worked as a surgeon on

one of the slave ships. In 1788 he related the conditions aboard the ship on which he worked as a surgeon:

I frequently went down among them, till at length their apartments became so extremely hot, as to be only sufferable for a very short time. . . . The deck . . . was so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux, that it resembled a slaughter-house. It is not in the power of the human imagination, to picture to itself a situation more dreadful and disgusting. (1973 [1788]: 25; cf. Newton 1962 [1788]: 110; Wadstrom 1789: 28–29)

The sickening stink inside the vaults is among the most powerful and notable sensations described by eyewitnesses. Olaudah Equiano, who, according to his famous autobiography of 1789, had been captured by slave raiders when he was a child and had to face the Middle Passage and subsequent slavery, recalls the conditions aboard as follows: “Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This and the stench of the necessary tubs carried off many” (1969: 30).

Smells (and bad smells in particular) produce profound effects within humans. Thus, in their cultural history of smell, *Aroma*, Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott describe the “stench of Auschwitz” (1994: 173) as a kind of olfactory torture that contributed to the utter humiliation and dehumanization of the prisoners. In a similar vein, the tight packing of the slaves and the inadequate hygienic facilities perversely confirmed the half-human status ascribed to the slaves on part of the trade’s profiteers. This denial of the slaves’ humanity, and the racism to which it is intrinsically linked, is probably the most painful legacy of the slave trade.

For those descendants of the slaves who came to visit the dungeons, it was at the same time important and distressing to recall their ancestors’ anguish. Even though during the time of the group’s first visit, the putrid odors inside the dungeons might have poured out from recent mould that had settled on the damp walls, their effect was nevertheless striking. The stench did not have to be original in order to work. The fact that it was disturbing and unpleasant was enough to generate an authentic experience—it created an appropriate atmosphere for the commemorative purpose of the visit. As David Howes has argued, olfaction is intrinsically linked to moments of ritual transition. The burning of incense, for example, creates “an ‘intersubjective we-feeling’ among the participants in a rite as each is forced to introject particles of the odour. One cannot not participate in the effervescence (or fellow-feeling)

of the situation, because it participates in *you*" (1991: 134; emphasis in the original). If the burning of incense, as an intentional act, can already create such intensity, the inescapability of the stench inside the dungeons only increases the emotional effect. Above all, it invigorated the tour members' memory of slavery as the most important trope of their collective identity. Through the smell, they could identify their own experience with the (imagined) experience of the slaves.

Trygg Engen writes: "Odors . . . stimulate memory; they do not cause any other reactions by themselves. When one feels sick in the presence of an odor, it is not because of the odor itself but because of its association with previous sickness" (1991: 120). His conclusion serves well to explain the great intensity associated with olfactory sensation. Whereas his approach mainly refers to the connection between odor and personalized memory, I have attempted to demonstrate that it is yet possible to move a step farther and to take into account the importance of olfactory stimulus in the collective commemoration of a more remote past. It served to forge the group together in the present; it affirmed their diasporan identity.

The above-described experience inside the dungeons was extraordinary and therefore could not have been repeated in all its depths by any of the participants. Nevertheless, it became the standard against which any future visit would have to be measured. Especially those people who decided to repatriate to Ghana wanted to make sure that others would be able to partake in the commemorative space that the dungeons had offered to them during that first encounter. Therefore, they wanted to have a say in the planning of the castle's and the dungeons' future.

WORKING TOGETHER? AFRICAN-AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESTORATION EFFORT AT CAPE COAST CASTLE

In August 1990 a letter reached the Museums and Monuments Board, regarding "Tourism at the Cape Coast Castle" (AM 59/162A). By then, none of the actual restoration work had started. The letter was signed by the Okofos, who at that time still used their American name, Robinson. They had finally relocated to Cape Coast from New York City and had started their new life by building up a business as travel agents (see Okofo 1999). In their letter, they request a small office space inside Cape Coast Castle to enable them to have first-hand contact with all groups visiting there. They claim that a joint effort would be needed to ensure the preservation and restoration of Cape Coast Castle. In their eyes, preservation would be necessary in order to "move forward diligently to secure and maintain our history." This goal would have

to be achieved by “whatever means necessary.” In addition, they promise a fund-raising campaign throughout the United States. The whole letter combines a keen interest in tourism development with a desire to “re-educate the returning descendants of our ancestry.”

At this initial stage, the request was given a positive reception by the authorities of the GMMB. In preliminary discussions between the Okofos and the board it was agreed that the couple would submit a detailed proposal of intent and that feasibility studies would be conducted by them as well as by the Ghanaian partners (AM 59/162). Two years later, Imahküo Okofo sent her proposal on “The Cape Coast Castle—The Monument to the African Experience” (AM 59/1-4) to the National Commission on Culture. This document is far more explicit than the previous letter. It includes a lengthy explication of the importance of the castle as the “last ground of Africa the [tens of thousands of enslaved Black Pilgrims to the New World] would ever know.” According to Imahküo Okofo, the story of the “holocaust that befell African people and the fall of its empire,” calls for recognition and exposition in a manner that would bring to light the *truth* of history.

This emphasis on truth can be said to constitute a cornerstone of the entire discursive field that makes up the imagination and praxis of homecoming. Its rhetoric derives from academic Afrocentrism and its emphasis on a uniquely Black or African form of knowledge production, superior to its Western counterpart (cf. Reinhardt 2008). The particular formulation, which was chosen by Imahküo Okofo, resembles the argumentation that had once been advanced by ADAF with regard to the historical representation of Fort Amsterdam. In both cases, the understanding of truth is ultimately linked to the perspective of the descendants of the enslaved, which is presented as a homogeneous one. In the Afrocentric logic, their story continues to be suppressed and silenced by the (White) hegemonic discourse; it therefore becomes necessary to bring this story out and make it visible and audible again. To commemorate past atrocities (such as slavery) would also serve to point out present-day injustice (such as racial discrimination). The conviction behind this rhetoric of truth is that of a basic core to all history, with fixed roles ascribed to the actors: slave vs. master, Black vs. White, good vs. evil. Such an essentialist conception of truth inverts the Manichean allegory of colonialist oppression, whereby racial difference is transformed into moral and metaphysical difference, with no means of traversing the firmly set boundaries of racial “character.” However, this inversion does not necessarily lead to a *subversion* of colonialist stereotypes, since the foundations of racial classification remain intact.

In the heated debate about the meaning and representation of the castles and the history of the slave trade in general that evolved throughout the 1990s,

the assertion of a strict opposition between Black and White perspectives on history was among the most contested issues. At this early stage, however, the conflict had not yet surfaced, and what dominated the discussions between Ghanaian officials and the African-American pressure group was a mutual concern with the future fate of the castle.

To Imahküis Okofo and her supporters, Cape Coast Castle was an appropriate venue to fulfill the task of historic enlightenment. The physical reality of its slave dungeons was undeniable. Therefore, the castle should serve as a focal point to “bridge the gap between our brothers and sisters at home and abroad” (AM 59/1-4). In view of the ongoing tourism drive in the Central Region, the proposal cautions its addressees not to miss a unique chance to develop Cape Coast Castle into a “true and meaningful memorial to our forefathers and Mothers.”

Among the concrete measures suggested in the document is the design of a new museum to replace the poorly furnished Museum of West African History. This exhibition should consist of one room containing African artifacts and another one devoted to the history of the slave trade, where pictures, slave memorabilia, chains, and so on should be put on display. The manifold contributions made by Africans and their descendants to the development of the United States and Europe were to feature in a separate area. The letter further suggests that rooms such as the Governor’s Quarters “should have replicas of the furnishings of that era to give a more authentic feel to what the Tourists will be viewing. It is difficult to visualize, in an empty room, what the surroundings were like.”

The proposal was once again received almost enthusiastically by the GMMB. In his reply to the GMMB head office, the Cape Coast Castle keeper confirms that it was “sound in many respects and fall[ing] in line with Cape Coast office’s programme” (AM 59/4/1). He also mentions a few setbacks that had hindered the realization so far: lack of material and information on slavery in the New World as well as the problem of adequate funding. CEDECOM’s attempts to attract foreign and local tourists are explicitly mentioned as a way to overcome these financial problems. Imahküis Okofo is portrayed as a person who was fit to solicit funds from “philanthropic organisations in the US” as well as to assist in the procuring of important historical documents from sources outside Ghana.

However, the Ghanaian authorities did not solely rely on the Okofos and other African Americans in their attempts to secure funding for the renovation work. In their pragmatic approach, money and assistance were welcomed from various sources, not restricted to people of African descent. Their priority was with protecting and stabilizing the fabric of the building while at

the same time developing the castle into a first-class tourist attraction. With an eye on the envisioned range of audiences from all kinds of backgrounds (Ghanaian, diasporan, European) Ghanaian museum experts regarded slavery as but one among the many aspects of the castle's turbulent history that ought to be presented to the visitors. The first letter by the Okofos suggested that they would share the view of the castle as a great tourism asset. However, the rhetoric of truth, as it was later advanced by the Okofos and other repatriated African Americans in a vehement manner, spoke of perpetrators and victims, ongoing guilt and the need for reparations.

Such a focus would eventually prove to be too politically and emotionally charged to fit into the conservationists' bureaucratic perspective.²² They rather viewed the castle through the lens of monumental time-scope (Herzfeld 1991), whereby history is perceived as a succession of exactly measurable and well-enclosed periods, thereby firmly separating the past from the present. This approach, which is common among museum workers who operate in the context of national cultural policies, presupposes that the relics of the past constitute a value in and of themselves (cf. Lowenthal 1985: 389). In the resulting process of reification, an anonymous archaeological site is produced, which may then be gazed on and consumed by tourists and other viewers.

In his book *A Place in History* (1991), where he introduces the term "monumental time-scope," Michael Herzfeld discusses the conflicts around a rigid conservation program in the Cretan town of Old Rethymnos. In his example, the struggle over representation took place between local residents, to whom the town designated their unique social space and time, and the conservationists and bureaucrats, with their distinct preference for maintaining old buildings and their disregard for the particularistic interests of their residents. In case of the slave castles, however, it was not an understanding of social time, with all its lived-out ambivalence, which provided the framework for the growing opposition against the renovation. What the protesters sought was a different "official history," even less arbitrary than the one endorsed by the representatives of the Ghanaian state and the heritage industry's bureaucratic machinery. Though by no means neutral or anonymous, this alternative perspective on history surely entailed a strongly developed sense of monumentalism.

Finally, there was one more reason for the Ghanaian reliance on international, that is, "White" donor agencies, namely, the fact that the flow of money from diasporan sources was rather slow: "Since we started with this project here, people like Brother Farrakhan, Isaac Hayes, they've all come, they all promised to try to raise money to restore the forts and castles—nothing" (interview with GMMB official, 01.18.1999). Such disappointment

is understandable, yet it should not lead to the conclusion that there is generally a lack of will on the part of African Americans. Thus, for instance, in November 1996 there was a renewed attempt by ADAF to extend the lease of Fort Amsterdam (AM 27/63; AM 27/72). However, despite the fact that the ADAF-proposal was at first considered a “golden chance” (handwritten note, AM 27/86), it was rejected almost two years later in March 1998, on the grounds of “the previous experience on the Dixcove Fort” (AM 27/94). At that fort, there had been a conflict with a European mining company, Brem-Taylor Ltd., over its usage (AM 30/2/23-131). The company had leased the fort and had used it as office space without adhering to the conditions that had been laid down in the leasing contract. The fact that ADAF’s proposal was regarded in the same light as that of a European businessman who had no interest in the historical significance and preservation of the fort under consideration throws an interesting light on the GMMB’s position. Their major concern was with retaining control over the forts and castles. They didn’t want any trouble—be it in terms of fraudulent contract partners or in terms of provocative political actions.

Another example concerning African-American investment in the forts and castles is that of the well-known American singer Isaac Hayes, who had promised a financial commitment toward the renovation of Cape Coast Castle when he first visited the dungeons in 1992 (AM 59/AM 49/5). However, the GMMB never received the money—a fact that led to bitter comments from museum workers. However, a great amount of money benefited the village of Ada, where the pro-Scientology Isaac Hayes Foundation has built a super-modern school, the Ada Technological Center of Excellence—Neko Tech. That Hayes changed his mind may be attributed to his acquaintance with the Ada royal family. Hayes was enstooled as *nkosohene* (development chief) in the village of Ada under the name of Nene Katey Ocansey I. This honorary ceremony offered a far more personal access to that particular place and its people than the negotiations with museum workers and state officials in Cape Coast over financial contributions toward the renovation could have generated. Again, the GMMB insisted on having full control over the ways that the money would be spent, whereas the building of the technology center remained Hayes’s personal project and functioned well in terms of self-publicity.

All in all, many different factors have contributed to the cooperation of the GMMB with the international donor agencies that I have mentioned above. In contrast to the 1970s, when Fort Amsterdam was left to decay without anybody taking the responsibility for further refurbishment, Elmina and Cape Coast Castles witnessed an enormous restoration effort as a result of this joint venture. Now, however, the measures that were taken provoked a

heated public debate that touched on questions of memory, representation, and ownership.

**“STOP THE DESECRATION OF THE CASTLES:”
THE WHITEWASHING DEBATE**

In an article that appeared in the journal *Uhuru* in 1994, Imahküsi Okofo (then Robinson) comments on the recent renovations of Elmina and Cape Coast Castles: “Here I am today witnessing the ‘White Wash’ of African History. But I cannot sit in idleness and watch this happen without sounding an alarm. . . . Restore, preserve, renovate, maintain? Exactly what is being done?” (quot. in Bruner 1996: 294). Her concerns about the damage of the castles through the tourism marketing were widely publicized in the media (see Buckley 1995), as well as taken up in a number of academic articles (see Bruner 1996; Finley 2001, 2004; Kreamer 2006; MacGonagle 2006; Richards 2005). Here, the African-American desire to remember the slave trade was often contrasted with a Ghanaian tendency to commercialize and at the same time forget it—a dynamic that I also sensed during my fieldwork. However, zooming in at the concrete interactions on the spot in Ghana, a more complex picture emerges that invites further elaboration.

Thus, it was not only African Americans who raised protests against the “whitewashing”—Ghanaians, too, objected to the new layout of the castles. Already in 1993 one of Ghana’s most prominent and internationally renowned artists, Kofi Ghanaba, issued an article in the *Ghanaian Times* concerning what he called the “desecration” of Cape Coast Castle. In it, he recalls his experience during the shooting of Haile Gerima’s film “*Sankofa*” inside the Cape Coast dungeons in 1990. He writes of an incident when the cameras refused to work and he, Ghanaba, poured libation to the departed ancestors: “We are here NOT to tease you . . . NOT TO DISTURB YOU . . . but to record what you went through and to tell your untold story to the world. . . . WE ARE NOT HERE TO MOCK AT YOUR PAIN” (Ghanaba 1993; emphasis in the original). In his article, Ghanaba points out that he and the film team had shown respect to the ancestors who had perished during the slave trade. Now, however, this respect was lacking. Ghanaba castigates the developments at the castle, where the restaurant was selling alcohol and playing loud music while “shoddily dressed tourists tramp around . . . laughing at us.” How could Ghana call on people of African descent to come and visit only to let them face this “national disgrace?” A place that should invite solemn meditation and reverence was degenerating into a “garish circus ground,” owing to the staging of musical performances during PANAFEST

(see Chapter Eight). In his eyes, commercialization had taken over—and in fact killed—commemoration.

A couple of weeks after the article had been published, an order was issued by the National Development Planning Commission to the GMMB, requesting the proprietor of the restaurant to cease operations at the castle immediately (AM 59/25). The owner was given a week's notice to wind up his business (AM 59/32). This decision was not taken in good faith by the regional office of the Ghana Tourist Board, who felt that a restaurant was important for the tourists to take some refreshments after the tour and have time to reflect on their impressions. However, their "voices were not heard," as one of the museum workers complained to me.²³

In a letter to the GMMB, a Cape Coast resident also expressed his disagreement with the decision. Just like Ghanaba does in his article, when he speaks of "some of us [who] are very sensitive and aware of our precious heritage," the writer of the petition employs a notion of "our heritage" as an argument in favor of the restaurant. In his eyes, there exists a specific manner in which Ghanaians show grief: "When we are happy, we pour libation and make merry with soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. In times of grief and sadness too we do likewise.... This was what our dear ancestors taught us" (AM 59/40). This writer does not operate in a Pan-African frame of reference. Instead, he applies a distinctly local one: He repudiates the accusation of desecration in Ghanaba's reproach and defends local means of appropriation of the castle (cf. Macgonagle 2006). In particular he points out that PANAFEST is one of the rare occasions when local residents visit the castle *at all*. The restaurant is said to have served a good purpose there. Even though his statement suggests that local people are not particularly interested in the castles, statistics show that the number of domestic tourists is substantially higher than that of foreign visitors (cf. Report 1994: Appendix 5). This may be attributed to the large number of Ghanaian school classes coming on tour. In addition, I would argue that the interest of Ghanaians in the castles is also continuously growing owing to the attention paid to the ancient monuments by others. The renovations can also be said to have highlighted the castles' potential as places to visit for domestic tourists. Many of the visiting Cape Coasters with whom I spoke had come to see the place for the first time, motivated by curiosity about this "attraction" that was lying right in front of their doorstep.

The letter then continues:

It is true we should show REVERENCE for our tortured ancestors and keep Castles and Forts clean as sacred places but such films as . . . "Sankɔfa" should not be advocated in our castles or anywhere on our land. It at

times incites the black race to bring vengeance or attack such countries [*sic*] which perpetrated such acts as slavery. (AM 59/40, emphasis in the original)

To the author, the castles need to be cleaned in order to point out and do justice to their significance as historic monuments—a conviction that was certainly not shared by the people who opposed the whitewashing precisely because they felt that such polishing would interfere with the spiritual and emotional significance that the dungeons held for them. The writer explicitly states that he does not regard the castle as a cemetery but rather as a remarkable (and because of that preservation-worthy) relic of the past. Such notion of a “presentable past” is in line with the view of tangible remains as a “finite and dwindling commodity” (Lowenthal 1985: 389), and it indicates the author’s approval of the tourism developments that are taking place in and around the castles.

But, above all, he is disquieted by the representation of slavery in the manner of a film like “Sankofa,” which could provoke ill feelings among visitors. This should be avoided by all means. If such feelings would nevertheless occur, they would need to be “cool[ed] down with something categorically from a resident restaurant.” Nobody ought to feel intimidated on the castle grounds. This position was widespread among Ghanaians who often expressed embarrassment when confronted with the emotions of rage, anger, and tearful remorse, as many diasporans visiting the slave dungeons openly expressed them.

In particular, I frequently encountered a lack of understanding for the seemingly aggressive behavior of diasporan visitors. The image of their intrinsic offensiveness, especially toward Europeans, accompanied me throughout my fieldwork and amounted almost to a stereotype: “You should be on your guards . . . because of the slavery aspect—I’m sure you know by now that the African American people don’t like to talk to White people very much. So you should watch that aspect, just a word of caution . . .” (museum official at Cape Coast Castle, 01.11.1999). Not only was this advice directed at me, but it also indicated the speaker’s own uncertainty in the face of such visitors’ sometimes unpredictable behavior.²⁴ This initial inhibition could also turn into actual frustration, as the following statement by the same person shows:

There are a lot of things they do over here they wouldn’t dare to do in Nigeria. . . . Sometimes . . . they come and yell at us. There are other people in Africa who are not that friendly, who don’t have much time for this kind of tourism and stuff like that. They are going on with their

lives. But in Ghana we believe that they are our brothers and sisters, the Ghanaian hospitality, that's important. Some people over-ride it, they take advantage of us, think that we are fools.

In her statement she opposes Ghanaian hospitality with diasporan hostility. In contrast to that image, the visitor books,²⁵ which are directed at an anonymous (mainly Black) audience, leave a more balanced impression. Here, it was often, though not solely, Ghanaians who expressed feelings of revenge against White people, who should be "hanged" (Ghanaian, Visitor Book, April 1998). Some suggest that Whites should not be allowed to come into the castle at all, because "they are evil" (Ghanaian, May 1998). Of course, there are other comments appreciating the "facelift" (Ghanaian, April 1998) that has been given to the castles or calling for a closure to the past ("Let past be past and gone," Ghanaian, 1996). Nevertheless, those are surprisingly few. Visitor books are of course a special kind of source, since they give no information about the specific background of the commentator. In addition, each entry stands in an intertextual dialogue with those written before. Moreover, visitors often come in larger groups, and individual comments therefore need to be contextualized within specific group dynamics. Yet all those qualifications cannot belie the fact that so many Ghanaians speak of White/European wickedness and infamy. This can partly be interpreted as due to the fact that those people who *do* visit the castles and *do* take time to put down a comment do already have an awareness of the slave trade and take an active interest in that history as part of a firm (leftist/Pan-African) political conviction *before* they tour the place. Yet another strand of explanation has to take into account that close to none of the Ghanaian comments refer to the African involvement in the slave trade. Classifying the "White man [as] vampire" (Ghanaian, 1994) offers an opportunity to shy away from the issue of African responsibility.

Few of the European comments take on the topic of shame and responsibility either. Europeans' remarks are dominated by a tone of reconciliation. One visitor from the United Kingdom misses the figure of William Wilberforce as part of the exhibition (British, 1995). A commentator from Ireland protests against "racist comments in this book" (Irish, August 1998). Few Whites state to be ashamed of their color (Italian, 1985) or their ancestors (Dutch, June 1998).

How then does the position of African Americans and other diasporans appear judged from the visitor books? Their comments often give account of a great emotional stir and many of them express their gratitude for having had the chance to "come home" to Ghana and the castle in particular: "I am strengthened because I came." (African American, March 1998); "This

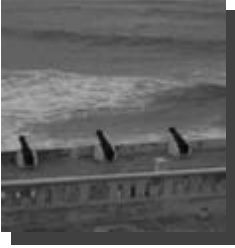
place is my only contact with my pre-slavery heritage. I beg you not to let it fall apart. I need this place!" (African American, June 1997). To some, the dungeons represent "our holocaust" (Surinamese, 1995), or *Maafa*²⁶ (Black British, August 1998). Indeed, there *are* angry comments, but most of them refer to the apparent whitewashing and sanitization of the castles/dungeons: "Repair/improvement work is uncalled for! This is our history. Leave it be—it's an atrocity!" (USA, June 1997). Many people are incensed by the fact that they are charged a fee as foreigners: "Departed descendants that come back . . . shouldn't have to pay. We feel offended by history and by touristic thought, that's as materialistic as our ancestors did" (Martiniquean, May 1998). This statement links the charge of fees to the African participation in the slave trade. It is an expression of ambivalence: On the one hand, the author separates those Africans whose ancestors had been taken away from those who stayed behind or were even responsible for the tragedy of the slave trade. On the other hand, he or she holds on to the idea of Black commonality by rejecting special fees for non-Ghanaian (Black) visitors and by speaking of "our ancestors." This ambivalence is not visible in all entries. Instead, some commentators follow the rhetoric of truth as already known from ADAF and Imahküs Okofo's proposal: "Do not distort, amend or sweeten the truth for anyone. Let those who seek truth, justice, and righteousness come. Others can go somewhere else!" (Afrikan²⁷ born in USA, June 1997).

The overt commercialization of the site (which is not further identified) is often criticized by Ghanaians and diasporan Africans alike—though one also finds words of appreciation for the work that has been done so far. Some Europeans, too, criticize the apparent "manipulating and commercializing [of] the site" (Danish, June 1997). What is called for is a greater sensitivity in the renovation work, "so that it can create an atmosphere of sorrow and sympathy" (Ghanaian, April 1996).

What emerges from these comments is a strong heterogeneity of opinions, cutting across communal boundaries. It seems impossible that these diverse positions could be reconciled in a single representational move. Nevertheless, there was an attempt to do so. In 1994, a conference on the preservation of Elmina and Cape Coast Castles took place. This two-day meeting involved Ghanaian, African-American, and donor agency stakeholders (Report 1994). As a result, a commemorative plaque for the departed ancestors was installed. It reads:

IN EVERLASTING MEMORY / Of the anguish of our ancestors. / May those who died rest in peace. / May those who return find their roots. / May humanity never again perpetuate / Such injustice against humanity. / We, the living, vow to uphold this.

During my visits to the castle, I have seen people copying the plaque by covering it with a piece of paper and rubbing a pencil against it—as if this authenticating gesture could bring those words into reality. However, despite the negotiations during the conference, the dispute that was initiated by the first wave of protests against the renovation could not be settled: Most of the comments cited above date from around 1997/1998, and I encountered similar views during my stays in 1998/1999 and 2005. This ongoing struggle is partly due to the mere fact that over the years more and more people have come to see and experience the site. This growing number of visitors has brought about an ever-growing diversity of opinions.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONFRONTING THE PAST

TOURING CAPE COAST CASTLE

The whitewashing debate was metaphorically tied to the very stones that make up the castles' structure. At the same time, it was also rooted in deep-running ideological frictions across the various collectivities that held an interest in these places. To explain this debate, I now turn to a description of a tour through Cape Coast Castle during the time of my fieldwork. It gives an idea of the representational strategies applied by the museum management as well as individual tour guides in order to reconcile the diverse positions and to authenticate the visitors' experience (cf. Finley 2004). At the same time, the problems and contradictions associated with such an attempt are further elaborated.

In this chapter I use two text formats to distinguish between two levels of writing. The first, in italic type, designates my description of a tour through Cape Coast Castle. It is narrated from a subjective point of view presented in the present tense. This ideal tour never took place in exactly the same order that is described here. I have composed it out of various fragments of experiences and observations in order to give readers a vivid and tangible impression of the castle/dungeons. The second text format, in roman type, comprises further background information as well as my analysis. By this approach I attempt to grasp the close entanglement of form and meaning at the castle. This intertwining is also reflected in the closing section, which deals with the castles as living places where memory is at the same time mirrored and formed.

APPROACHING THE CASTLE

The area around the castle is quiet. It forms a sharp contrast to the lively market street of Kotokuraba, only a few hundred meters away. Approaching the castle from the taxi stand, I can spot a few fishermen mending their nets. The building hugs the rock in a smooth curve. From the street, its shape can only be guessed—nothing but a long, faceless wall with a few high-lying windows is visible. On the one side a throng of simple huts and smoking ovens reaches out to the castle walls. The houses belong to the local fisherfolk, who live in the immediate surroundings of the castle. To its right stretches a low wall, separating the roadside from the beach. A smell of fish, salt, and urine lingers in the air. Opposite the castle is an open square, with two of Cape Coast's many big churches squeezing on the edge. Formerly used as a parade ground for the English troops, the square now looks almost as if the castle would request such an empty space to mirror its own significance; as if no other building could directly face this bastion.¹ Somehow, the shiny castle sits like an alien in this semi-urban landscape. From the outside, it is impossible to detect either the canons facing inland or those pointed toward the sea. Some vendors have planted their booths just opposite the castle, selling wood carvings, drums, and clothes. One of the stalls carries a painted sign saying "Castle Fashion Store." Business is slow, they tell me.² Scaffolding has been erected around parts of the building, and one can see the fresh lime mixture that has been applied to the high outer walls.

Since at least the 1950s, this type of painting has been a regularly repeated measure against the aggressive onslaught of the sea breeze, whenever the necessary financial backing was available (see AM 30/126-8). I was told that the dungeons, too, have always been treated in a similar way. The white lime-mixture was much cheaper than a fungicide and for that matter preferred by Ghanaian conservationists. Nevertheless, the coordinator for conservation and exhibition at the GMMB, Prof. Joe Nkrumah, recognized the powerful emotional impact of an "uncleaned" dungeon and admitted a certain degree of indifference toward this effect among museum workers. Commenting on the accusation of whitewashing, he said:

Because they came last year and it was so dark and very suggestive of where people were kept and so on. I must say, we might have lost a little bit the sensitivity and so we come, do what we've been always doing routinely. And of course, yesterday you were there and it was black on the wall, dark—it wasn't black from the blood of our ancestors who

left—no, no, it's only mucus . . . from only a month or two ago, or a year ago. (interview 06.06.1999)

In this statement he clearly rejected the strict opposition of “authentic appearance” versus “sanitization” that dominated the whitewashing debate. To him, such misconceptions could be overcome if only the people would be properly educated—and a dialogue over adequate restoration as well as adaptive uses would begin (or rather continue after the 1994 conference mentioned earlier). He viewed this dialogue as an ongoing obligation for all parties involved: The protesters needed to be educated on the professional constraints to which conservationists were forced to respond, whereas the museum officials ought to become more sympathetic to the sensitivities of visitors and more aware of the emotional and political consequences of the renovation measures.

In practice, however, the desire to educate was met with a similar assertion of the entitlement to truthful representation on part of the critics of “whitewashing.” Furthermore, I argue that the opportunities for dialogue are very limited, because the castle/dungeon grounds do not constitute a neutral terrain where talking would be an adequate means of communication. The slave sites always give rise to passionate emotions, regardless of their state of reconstruction. When the dungeons had not yet been renovated, for some visitors these emotions arose from an overwhelming sense of ancestral presence; for others it was rather the feeling of loss that manifested in the empty cells. When, however, the sites were cleaned, such emotional responses were complemented by anger and fervent resistance against the perceived “fumbling with history.”

PAYING FEES

I pass through a gate that looks surprisingly small and unimpressive to me. The floor is paved with irregular cobblestones. To my right I notice a small yard. Up to the 1980s this part of the building housed the Cape Coast Prison. Now, the cells have been demolished, and toilet facilities for visitors have been put up instead. Walking ahead, I approach a window and purchase a ticket. Soft drinks, postcards, and a few books are on sale as well. The fees are graded: Ghanaians pay about ten times less than foreigners, be they Europeans, African Americans, or Africans from neighboring countries.³ A self-guided tour is about half the amount of a regular tour.

Talking to different visitors from the diaspora, I have encountered a range of opinions concerning the price disparity. A regular PANAFEST-participant

stated that the amount was not very high if compared to American standards—and the money would help to keep the buildings in shape. Another woman, who was in Ghana to spend her sabbatical at the Kumasi College of Arts, was hurt by such a distinction among Black people and claimed: “Thus we will never get together!” She suggested that if there was simply a call for donations, “I am even sure that people would give more!”

One of the Ghanaian tour guides expressed his lack of understanding toward the latter attitude: “A lot of African Americans believe that they actually came from Ghana. That’s why they don’t want to pay. But how can they prove it? People from neighboring African countries also have to pay the full price!” To him, Black or Pan-African unity remained an abstraction, while national borders became an important mark of distinction. The fact that the symbolic significance of a “return to the Motherland” could go hand in hand with the demand to be treated “like a Ghanaian” was incomprehensible to him, at least if it came to the issue of entrance fees. After all, the visitors could afford the expensive trip and were financially far better off than local visitors.

If one considers the totally inadequate financial outfit of the GMMB, it would seem reasonable to try to sustain the working of the board with the revenue gained from visitors to the castles. However, the money did not benefit the forts and castles directly but instead went straight into the Ghanaian state-budget. Whereas this policy was in line with the objectives of the Tourism Development Scheme for the Central Region (TODSCER) and the Central Region Development Commission (CEDECOM), which I have outlined above, museum workers and representatives of other Ghanaian cultural institutions often opposed it. I encountered bitter complaints about the mere lip service that was allegedly being paid to cultural matters and heritage preservation on the part of the Ghanaian state, which was said to be interested solely in the economic benefits of tourism.

Tour operators who brought their own groups had to pay a fee to the museum. They could also hire the premises for performances, such as the re-enactment of the slave trade in One Africa Production’s *Thru [sic] the Door of No Return—The Return*, a commemorative ceremony designed by the Okofos and others in the early 1990s (see Okofo 1999). It is held on request, primarily for African-American tour groups. The ceremony comprises joint prayers inside the dungeons, where candles are lit and libations poured. From there, the participants are led through the “Door of No Return.” Once they arrive on that other side, songs are raised that resonate with the diasporic experience. With “We Shall Overcome” on their lips, the group then makes its way back into the castle, that is, metaphorically “back to Africa” (see Bruner 1996; Schramm 2009).

To take part in the performance, participants, of course, have to pay. Throughout my research I never encountered any complaint against that particular form of financial gain from the history of slavery. Quite a few African Americans who were living in Ghana and who had raised their voices in the whitewashing debate made a living as tour operators, which means that they also profited from the ongoing tourism drive. Thus, for example, the international representative of the Nation of Islam in Ghana, Hon. Minister Abdul Akbar Muhammad, regularly brought in visitors through his company, Adventures in Africa Tours and Safaris. What made such tours different from the ones channeled through the museum was the way the story of the slave trade was represented. The emphasis, again, was on the “proper story [to be] told” unsparingly from the perspective of the descendants of the enslaved, and “not a white washed version.”

A tour guide working at the castle commented on such an interpretation: “He [Akbar Muhammed] says things the way he sees them, not as they are.” This remark reveals an interesting reversal of the rhetoric of truth, as the guide threw it back on those initially claiming it. When questioned further, he referred to the “Muslim African Americans”’ continuous insistence on the ultimate cruelty of the British, who had even built their chapel on top of the male dungeon. To him, a devoted Christian, such an emphasis was embarrassing, and he personally rejected the absolute condemnation of the British, who had brought the Christian faith to the Gold Coast. Nevertheless, the fact that the chapel was built on top of the slave dungeons was often narrated during official tours as well, if only in a more casual manner. The complaint that was formulated by the tour guide was therefore not so much directed at *what* was being said, but rather at a particular *style* in which the facts were being narrated and contextualized by some of the diasporan stakeholders.⁴

The alternative tour through the castle, as provided, for example, by One Africa or Adventures in Africa, was not, and could not be, a totally idealistic endeavor free of any economic considerations. Indeed, the African-American tour operators knew their clientele far better than their Ghanaian counterparts did and because of that were better inclined to satisfy the emotional and spiritual needs and demands of the people coming, while at the same time following their own political and ideological convictions, which they often shared with the groups they catered to.

The following advertisement of an organization called Afrika House International illustrates this point very well:

Say you want to come but you don't know anyone. A little nervous. We will put your mind at ease. We are a group of Diasporans (Afrikans born

in the West (North America)—some of us have repatriated—others are in the process—we can make your trip worthwhile and enjoyable *we know what you need—we know what you like*—we have different packages and services according to your needs—want to relocate—we can help you! (Repatriation News 1999, my emphasis)

Among the offerings is a “business person special” as well as a package consisting of “slave dungeons, Asantehene palace . . . shopping in the market . . . festivals, drumming, botanical gardens and more”—not much different from the itinerary offered by any other tour operator. Yet what is clear from those lines is the fact that the group’s expertise regarding the “needs” of the people who are coming constitutes an integral part of their marketing strategy.

Commemoration and commercialization are therefore always intermingled, be it openly, as reflected in the tourist refurbishment of the castles, or more subtly, as in the case of the diasporan tour operators’ self-positioning (cf. Ebron 2000).

VISUALIZING CONNECTIVITY: *CROSSROADS*, THE FILM

Visitors who come on their own are first asked to have a look at the museum, before joining the guided tour. So am I. Stepping into the main courtyard. The huge dimensions of the castle become clear from here. I am standing beneath a two-winged flight of stairs that leads to the governor’s quarters. Heaps of cannonballs are piled up at each side of the entrance. To my right there are four graves, one of them decorated with a fading wreath. The breakers are crashing against the rocky foundation of the castle, making a sound that is at the same time angry and soothing. The salty spray can be felt against the skin.

The museum⁵ can be reached via a staircase on the left side of the courtyard. I enter the museum. A guide draws my attention to a film that is shown in the first room. Its title mirrors the motto of the whole exhibition project: Crossroads of People—Crossroads of Trade. Kwaw Ansah, an internationally renowned filmmaker, has directed the documentary with the financial support of the Smithsonian Institution in the United States.

Sitting in the darkened room together with a few other visitors, I am first confronted with the question: “What is the story of Africa?” We hear that, at the beginning, “there was meaning in life.” Short scenes of naming ceremonies, puberty rites, and royal durbars (all of these bearing the imprint of southern Ghanaian, Akan, culture) are followed by images of traditional healers and craftsmen and -women. In all those areas, we are told, there was

“harmony which we share with the very earth in rhythm.” Even though it is an ancient past that is being evoked, the comments are in the present tense. “The young ones” are explicitly called on to “absorb the wisdom and skill from the past values of yesterday, our past.” The film repeatedly emphasizes the “we,” thereby addressing a large community of Africans from all over, who should get to know the “illustrious worlds from which they came.” Soon, however, the harmonious picture gets interrupted by “a strange vessel approaching the shore”—the first Europeans appear on the scene. We learn that it was gold that attracted them in the first place and that they exchanged for rum, gunpowder and “other trinkets.” Although at first there was “peaceful trade” between Europeans and Africans, soon there came another trade—that in human beings. Now “darkness fell over the land,” poisoning the relations between formerly placid neighbors and snatching “our beloved brothers and sisters, princesses and priestesses . . . , farmers and royal sons and daughters.” European merchants, Arab middlemen, and “some [who] collaborated with evil” are held responsible for the suffering of those who were carried away through the Middle Passage to the auction bloc and the cane fields overseas. Confronted with racism and oppression, those slaves built the nations of the New World. Yet despite the great amount of suffering, there was also resistance on the part of the slaves who were later joined by some “children of slave masters.” It was the “African struggle” (and no “gift” by Europeans) that finally brought Emancipation. All the names that are mentioned in this part of the film belong to historical figures from the United States: Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson. The only exception is Marcus Garvey who, though he was born in Jamaica, had his greatest success and following in the United States. The spirituals that accompany the images are also part of a musical tradition that is mainly understood as a specifically African-American cultural expression.

The struggle, we are told, did not end here. It continued in the fight against racism and segregation in the diaspora as well as in the struggle against colonialism on the African continent. The film now turns to Ghana and the outstanding role of Kwame Nkrumah who spearheaded African independence. The early linkages between Ghana and the African diaspora are pointed out. From here, the film shifts back to the United States and joins Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” with Malcolm X’s “By any means necessary!” in a reconciliatory move. This is where the story ends, a story that “nobody can tell for us.” The film, however, continues. It guides the viewers to recognize the ongoing connections between Africa and the diaspora by comparing contrasting, yet startlingly similar, images of an African chief performing “Kete” and an African-American step-dancer; a Ghanaian schoolchild reciting a song and the U.S. rap star

Chuck D; a xylophonist and Duke Ellington playing the piano, and so on. "We are one family," the images seem to suggest;⁶ and this notion is actually taken up in the comment: "Hope lies in the strength of [our] heritage shared by Africans all over the world, a heritage [that] dates back to Egypt. . . ." On a celebratory note, showing the Rio carnival together with a durbar of chiefs and their African-American audience during PANAFEST, the film closes.

The whole choreography suggests that the focus is primarily on an African-American audience—all in line with the objectives of the Ghanaian tourism industry and its focus on heritage and "roots." Yet it needs to be emphasized that Kwaw Ansah belongs to a generation of Ghanaian intellectuals who share in the convictions of African cultural nationalism that resonate throughout the film. In our interview he stated that the most important thing to him was the educational potential of "Crossroads." Questions ought to be posed: "Who were we? How meaningful were our actions? Why did we throw all of it away—and jumped on certain things that have made us so confused and so impoverished and hungry?" (08.21.2009). From this perspective, national and Pan-African outlook became blurred. Ansah vehemently claimed that the history of the slave trade was one that ought to concern Ghanaians, as well as Africans from the diaspora. Like other intellectuals, however, he could not make out such awareness among decision makers in tourism or among cultural bureaucrats: "It's all cosmetic," he said. Ironically, despite Ansah's critical stance toward the workings of the tourism industry, his film formed an intrinsic part of the whole museum layout and was thereby enclosed in the controversy over "accurate representation" and historic sanitization.

HISTORY ON DISPLAY: "CROSSROADS," THE EXHIBITION

I enter the exhibition. On an introductory panel I read:

The exhibition places the forts and castles within a broad economic, political, and historical context and includes the legacy of the Slave Trade, clearly one of the more tragic chapters in the history of Africa and the Americas. It also includes Ghana's emergence to lead the continent in its struggle for freedom. . . . The exhibition speaks to this heroic history and offers a glimpse into Central Region life today and its rich cultural heritage. (my emphasis)

The historical framework is broad indeed. Starting from archaeological evidence of early human settlement in what is today called "Ghana," it covers the trans-Saharan commercial network as well as the early gold trade

with Europe. We are told of the European competition for influence on this part of the African coast. A showcase contains a portrait of Governor George Maclean, who was president of the British Committee of Merchants from 1830 to 1843, after the British had officially abolished the slave trade.

As I turn to continue my tour, I am faced with a large panel showing a group of slaves on their way to the coast. To my left I find some historical information on the triangular trade and its economic implications. To my right there is a panel speaking of the legacy of the European trading powers, emphasizing the positive sides of the trade between Europeans and Africans in terms of “cultural, social, and political manifestations,” despite the “shadow” that the slave trade had cast on the relationship.

When I talked about the exhibition with Dr. Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang, author of a collection of poems on Cape Coast Castle, he made me aware of the specific arrangement of objects in the museum. He mentioned that in Ghana, it is an offense to eat or greet with the left hand, which is considered impure. To him, what was striking about the exhibition was the fact that all negative things were arranged on the left-hand side, whereas all positive things were to be found to the right of the observer. Opoku-Agyemang insisted that this was by no means accidental but rather followed a well thought through psychological pattern. In his interpretation, the objects and the information that the visitor encounters on her left become automatically associated with pollution and corruption. Those were the things that people did not want to deal with, things that they denied and placed outside the boundaries of their own social sphere. The fact that the material on the slave trade was contrasted with panels that emphasized the positive effects of the African-European relationship (such as the import of Christianity and formal education) would work like a reassurance—things were not so bad, after all. This particular arrangement of panels, then, would support the suppression of the slavery past and continue the silence in a different form.

To prove his argument, Opoku-Agyemang pointed out that there was comparatively little information on the slave trade as such, with no references at all to its negative effects on the African population (from internal displacement and depopulation to economic deprivation, see Kankpeyeng 2009; Smallwood 2007). And, indeed, what the visitor learns about the European legacy in Africa, and Ghana in particular, is all about cross-cultural fertilization. The suffering, so the exhibition affirms, affected mainly those who had been taken away as “unwilling immigrants” (exhibition panel).

Again situated to my right, I find another panel, which informs about the numbers of people involved. “Within scholarly circles, the estimates range

from a total of 12 million to 25 million [people].” There is a striking frequency of references to scholarly evidence here: “Scholars debate about the total number of Africans caught . . . ;” “scholarly circles estimate . . . ;” “scholars agree that the smallest number of Africans came to what is now the United States of America and Canada”—all these sentences are gathered on a single panel.

This invocation of scientific objectivity through the repeated reference to academic discourse can be read as an attempt by the exhibition designers to forestall any criticisms against their chosen focus, which insists on the contextualization of the slave trade within the broader framework of a cross-cultural encounter. It also needs to be understood as a conscious argument against repeated assertions put forth by a range of Afrocentric scholars and political activists, who place the figures around 100 million people (Clarke 1970: 7). The explicit stressing that the United States received by far the lowest number of African slaves (the inner-American trade in slaves is not taken into consideration) is underlined by pointing out that “during the twentieth century, there has been much voluntary migration.” The selection of this particular piece of data symbolically denies African Americans their claims to a special relationship with the castles as part of their collective history. Those claims, it is feared by museum officials, would draw a sharp line between visitors of European and those of African descent. In contrast, the exhibition aims to avoid such polarization and appeals to a general public instead, which is then provided with seemingly neutral information.

Turning around, I follow a narrow passage, which leads me into a small room with a low ceiling. Raw wooden planks cover the walls, suggesting that visitors have symbolically moved into the bowels of a slave ship. Rusty chains and shackles are hanging from the wall. During my first visit in 1995, one could hear the murmur of the sea inside this place. Now, the sound system has broken down from serious water damage that has affected some of the other exhibits as well.

I step into the next room—into the “New World.” Posters of slave auctions as well as a large-scale reproduction of an auction-bloc scene cover the walls. Cotton sacks are stacked against a corner. The following section, “The African Diaspora,” shows the slaves’ suffering and resistance together with photographs of a family that traced its roots back to Africa. An ancestral portrait gallery of Black heroes and heroines has been located directly opposite the auction room, ranging from Marcus Garvey to Elijah Mohammed, from Paul Robeson to Stevie Wonder. Diagonally opposite those famous personalities from the diaspora we find Ghana’s “Big Six”: Dr. K. Nkrumah, E. Obetsebi-Lampety, E. Arko Adjei, W. Oforik Atta, Dr. J. B. Danquah, E. Akufo Addo—all

representatives of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), which was the first party to spearhead the anticolonial struggle in the Gold Coast, before Nkrumah formed his own Convention People's Party (CPP). Photographs of Ghana's declaration of independence close the historic part of the exhibition.

The last and largest room is devoted entirely to the life in the Central Region. An attractively decorated fishing boat dominates the room. In the background I can make out a chief's palanquin, linguist staffs, and other regalia.

The focus of this part of the exhibition is solely on so-called traditional culture, which is fashioned as a vibrant, colorful spectacle. Other aspects of present-day life, such as the severe poverty that a great portion of the local population has to struggle with, are excluded. They are not marketable and therefore do not fit into the dominant tourism framework.

The exhibition places the slave trade in a transitional space, exemplified in the hold of the ship that the visitor has to pass stooping down. Struggles of Black people against colonialism and racism seem to have found their conclusion in the achievement of independence (Ghana) and the success of the Civil Rights Movement (diaspora/United States). In that spirit one of the museum workers explained to me: "Slavery brought about this rebellious nature . . . and nationalism brought independence. . . . So slavery brought about nationalism; and nationalism brought about independence, so slavery brought about independence" (interview 01.11.1999).

Another Ghanaian who worked at the castle even told me about his plans to write a book on "The Good Side of the Slave Trade." In it, he aimed to show two things in particular: First, that Ghana would not be developed without the Europeans—there would be no formal education, no infrastructure, and so on; and second, that those who had been taken away were now far better off than their African counterparts, enjoying the advantages of technology, knowledge and a superior civilization.⁷ Interestingly, this employee also had a poster of the "Million Man March," organized by the Nation of Islam in 1995, in his office. His appropriation of the powerful symbolism of Black nationalism offered an opportunity for recognition by visitors from the diaspora sympathizing with the Nation of Islam who would otherwise vehemently object against any recognition of "the good side of the slave trade." The evocation of Black solidarity in a language that was familiar to diasporan visitors enabled the Ghanaian official to articulate his expectations toward them—they ought to come and help Ghanaians, because, after all, they enjoyed many advantages and privileges that were unavailable to continental Africans.⁸ Although there was no need for him to directly mention this situation as part of the "good side of the slave trade," a formulation that would antagonize African Americans, the demand was still

in line with his philosophy of the positive aspects of slavery and the slave trade. What is interesting about this example is the matter-of-course-attitude with which my interlocutor connected concepts that seemed ideologically incompatible. His position on the continuum between a belief in the positive effects and an emphasis on the devastating consequences of the slave trade was by no means unambiguous or fixed, but rather strategic and flexible.

All in all, the exhibition favored an interpretation of the past as definite and gone, at any rate when it comes to the slave trade. From the perspective of the exhibition designers (both Ghanaian and expatriate), the tragedies needed to be remembered, yes, but this should also be confined to the narrow space of a historical narrative, enabling the individual to distance him- or herself from the past. Instead of further engaging with the possible political implications of slavery on contemporary societies (see Argenti 2007; Ferme 2001), visitors were called on to marvel at the Central Region's living traditions and a rich cultural heritage, which, following the logic of tourist representation, were freed of ambivalence and clad in a smooth and appealing surface.

“I RETURNED THROUGH THE DOOR OF NO RETURN”: SELLING MEMORIES

Coming out of the museum, I run into a gift shop that has been put up in one of the rooms on the gallery.⁹ There is a broad choice of items, ranging from batik clothes, jewelry, and brass figurines to books and postcards. I notice some T-shirts that catch my attention: “I returned through the Door of No Return, Cape Coast Castle, Ghana,” “Back to Our Heritage,” or “To Our Native Roots” is written on them.

When I later told an African-American friend about that, she exclaimed: “They sold us once, now they are selling us again!” Her indignant objection was directed against the overt commercialization of the deep significance that the “return” held for her and other Africans from the diaspora. To her, the T-shirts that were sold in the castle shop were symbolic for the exploitation of diasporan emotions that was recognizable in the general handling of the slavery topic in Ghana.

Even though I never saw anybody wearing those particular T-shirts, similar clothes were very popular among Africans from the diaspora whom I encountered throughout my research. For example, Prince Ras Fifi, a Ghanaian painter and musician, produced T-shirts as well as dresses and other items that all centered on the themes of slavery and Black emancipation. According to him, his work was the outcome of “divine inspiration.” He regarded it as



FIGURE 5.1 Ras Fifi posing among his paintings, PANAFEST 1999.

a “service for my people.” Ras Fifi sold his products at the popular Labadi Beach in Accra and also during PANAFEST, where he made a good profit: “The Americans they have more deeper feelings in my works because it is something which they have been looking for” (interview 08.19.1999).

As Dick Hebdige (1979) has shown, style in itself is an important medium of communication as well as of group identification. To wear clothes with



FIGURE 5.2 Museum Shop, Cape Coast Castle, 1999.

definite political statements, such as the ones produced by Ras Fifi, is even more so a means of sharing one's views with others. It offers an opportunity to identify with one group of people, as, for example, "African ascendants," while at the same time expressly separating oneself from others. The slogans on the T-shirts that were sold in the castle gift shop were much in line with this branch of political rhetoric. In addition, such a T-shirt could also work as an *aide-mémoire*, long after the person who bought it has gone back home.

Consequently, it does not necessarily trivialize the experience inside the castle/dungeons, but may rather reinforce its recollection—acting as a link in a memory-chain.¹⁰

Why, then, the strong disapproval? Was it induced by the fact that the items were sold in a museum shop inside the castle? Did that automatically indicate a lack of sincerity on part of the supplier of the memorabilia or a dishonest exploitation of the emotional needs of visitors? What difference did it make regarding the selling of “castle stones” as necklaces, as done by an African-American couple during PANAFEST? After all, souvenir shops are very common at memorial sites (see Cole 1999: 110; Sturken 2007; Weissberg 1999). However, the location of a gift shop within the walls of the castle was not in line with the recommendations that had been made during the 1994 conference on preservation. There it had been stated: “Items . . . such as shackles for slaves which might be of interest to tourist[s] should be sold outside the castle as souvenirs” (Report 1994: 13). While in Cape Coast the shop was situated in the administrative part of the building—which could be interpreted as an acceptable moderation of the initial agreement—this was not the case at Elmina Castle. There, the gift shop had been installed inside one of the male slave dungeons. This placement provoked serious objections, even more severe than the ones that had been raised during the earlier disagreement over the painting of the castle walls.

To those people who claimed that the castles were first and foremost slave memorials, the transformation of a dungeon into a marketplace was unacceptable. Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang, for example, regarded the castles’ whole renovation together with the sale of “trinkets” inside a former slave dungeon as a powerful indication that “the conflict between the slave and the enslaver is still going on.” Instead of being presented as “artifacts of this slave history, very important artifacts” that “speak to us . . . remind us . . . are like memory frozen in time,” the castles were, in his eyes, being “attacked in a very serious way such that the evidence is being interfered with” (interview 08.03.1999).

Though widespread among Africans from the diaspora, this view was not shared by the people who were in charge of the decision to install a gift shop inside a former slave dungeon. They brought in the argument of the multiple usages that the castle as well as the dungeons had been subjected to over the centuries. Other people simply denied the dungeons their symbolic power and aura that had been so vividly evoked by Rabbi Kohain when speaking of his first experience inside the dungeons. Thus, Prof. James Anquandah, the chief archaeologist who had been responsible for the excavations at Cape Coast Castle, took a very pragmatic stance on the issue of the gift shop. In our interview he said:

They could have set up the shop outside. . . . But the idea of a gift-shop . . . is that they should use the revenue from it for keeping, maintaining the place. The idea itself is ok, but [*hesitates*] there is nothing in the male dungeon, there is nothing in it. There are no human beings lying there fossilized, slaves, so what do you want to put there? . . . Female dungeon is empty, and male dungeon is empty—So do they want to use it as a library? . . . It must be used for something. It's very expensive to run, to maintain over centuries. . . . And the government doesn't have [any] money. (interview 07.12.1999)

The shop at Elmina did not last long. It soon became clear that it would bring more trouble than gains, and so the decision was made to remove it from the dungeon and place it on the upper floor.

WALKING AROUND—HEARING STORIES

After roaming around the gift shop, I now join the guided tour. All participants are welcomed once again to Cape Coast Castle.

The decision to rename the site Cape Coast Castle *and Dungeons* (my emphasis), which was made during the already mentioned conference on the preservation of Elmina and Cape Coast Castles (Report 1994: 6), never seemed to have influenced the daily practice of the tour guides, whether deliberately or simply out of neglect. Perhaps this varied with different audiences—a supposition that I was not able to confirm, because I was excluded from “Blacks only” groups. The separation of groups was an often-repeated demand in the visitors' comments, and it proved to be a contested issue throughout my research. Partly in reaction to verbal and even physical attacks that are said to have occurred when Black and White visitors went on a joint tour, there have been attempts to avoid such tensions. As an employee of the Ministry of Tourism told me:

Well, they [Black and White visitors] go to the other attractions in one group—Kakum Park, etc. But when it comes to the castles, there are tensions, cold chills running down the spine, some people break down and cry etc. So we are now educating the people [for example, museum staff] on how to organize the tours so that there are no mixed groups. (interview 03.05.1999)

The Ministry of Tourism and other Ghanaian institutions wanted to avoid any open confrontation. This concern partly derived from a fear of losing

European (that is, White) tourists—since they were the main subjects of verbal attack from Black visitors. At the same time, the tours were always choreographed in such a way so as to confirm the enormity of the European atrocities. From this constellation arose a difficult balance that could not be sustained by a mere separation of groups. The ambivalence that becomes visible here reflects a general problem that occurs whenever the slave trade is framed as part of the tourism industry. In their utilization of specific African-American discourses (be it references to repatriation, reparations, or Afrocentric ideology in general) in order to attract visitors, Ghanaians were not always capable of monitoring the anger and other emotions that went along with it. Apart from that, many people working at the site did not accept the strong feelings expressed by African-American visitors as genuine or appropriate: “Their crying and praying, I don’t buy it. They should come here and do something to help us to develop” (GMMB-employee, interview 01.16.1999). This attitude was often sensed by visitors, resulting in mistrust and mutual stereotyping.

Following the welcoming of our (mixed) group, the guide feeds us with information about the architectural and administrative history of the castle. We learn about the development of trade relations between Europeans and Africans that took the form of a barter system, whereby finished European goods were exchanged for African produce such as gold, ivory, beads, and pepper. Slaves are mentioned as part of this trade. The actual tour starts from the former governor’s quarters. The rooms are empty; because of the heated controversy over the renovation work, international donors have withdrawn their support for the refurbishment.

All stakeholders initially supported the refurbishment of the governor’s quarters, though with different intentions. In the eyes of Imahküs Okofo the reconstruction was meant to illustrate the luxurious living conditions of the Europeans in sharp contrast to the conditions that the slaves had to endure when they were cooped up in the dungeons underneath. The GMMB, in contrast, aimed at a refurbishment of the quarters with the furniture and other objects of the Maclean era, that is, as an illustration of a time when slaves were no more kept inside the vaults. An educational officer at the castle explained her priorities:

I will not focus on the effects of slavery on the lives of people around us. Because during the Maclean era, there were a lot of activities in the castle. . . . There were the Ashanti-Fanti wars. . . . A lot of castle schools started. . . . So we talk about that also. And then the Bond of 1844.¹¹ . . . There was this slavery aspect, yes, but there were other things going on here. So I think we can talk about that also. (interview 01.11.1999)

Again, we find an emphasis on the diverse histories that the castle represents in the eyes of museum officials. This attitude may derive from the fact that present-day Ghanaians could regard aspects such as formal education, early trade relations, or the Bond of 1844 with a sense of pride. They can be (more or less) easily incorporated into national history (see Holsey 2008; Keren 2008). The slave trade, in contrast, is associated with shame and therefore often constitutes a silenced chapter of collective pasts—be it in Africa, Europe, or the Americas.

Consequently, quite a few Ghanaian intellectuals criticized the view that tourism (at least in the form that it took shape in Ghana) could generate historical awareness. In their eyes, those institutions and managers who have taken up the topic of the slave trade in order to exploit it as a tourism asset were unable to recognize the challenges that this issue posed for the Ghanaian society itself (see Akyeampong 2001)—and not just for Africans in the diaspora. To them, a narrative strategy that treated different historical periods as if they were equally relevant was not suited to create a better understanding of the past. For example, Esi Sutherland-Addy¹² appreciated that there was a growing awareness and sensitivity about the slave trade among tour guides, yet she disagreed with the logic of neutral representation that was advanced by the museum official cited above. Instead, she favored a prioritization of the slave trade: “I think you could have a street and so many things could have happened on that street, but there is one thing—somebody gets killed at one point in history, people will remember that particular event.” While Sutherland-Addy emphasized the exceptional character of the slave trade that would necessarily have to shape public commemorations, Saidiya Hartman is less convinced that this strategy will ever work out. For her, the road metaphor takes on a completely different turn. When reflecting on her visit to the slave dungeons, she writes: “It feels like the crash to me, not the grave. It’s the place where the car hit the tree and your mother and brother died. . . . But it’s just a regular street for everyone else” (2007: 108). She thus expresses the limits of commonality and empathy that become apparent in the different attitudes toward the slave trade of people touring the castle/dungeons.

As the tour continues, we are led to the so-called Palaver Hall, the place of the signing of the Bond of 1844. The room is painted in a grayish blue. Today, municipal organizations, churches, and so on may rent it to conduct their meetings. From here we step down back to the courtyard.

The entrance to the male slave dungeon is a big opening, followed by a ramp leading down. It is dark. We are asked to watch our step before we descend. The ramp turns twice before it reaches the dungeon. In Haile Gerima’s film Sankofa

(1993), the female protagonist steps into a memory-hole and is taken back to the past of slavery as soon as she enters here. To me, it is hard to imagine what might have happened in this place. A light bulb illuminates the emptiness. We are told that the dungeons were initially built to hold 500–600 slaves. However, at the peak of the slave trade, up to 1,000 captives at a time were held here.

In his French manuscript of 1688 Jean Barbot mentions that “a thousand Blacks” could be kept in the slave prison, which “consists of large vaulted cellars, divided into several apartments . . . cut into the rock” (1992: 392). The archaeologist Arnold W. Lawrence even assumes that this underground prison had been extended between 1692 and 1750, “when it could take fifteen hundred” (1963: 189; cf. St. Clair 2006: 77–81).

Inside the first room the guide points out a narrow gutter that is said to have served as the slaves’ sewage system. We are told that the dungeons were not regularly cleaned and that this was a constant source of fatal diseases among captives. The prisoners died of starvation or exhaustion as well. On the walls one can see the marks of an archaeological survey that has been carried out inside the dungeons. They are almost half a meter above ground.

All the rubble and filth that had covered the floor and had over the years turned into a rock-hard surface had been carefully cleared away, layer after layer, by the Scottish Kirkdale Expedition in 1991. In 1996 a research team led by Prof. James Anquandah of the University of Ghana, Legon, carried out a second excavation. This time, the female slave dungeons were also under scrutiny. Based on his findings inside the dungeons, Prof. Anquandah rejected the story of the slaves’ misery and starvation in blatant terms:

I’ve been in there, underneath, so I can best tell the story of what was happening there. They were eating nice chicken! Nice beef! Yes, the bones have survived there, so they were doing well [laughs] not all of them, of course they were in chains, but not all of them were suffering [laughs]. . . . I’m trying to readjust the balance. (interview 07.12.1999)

This “readjustment of balance” is not simply carried out by means of an objectified scientific discourse that would oppose *myth* with *evidence*. By the way in which Anquandah presents his argument he is supporting and reconstructing a different myth, namely, that of the slaves’ well-being. Choosing the rough and exaggerating language of everyday communication, he is reacting against the self-enclosed rhetoric of truth, which blames

solely the European oppressor. Such an interpretation he counterpoises with a different understanding of truth, namely, a concept of “free will”: “Free will for someone to come and enslave me and . . . to sell me . . . and to buy me. When people came to buy . . . we had the free will to keep our people or to sell them. . . . We had a choice.” Anquandah understood the history of slavery as a partnership, though an unequal one. In his eyes, it involved senior (European) and junior (African) partners (see Anquandah 1999: 104) as well as voiceless slaves, whose “free will” was admittedly reduced but who were at least fed “nice chicken.”

This particular perspective did not find entry into the tour, because it was incompatible with the assumed desires of visitors, particularly those from the diaspora. In addition, one could say that the tour guide’s strong emphasis on the terrible conditions inside the dungeons aimed at creating the sharpest possible contrast with the present living conditions of the visitors. This produced a double effect: First, it created sympathy for the slaves and their fate; second, it placed slavery in the distant past, a past that was luckily overcome.

Passing through the dungeons, we learn that those who revolted against their enslavement were regarded as stubborn captives and separated from the others in order for them “not to form one huge source in fighting for their rights.” Such unified resistance was further prevented by the communication problem among the slaves who could not understand one another’s language, since they had been gathered from all parts of the interior. Then, our guide points out small holes high above the wall. We hear that “in those days,” these were the sole source of light and ventilation.

Contrasting this information, a brochure published by the GMMB states that at the time of their construction the dungeons “had several bays and fairly large openings near the ceiling to facilitate supervision by guards. These openings were eventually blocked due to later additions to the castle” (Cape Coast Castle: A Tourist Guide). Albert van Dantzig describes the structural changes that affected the slave dungeons in some detail. Although the dungeons as we know them today were indeed better ventilated during the time that slaves were kept there, this does not indicate that the slaves in general were well-treated. He writes that the newly constructed dungeons were considered “an improvement on the old dungeons below the parade which had only ventilation through small openings in the roofs, which, like those of the hold of slave ships, had to be closed when it rained, leaving the slaves in airless darkness” (1998 [1980]: 60).

During a one-hour guided tour, such differentiation is neither communicable nor important. After all, the major concern of this part of the tour is to

create a sense of the terror produced in the minds and bodies of the enslaved by their capture and confinement in those vaults.

At the very end of the dungeon complex there is a small room. During the time of the slave trade it marked the entrance of a tunnel leading from here to the female slave dungeon. This was the path that the slaves took on their way out of the castle. When the trade was abolished the tunnel was sealed. Once there were plans to reopen it, but they have been shelved, as was the attempted reconstruction of the governor's quarters. Next to the former entrance of the tunnel, a small altar has been erected. Bottles and jars are arranged on it. An old man is awaiting the group. Our guide says, "Some people believe that the souls of our ancestors left through this tunnel. We Africans pour libation for our ancestors as a form of prayer. So now this man will pour libation for the departed." The caretaker starts pouring some unidentified liquid on the ground while reciting a few words in Fante. No translation is given, even though many participants do not understand this local language. There is an awkward silence among the group when we are asked to donate money afterward. Some people drop a note into the ready basket.



FIGURE 5.3 Shrine for Nana Tabiri, Cape Coast Castle, Male Dungeon, 2002.

The explanation regarding the significance of the shrine and the libation that was performed by the caretaker varied in different tours, depending on the tour guides' personal preferences as well as on their audience. It was a senior tour guide who had been working at the castle since 1985 who told the version narrated above. What was omitted from his explanation was the fact that the shrine was originally devoted to a local deity, Nana Tabiri, who was said to reside on the very rock that Cape Coast Castle was built on. At the time of the Cape Coast Fetu Afahye festival, a cow was regularly sacrificed here.

During another tour, consisting of four White European visitors and me, a different guide put his emphasis on the libation as a demonstration of local customs. No reference was made to the departed ancestors. When the caretaker was about to start the libation, the guide abruptly asked: "So what shall we do—go outside?" So the group turned around and left the old man alone, without any donation. The guide then told the group that the libation was meant to be carried out with palm wine, which, however, was not used here: "Palm-wine is very sweet, so he may drink it all by himself!" Through this statement he made his disapproval of so-called traditional religion explicit, an attitude that he confirmed in private talks throughout our acquaintance. In his decision to leave out the demonstration of libation he followed his personal conviction as a born-again Christian (cf. Meyer 1998). At the same time, he carefully harmonized his presentation with the specific audience that he was dealing with—in the aforementioned case, it was a group of Europeans who probably had no specific interest in the shrine and might even feel embarrassed by the ceremony.

The shrine—and in particular the decision to have the caretaker perform the libation—prompted a variety of reactions, not only from different tour guides but also from the visitors. The guest books indicate that quite a few of them perceived the performance of libation for tourists as a mockery and vehemently objected to it. The protesters regarded the altar first and foremost as a sacred shrine for the slave ancestors, as it had been suggested in the above-described tour. In that spirit, one of the entries states: "The libation is sacred and not to be trivialized. You should pray the ancestors don't wreak harm on your souls for treating hallowed ground as if it were circus act" (African, U.S.A, June 1997).

Although the staging of libation within a tourist setting was rejected, the shrine itself was regarded as an appropriate memorial for the slave ancestors and often seen as belonging to their descendants. One woman, who worked as a sculptor in New York City and had come to Ghana to spend her sabbatical, said that she liked it because "you could leave anything at all—sea shells or whatever!" When I asked her if the caretaker had been around during the time of her visit, she said that he had been on break and that this had given her and her friend the opportunity to do "our own little ceremony, lighting candles."

When the guide returned, he asked them for money, “which really annoyed me because they were demanding money from me at the gate already.”

The shrine’s location next to the sealed slave tunnel makes it compelling to incorporate it into the commemorative setting that many African Americans seek to establish inside the dungeons. Yet this symbolic acquisition is not in line with the shrine’s local meaning. That African-American (as well as other) visitors perceive the caretaker’s demand for donations as an affront and view it as a sign of commercialization is indeed a misinterpretation of local customs. It ignores the usual procedures taken at a shrine, such as the buying of drinks as well as the payment of a significant sum of money to the caretaker. This money is not kept by him alone but rather spent on the shrine’s upkeep and the acquisition of ceremonial provisions. Throughout Ghana it is also customary to bring money and other gifts, mainly liquor, as a sign of respect when one visits chiefs and elders of a community.

Local meaning thus contrasts sharply with the museum’s representation as well as the symbolic appropriation of “sacred space” by diasporans. Those differences are hard to overcome and may also breed conflict among the different groups involved. However, the polysemic nature of Nana Tabiri’s shrine is also an indication of the dungeons’ potential for accommodating a vast range of memories and producing distinctive commemorations.

Back outside, it takes a little while before my eyes readjust to the brightness in the courtyard. Later on, the guide tells us that some of the slaves turned blind from their long stay inside the dungeons. The tour continues at the graves that I had already spotted from a distance. The one with the wreath belongs to Philip Quaque (1741–1816), who was a pioneer of education in the Gold Coast and the first African to become an Anglican priest. Next to him lies Governor George Maclean, joined by his wife and an unnamed British soldier.

The above-mentioned brochure (printed in the early 1990s) says that Quaque was the son of a wealthy African slave trader. This piece of information was omitted from the guide’s explanations—in fact, I encountered it only during one of the tours in which I took part. Quaque was almost always referred to with respect and pride. It could be said that an idea of modern Ghana manifests in his person. To many Ghanaians, his early contributions toward education and Christianity provide a different sense of connectivity with the past than the slave trade would (see Holsey 2008). If the information about Quaque’s father’s involvement in the slave trade is withheld, this also indicates a lack of readiness on part of the tour guides as well as of the museum management to confront the question of African involvement in the trade.

In the limited context of a guided tour, this question could not be dealt with in much detail. Depending on the make-up of the tour, it was mentioned either in passing or left out completely. Thus, during the all-European tour that I have already referred to, the guide said: "But we shouldn't forget that Africans willingly participated in the trade. . . . So not one side has to be blamed for it." In a conversation that we had at an earlier date he told me that he was convinced that it was necessary to leave the past behind and "look into the future." He went on: "I think no matter your color, we can be friends. It is not actually you who did this and maybe not even your great-grandfathers have been involved, this is something that happened 400 years ago—so let's move on!" Nevertheless, he was careful to adapt his presentation of history at the castle to the specific audience to whom he had to attend: "You have to watch your words very carefully. [To Caribbeans] I would never say that Africans had also been involved in the slave trade. They know it, but they wouldn't want to hear it. If you would say it, they'd go mad. . . . So I try and keep it to myself." Here, he refers to the rhetoric of truth that is often advanced by diasporan groups as well as to the stereotype of their inherent aggressiveness, which he nevertheless was able to handle and even manipulate.¹³

From the graves we pass over the old tunnel. Rusty canons are pointing toward some distant and no more visible target. The guide explains technical details while we are walking toward the female dungeons, which are situated above ground and are smaller than their male counterpart. The conditions there, according to our guide, were no less appalling than the ones underground. To worsen their imprisonment, some women were forced to have sexual intercourse with Europeans. We are told that those women who were detected to be pregnant before the arrival of the slave ship were set free. Their offspring often received missionary education and because of that "came to feel superior over the local population."

The motif of rape is particularly striking when it serves to elucidate the African-European encounter during the slave trade. It symbolizes physical violence, the break-up of families, as well as the psychological degrading and humiliation involved in enslavement. At a forum on reparations, which took place during the first Ghanaian Emancipation Day in 1998, the chairperson of the Afrikan Reparation and Repatriation Truth Commission, Debrah Kofie, utilized the powerful imagery of rape to underscore the demands for reparations. She said: "We are owed a price for the mothers who had to stay in the slave dungeons, who had to go into the chambers with the governors, who had to sleep with them to create another race, or a hyphenated race of people!"

(Daramani 1999). Her pain over the disintegration of the “African family” (in the sense of a political and cultural as well as a racial entity), and the resulting diasporic dispersal, is perceptible in this remark.

We have now reached the “Door of No Return,” which is said to have been the last exit point for the captives.¹⁴ Loud disco music resounds from the other side of the gate. When the guide opens the door, we suddenly become part of a big beach party—teenagers are dancing on the steps that lead from the castle to the sea. Apart from the volume being turned down a bit, nobody appears disturbed by our presence, and the merry-making continues.

When I later asked one of the museum workers about this incident, she replied: “Well they are just having fun, they don’t realize. . . . I think people, the local guys are saying that this is one of the safest areas to swim.” She immediately wanted to “discuss it with [her] boss,” since it could “give us problems.” This episode together with the official’s reaction indicate the immense difficulties involved in harmonizing local appropriations of space with visitors’ demands for a memorial ground. Since the forts and castles were under the control of the Ghanaian state, they have been utilized as convenient locations for many different purposes. For instance, I came across documents dating from 1976, where the traditional council of Upper Dixcove (Ahomta) asked to use Fort Metal Cross during the weeklong annual Kundum festival. The council wanted to accommodate festival guests at the fort, a request that was given approval by the GMMB, on the condition that a fee would be paid to the board and that “the premises should not be used for pouring libation” (AM 30/181).

Even today, when so much more attention is being paid to the forts’ and castles’ significance as “special places” (Report 1994: 19) and a solemn and sensitive adaptive usage has been repeatedly agreed on (*ibid.*), this does not forestall other interests to manifest here. After all, visitors come and go, but the local community is permanently living in the presence of the forts and castles. Even though its interests and needs are probably taken the least notice of in the whole debate surrounding the sites (Bruner 1996: 297), they are not totally ignored. Thus, as part of the 1999 Fetu Afahye festival, a concert was scheduled to take place inside Cape Coast Castle. Reggie Rockstone, Ghana’s hip-hop mega-star was expected to come to town. The castle and the forecourt were filled with an excited crowd of young people from Cape Coast, many of whom had never been at the castle before. The stage had been erected just above the male dungeon, where only a few days earlier the “declaration of emancipation” had been proclaimed as part of the joint Emancipation Day/PANAFEST celebrations. The addressees of the latter “reverential night” had

been mainly foreigners. Now, by contrast, the castle belonged to the local youths, who were enjoying the rare entertainment and not worrying about other sensitivities. I had wanted to attend both events in the company of my hostess's eighteen-year-old son and his friend. While they were happy to join me for the concert, they were reluctant to go to the reverential night and preferred to visit a nightclub instead. There are other venues in Cape Coast, which could hold a comparably large audience, the Centre for National Culture (CNC) among them. On the one hand, therefore, the fact that the Rockstone concert was held at the castle was like a conscious violation of the agreement that "no musical extravaganza should be performed in the castle because it would contrast sharply with the 'Sanctity' of the building" (Report 1994: 13; emphasis in the original). On the other hand, Ghanaian hip-hop music does take up the themes of slavery, African unity, and Black pride—more than any other popular cultural expression. If regarded from that angle, the categorical contrast between the two events dissolves.

However, one also has to keep in mind that it is not necessarily the local people who are planning and organizing such events to take place at the castle. International companies also make use of the premises in order to promote their products.¹⁵ For example, I was told about a dance party that was put up by Guinness Breweries inside Cape Coast Castle. People were drinking beer, dancing, and enjoying themselves, while an MC was leading the program and praising the quality of the Guinness brand. An event such as this has no connection to the castle's role as a slave memorial. When people who feel connected to the place as a site of suffering learn about it they are insulted and hurt: "Would the Jews party in the ovens in Germany? Would New Yorkers party at Ground Zero in New York City? This is disgusting!" Such was a widespread email comment on another Jazz concert, organized by the American company Black Entertainment Television (BET) and held at the Cape Coast Castle in March 2003—despite a wave of protests that had been articulated in the run-up to the concert (Jijaga 2003).

That this controversy took place more than a decade after the initial white-washing debate indicates that the conflicts that I have outlined above are far from resolved. Rather, as I demonstrate throughout this book, they are continuously articulated on different occasions and through a variety of means.

Standing outside the gate, in view of the Atlantic Ocean, our group listens to the story of the Middle Passage, attempted escapes, and death aboard the ships. Then we re-enter the building. Moving past a row of storerooms that were used to hold all kinds of trade goods during and after the slave trade, we reach the so-called Condemned's Cell. Deserted

soldiers, enemy European spies, and pirates as well as “stubborn captives” are said to have been punished here. The guide asks some of us to go inside while he closes the door for a moment. When the cell was still in use, the door would not be opened until the last prisoner had died. I am glad to step outside again.

WHAT’S IN A PLACE?

To conclude this chapter, I take up the notion of Cape Coast Castle as a contested terrain once again, this time from the theoretical perspective of spatial relations. By differentiating between the understandings of the castle *as place* in opposition to the castle *as site*, I attempt to elucidate the processes through which meaning is constantly (re)generated within its realm.

Cape Coast Castle, standing exemplary for the many slave forts and castles on the West African coast, is not a neutral place but rather a continuously disputed one. This does not mean that the castle grounds constitute a kind of stage on which different groups act out their controversial positions and consequently come into conflict with one another. Neither should the castle be regarded as the generator of “some general spatial effect” (Urry 1995: 66), independent of human activity. Instead, it is the interdependence of social and spatial factors that forms its most striking feature. The stones of Cape Coast Castle bear the imprints of complex historical events. In combination with the visitors’ historical and political awareness as well as their position in present-day relations of power, these traces produce an effect, which in turn influences contemporary perceptions of history. Moreover, this effect (be it an emotional stir, a feeling of unease, or a sense of psychological liberation) also leaves its mark on the social relations that are unfolding within the discursive space surrounding the castle.

The castle/dungeons form a distinctive locality where meaning is grounded and continuously produced (see Rodman 1992: 643). Even though they were built for a specific purpose (at first for trading in gold, later extended to serve as storehouses for slaves), they have been transformed over time.¹⁶ Different actors have consecutively determined their purpose and resulting significance—be it as trade post, seat of (colonial) government, post office, state prison, or national museum. This official administrative history has left its imprint on the building and makes up part of its place-identity. Yet, even though that particular history can be said to represent a hegemonic discourse of people in power, it is not the only one that can still be traced. The perspective of the slaves who were held captive inside the dungeons is one such marginalized position. In today’s debates surrounding the castle, the slaves’

story is more and more coming to the fore, articulated by people to whom it is of immense personal as well as political importance. As a result of this growing attention, slavery has become the dominant theme to be associated with the building. However, other marginal positions, such as the local significance of Nana Tabiri's shrine, continue to be such: marginal. They have not (yet) entered the domain of representational significance. Nevertheless, they, together with previously dominant positions, remain inscribed on the castle as on a palimpsest—both in physical and discursive terms. They cannot be wiped out completely.

In his analysis of the relationship between an event (the Holocaust) and a memorial (the Warsaw Ghetto Monument), James E. Young has pointed toward the danger of “turning events themselves into a mere footnote to their memorialization” (1989: 103, n. 8). In discussing the diversity of positions toward the castle, I do not aim at trivializing the slave trade. My specific interest here lies in the context in which the slave trade is being commemorated today—at a particular place that is in itself ambivalent.

There is no unambiguity for such a place as Cape Coast Castle. Moreover, I would argue that it is its very ambiguity that makes it a place. As Doreen Massey has put it, “what is specific about a place . . . is always formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence there of particular sets of social interrelations, and by the effects which that juxtaposition and co-presence produce” (1992: 12). In his philosophical history of place, Edward S. Casey carefully distinguishes between “place” and “site.” The latter, to him, carries the defining features of “homogeneity, planiformity, monolinearity, and seriality” (1997: 186). Place, in contrast, “brings with it the very elements sheared off in the planiformity of site: identity, character, nuance, history” (*ibid.*: xiii). What may sound like a romanticizing invocation of “real places” (echoing Pierre Nora's notion of “real memory” [1989: 8]), as opposed to “artificial sites,” can in fact be utilized as a device to grasp the specific character of the castle/dungeons. To me, what is most significant in Casey's discussion is his argument that “if ‘place’ always retains an aspect of particularity . . . ‘site’ must be grasped in terms of ‘a generalizable model of functioning’” (1997: 185). I argue that this “model of functioning,” a term borrowed from Michel Foucault, is not only significant in terms of technical or administrative use-value. It can also be extended to the sphere of memory and commemorations. As I have demonstrated, there have been continuous attempts by different groups and individuals to ascribe *one* meaning or *one* means of representation to the castle, in other words, to turn it into a site. However, the castle resists those attempts—it remains contested and is thereby constantly reproduced as place.

James E. Young has demonstrated that even a memorial designed for a specific commemorative purpose, the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, may give rise to a “cacophony of competing voices” (1989: 92; cf. Brown 2002). It is precisely this quality, which renders the place continuously meaningful in its local setting. Often monuments appear fixed and are therefore at risk of vanishing from public consciousness. Once this fixation is broken—be it by unconventional appropriations of the monumental space or by disagreement over the adequate means of representing a historic event—their status and social impact become objects of debate. The clash of different positions produces frictions, which in turn may have a very constructive effect: Official memorialism is contrasted with a variety of counter-memories that challenge a singular and confined version of history.¹⁷ In the process, representational authority may shift from one perspective to the other, depending on the specific constellation of actors involved (see Schramm 2008c; cf. Bruner & Gorfain 2005 [1984]).

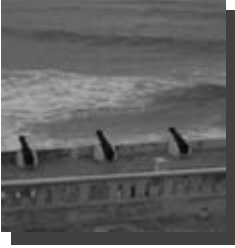
Cape Coast Castle is not a memorial *per se* but rather a historic location that has served multiple functions. Still, to many visitors, it is above all a place of horror—a tangible evidence of past crimes and sufferings. The slave trade has thus become the dominant discursive theme at the castle. One question, however, remains unresolved, even among the people who share that particular focus: How is this past to be (re)presented? And how is the evidence to be preserved? As my discussion has shown, there is no such thing as one truthful representation—even though there might be a broad agreement on the inadequacy of a particular chosen focus, such as the one employed by the GMMB and its international team of experts. The above-discussed rhetoric of truth, as well as the officials’ and conservationists’ reliance on monumental time-scope, does imply the danger of reifying history. The persistent holding on to *one truth* ironically creates another assimilable version of the past and thereby avoids the “difficult and often painful and unbearable encounter with what continues to be the intangible presence of an absence, which Jacques Derrida has called [with reference to the Shoah] the ‘hell in our memory’” (Baer 2000: 45).

At this point I would like to return to the formulation put forth by one of my interview partners, who had characterized the dungeons as “empty.” The virtual emptiness that he was referring to, the fact that “there are no slaves lying there, fossilized” (Anquandah, interview 07.12.1999) sharply contrasts with a different notion of place, namely, its association with a feeling of belonging (cf. Feld and Basso 1996; Lovell 1998). Such intimacy or even a sense of home is denied to the person who is facing the void (see Hartman 2007). What is generated instead is a process of memorial ascription. The literal abyss that the

dungeons represent resembles the void that we encounter in the photographs of former German concentration camps, discussed by Ulrich Baer (2000). Those photographs depict landscapes from which all traces of their historical uses are extinguished, just like the people who fell victim to the Holocaust. The images do not “contain evidence to reveal their importance” (*ibid.*: 42). Nevertheless the viewer is unable to withdraw from them. She is searching for traces that would connect her or him to the landscape, that would help to illustrate the horror whose only reference remains the caption of the respective picture. The sites as such, however, cannot generate a feeling of place in the beholder, because they “finally exclude us” (*ibid.*: 49). For Baer, the notion of place entails a sense of wholeness, which is different from the nothingness that speaks from the photographs. This situation bears a striking similarity to the empty vaults beneath the castle courtyard, which also carry a caption that identifies them as slave dungeons. In both cases, it is left to the imagination of the individual to fill the void in a commemorative act. Such acts, however, remain always incomplete. In the case of the castle, this incompleteness is not just a result of the multiplicity of memories that are attached to the building; it also arises from the experience of loss that has been produced by the slave trade and that remains an “intangible presence of an absence” (*ibid.*). Baer draws our mind to the continuous tension between evidence and absence, appropriation and exclusion, concrete location and abstract history. In case of the castle, each person who passes through the building—be it whitewashed or gloomy—is confronted with this tension.

From what has been said so far, it can be concluded that the castle/dungeons are ambiguous in multiple ways. Not just as a contested terrain accommodating different subject positions, but also because of its very nature as a point of transition. In its amazing complexity, the castle escapes fixation. Thus, it is place and non-place, site and counter-site, or even place and site—all at the same time, depending on the specific angle from which it is being approached. It is this transformative quality that marks the slave castle as such an important topos of memory for Africans from the diaspora, as well as for Ghanaians and Europeans.

Next I discuss an additional dimension of the castles—that is, I examine them as destinations of pilgrimage tourism. Building on their identity as transitional spaces, I put the castles/dungeons in the broader framework of homecoming as a diasporic journey. First, to build up my analytical framework, different aspects of travel and movement that form an intrinsic part of both pilgrimage and tourism are discussed.



CHAPTER SIX

PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

HOMECOMING AS A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

The slave trade topos is certainly of outstanding importance to most Africans from the diaspora who are coming to Ghana. It is at the core of a pilgrimage discourse advanced by African-American visitors as well as Ghanaian and American tourism officials alike. The pilgrimage metaphor has also been taken up in the academic literature that deals with (African) diasporan homecoming (Davis 1997; Harden 2007; Holsey 2008), yet often without deeper analysis. The pilgrimage vocabulary denotes an attitude of reverence with which the journey ought to be undertaken as well as represented. It also differentiates diasporans from ordinary tourists and grants them a special relationship with the place/s they visit. Like the term “homecoming,” it suggests a possibility of healing and reconnection. At the same time it is articulated in a tourism framework that also provides the infrastructure that makes the journey possible in the first place. For example, I came across the following advertisement by an African-American tour operator, which announced “pilgrimage tours” to the Motherland, promoting “the REAL African Experience” and explicitly claiming that “this is NOT a tourist trip!” (*The Rising Firefly* 2002: 40; emphasis in the original). Estimated costs for this particular journey were given, with \$3,000 for a one-month tour. This commercial embedding (or even creation) of deeply emotional experiences, which becomes most obvious in corporate-sponsored homecoming tours, has drawn Paulla A. Ebron (2000) to speak of “tourists as pilgrims.” For the same reasons, Sandra L. Richards rejects the term “pilgrim” altogether:

Though many travelers may emphasize the spiritual dimension of their journey, I retain the former term [tourist] in order to signal our collective inability to escape a mediatized cultural economy, whose commodification and circulation of information, images, and desire so saturate our daily environment as to nearly pass for invisible, with the result that discourses of authenticity and agency mask our identities as consumers selecting from a number of externally determined options. (2005: 619)

In my own analysis, I want to neither embrace nor reject the notion of pilgrimage completely. As my previous discussion has indicated, allusions to “family,” “home,” and “sacred grounds” are central categories in the homecoming discourse. Yet they may easily turn into sources of conflict, especially if their application within the tourism sector becomes too obvious. The equilibrium between pilgrimage and tourism needs to be constantly negotiated and reestablished. Therefore, when I speak of pilgrimage tourism, I mean this process of continuous balancing between the two poles—a movement that is characteristic not only of the phenomenon as such but also of the shifting positionalities of the actors involved. Before I concretize my notion of pilgrimage tourism in light of the homecoming phenomenon, I want to tease out some of the theoretical linkages that have been made between the two types of travel/experience.

THE COMMON TRACK: PILGRIMS AND TOURISTS ON THE MOVE

The current literature on pilgrimage shows that the framing of pilgrimage within the discourse and practice of the tourism industry is far from unusual (see Badone & Roseman 2004; Coles & Timothy 2004; Eade & Coleman 2004; Eade and Sallnow 1991; Smith 1992b; Swatos 2006). Rigid distinctions between (serious) pilgrims—always on a journey to a sacred site—and (playful) tourists—always on a trip to locales of profane pleasure—have become blurred. Victor Turner already notes the linkage between sacred travel and the pilgrims’ engagement in secular activities (1973: 204–205). For example, he points out the abundance of commercial activity around pilgrimage centers in medieval Europe, “where the shrine is flanked by the bazaar and by the fun fair” (*ibid.*: 205). Turner concludes that this reign of profanity sharpened the contrast between the everyday life at the pilgrims’ home world and the sacredness of the shrine that they wanted to reach, plus the inner transformation they aimed to achieve. In more recent times—both in terms of historical distance as well as epistemological approach—the commercial aspects of sacred travel, and for that matter the intrinsic linkage between pilgrimage and tourism, have moved to the foreground.

Thus, it has been argued that centers of religious pilgrimage, such as Lourdes in France, have virtually grown into tourist attractions. As John Eade (1992) has demonstrated, the commercial refashioning of religious zeal has become a marked feature of this (and other) sacred sites. Thereby, the strict dichotomy of sacred and secular, with a fixed pattern of appropriate behavior as the distinguishing feature of a sacred site (Hubert 1994: 11), is called into question. Even the pilgrims may behave like tourists when they purchase religious souvenirs (Eade 1992: 28), or they may turn again into “proper tourists” immediately after their visit to the shrine when they continue their holidays in the region or beyond (*ibid.*: 22).

Apart from such analysis of the close correspondence between pilgrims and tourists at an empirical level, the two concepts have also been brought together within wider theories of travel and identity. In an eloquent cultural critique of the postmodern condition, Zygmunt Bauman (1996) employs pilgrims and tourists as opposing metaphors, each standing for a distinct conception of identity. To Bauman, man [*sic!*] as pilgrim is the ultimate metaphor for the modern subject, constantly preoccupied with the building and maintenance of an identity through which he can give meaning to the confusing world surrounding him.¹ For modern man, life is determined by the point of arrival (whether real or imaginary) always gleaming in the future. And the past, one may want to add, is represented in the form of grand narratives. For the postmodern subject, however, the future seems to have lost its magnitude and allure—it has collapsed into a present that has established its permanent rule (cf. Harvey 1990). Now, fixation needs to be avoided, and identities must be prevented from “sticking” (*ibid.*: 24). Bauman singles out the stroller, the vagabond, the player, and finally the tourist as the inherent states of being in today’s world. Out of those four, the tourist, quite in contrast to the player or the vagabond, seems to be devoid of any creative potential, because to him, “the strange is tame, domesticated, and no longer frightens” (*ibid.*: 29); it is presented in a package that he buys without questioning. In other words, he is gazing (Urry 1990) at a product, not engaging in a world.

Simon Coleman and Mike Crang have criticized the sole focus on “gaze” in tourism studies, because it omits the dynamics of “who is looking at whom, and what is being staged” (2002: 8). Taking this criticism seriously, one also needs to ask who precisely those “postmodern subjects” are who want to (or perhaps, have to) “keep the options open” (Bauman 1996: 18). And where does one draw the line between modern and postmodern subjects? Doreen Massey, in close correspondence to bell hooks, has stressed that the postmodern discourse of dislocation, be it in the metaphorical or actual sense, reflects the perspective of an elite—Western, White, and male (1992: 9–10).

The experiences of this rather small group sharply differ from those of other people “on the move”—such as migrants and refugees (cf. Kaur and Hutnyk 1999: 1–2). While their identities, too, are certainly fragmented and shifting, this situation is not just the result of arbitrary choice but is rather determined by global geopolitics and power hierarchies (cf. Pabst 2006). Anthony King has taken this point further by calling into question the very term “postmodernism.” In his article on the “times and spaces of modernity” he provocatively asks: “Who needs postmodernism?” and calls for a reconceptualization of the Western concept of “modernity” in such a way as to “take the ‘global space’ of the present as the ‘now’ of modernity” (1995: 119). This would mean to acknowledge the “existence of a world beyond the Western hemisphere” not as a recent phenomenon but rather as a previous blind spot of Western concepts of the world and its social and political constitution (see Appiah 1991; Clarke & Thomas 2006; Gilroy 1993). The term *postmodernism* would then become obsolete, because it would be replaced by a much broader concept of modernity that would radically reject the narrow perspective of Eurocentrism, out of which postmodernism emanated in the first place. This approach would help to integrate into the discussion a more diverse range of movements such as the ones recognized by Zygmunt Bauman.

Anthony King’s skepticism toward the entire concept of postmodernism seems the more justified if one considers people’s political and social practices. When Bauman states that the modern “problem of identity”—its construction and maintenance (associated with the pilgrimage metaphor)—is no longer relevant, one wonders about how to fit into this picture such re-essentializing movements as Afrocentrism or the growing preoccupation with heritage and personal, as well as collective, genealogies that is taking place on a global scale (see Lowenthal 1994: 45; Nash 2002). Longing for a “stable identity” (or be/longing) is not all that outmoded, it seems. Especially in highly politicized and emotionally charged contexts such as diasporan homecoming, there is a pronounced articulation of a yearning for home and “oneness.” That does not mean that an individual’s notion of the meaning of such a proclaimed collective identity (as, for example, expressed in the kinship metaphor of the African family) would have to correspond with that of others who relate to the same ideal. Neither does it indicate that this aim could ever be reached. Nevertheless, the promise of fulfillment and arrival lingers in the notion of a return to Africa—even though such expectations might not be fulfilled, and the journey toward an African identity may have to continue.

To understand that particular movement toward “home,” it is useful to step back from Bauman’s perspective and to introduce a more differentiated view on pilgrims and tourists. The diasporans who are coming to Ghana share

a lot with both types of travelers—in terms of their politics of identity (and identity formation) as well as their actual behavior. Their journey serves as an example that the pilgrim's wandering in search of a spiritual center "out there" (Turner 1973; cf. Cohen 1979, 1992) has not simply been replaced with the (efficiently planned and thoroughly organized) movement of a growing number of tourists to places elsewhere.

"The pilgrim" is not a fixed or one-dimensional state of being. Neither is "the tourist." Both categories are open to transformation and inclined to internal diversification and hierarchy. It is therefore necessary to distinguish among different motivations for, as well as different forms of, travel that are all classed under a general term such as *tourism*. Thirty years ago, Erik Cohen (1979) introduced his "phenomenology of tourist experiences," which may still serve as a useful tool to grasp the "continuum of travel" (Adler, quot. in Smith 1992a: 4) and the subject positions floating along the top of it. Cohen draws analogies between pilgrimage and tourism that go beyond the recognition of movement as being characteristic for both. At the same time he also avoids a mere equating or replacement of one term with the other, as Nelson Graburn has attempted in his analysis of tourism as "the sacred journey" (1977). Although there are striking parallels between the two forms of travel that may compel us to regard "sightseeing [as] a form of ritual respect for society and . . . tourism [as absorbing] some of the social functions of religion in the modern world" (MacCannell 1973: 589; see also MacCannell 1999), such an analysis remains on an abstract philosophical level and thereby blurs important empirical distinctions between, as well as within, the two categories. Cohen is not interested in such broad generalizations. He recognizes that not all tourists are looking for the same thing—that is, not all of them ought to be called "modern-day pilgrims."

At this point, I would like briefly to consider Dean MacCannell's pioneer study on "staged authenticity." MacCannell's article marks a break with previous attempts to grasp the phenomenon of tourism, especially with David J. Boorstin's (1961) concept of "pseudo-events." Boorstin stands exemplary for a tendency to oppose tourism with "real travel," and vulgar tourists with enlightened intellectuals, a distinction that has its base in mid-nineteenth-century cultural stereotyping and "snobbish 'anti-tourism'" expressed by the emerging bourgeois elite (Buzard 1993: 5). MacCannell, however, argues that this very distinction is at the heart of the tourism experience.² Drawing on Erving Goffman's division of social establishments into "front" and "back" regions, MacCannell develops a scheme in which six different tourist settings are arranged on a continuum between front and back regions. The front region signifies the "meeting place between hosts and guests," and the back "is the

place where members of the home team retire between performances to relax and to prepare" (1973: 590). Now, MacCannell's major argument is that the "quest for authenticity" (*ibid.*: 593) is at the heart of *any* tourist's aspiration. To satisfy the tourists' desires to enter the back regions of the host society, authenticity is being "staged" (*ibid.*: 595). According to him, the very insistence on "participation" in the lives of others, which suggests an authentic experience to the tourist, is an indicator for this staging, because "no one can 'participate' in his own life" (*ibid.*: 601).

Other authors have called into question MacCannell's basic assumption regarding the dynamics between the quest for and the staging of authenticity. For example, Edward M. Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett prefer to speak of "tourist realism" in order to avoid "the language of copies and originals, the spurious and the genuine" (1994: 459). How do MacCannell's "back regions" emerge? Who creates and sustains them? Regina Bendix (1989) and Michel Picard (1995) have demonstrated that what we call "local culture" is often produced only through tourism (see Herzfeld 1991). In the tourism sphere, we thus find "authenticity" in a state of emergence (Cohen 1988).

Therefore, "'the tourist' does not exist as a type" (Cohen 1979: 180; emphasis in the original). Cohen distinguishes five different tourist objectives, or modes of experience: namely, recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential. For my discussion of homecoming, the categories of experiential and existential tourism are the most significant. The former resembles a quest for authentic experiences, a search for "meaning" (*ibid.*: 186) at another place, which nevertheless always remains remote and "strange" (*ibid.*: 188). This type closely corresponds with MacCannell's idea of "staged authenticity." In contrast, the latter category of "existential tourism" is "characteristic of the traveler who is fully committed to an 'elective' spiritual center . . . *external* to the mainstream of his native society and culture" (*ibid.*: 190; my emphasis). The notion of "center" is important here. Victor Turner (1973) has singled out remoteness and ex-territoriality as a major characteristic of pilgrimage sites. According to him, the farther away in space, the more powerful a shrine becomes. Even though Turner's conception has been criticized for its rather narrow reliance on Catholicism as a frame of reference (see Cohen 1992: 34–35), it still works to clarify my discussion, since it helps one to keep in mind the importance of the journey through space for a pilgrimage (see Coleman & Eade 2004: 16–17). At the same time it recognizes that it is not the sheer extensity of movement that "makes" a pilgrimage. Rather, the kind of destination is of major importance. This specification calls into question any one-to-one equation of tourism and pilgrimage.

According to Erik Cohen, the pilgrim is seeking to reach the center of his own world, no matter how far away it might be in space. A special case in point is the so-called archaic pilgrimage. Here, the distance from the center is not a matter of place but one of time. This archaic center is associated with a pristine existence and is mythically constructed as a paradise forever lost—never to be fully restored, yet always longed for (1979: 182). The imagination of Africa as the Motherland, at once bucolically peaceful, almost innocent and at the same time conceived of as superior to others for the greatness and power of its ancient civilizations, comes close to this notion of “archaic pilgrimage.”

For the tourist, however, the center that she is striving for is located outside her world. Once at her destination, she may look at it with curiosity, awe, or even some understanding, yet as a conscious outsider—this is characteristic of the experiential tourist. Or the center may become the place of an elected “home,” where the existential tourist wants to restore energies for sustaining his ordinary, everyday life, which is perceived as one of “exile” (*ibid.*: 190). The only meaningful life, then, is projected onto the center to which the existential tourist may eventually convert. For Cohen, this notion of an “elective center” also includes the idea of a “historical home” to which a person could trace his or her spiritual roots. In that particular case, the center becomes laden with the desire for true (and due) belonging. However, the journey, the “homecoming” itself, does not guarantee fulfillment of this desire. The “real life” at the center may thus turn out to be incommensurable with the high hopes and expectations of the traveler (*ibid.*: 191–192).

HEMCOMING AS PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

How do the above-described concepts relate to the process of homecoming by African Americans? Their experience is a matter of a complex conglomeration of different motives and aspirations. Moreover, the people who come cannot easily be grouped under a singular heading. The spectrum of travel among them reaches from a one-time visit in a packaged tour to physical repatriation; it oscillates between strangeness and familiarity. Even though the travelers could be said to have a similar class background (middle class with a comparatively high level of educational capital), they differ in terms of political and ideological orientation and consequently in their attitude toward such issues as race, tradition, and belonging. This heterogeneity is mirrored in varying understandings of the meaning of homecoming as well as the perceptions of the process itself.

Apart from that, an additional complication arises out of the fact that their homecoming is not just to an ancestral land but at the same time to sites of

traumatic memory, such as the slave dungeons. Drawing a comparison with the Jewish Diaspora after the Shoah, there are compelling parallels as well as decisive distinctions between the two groups and their conceptions of home. One could argue that Africa/Ghana is symbolically understood as *both* the Promised Land (Israel) and the death camps (Poland) by African (American) descendants. Of course there is a major difference between the two examples that should not be omitted here. The Holocaust took place in the recent past; some of its survivors and eyewitnesses (as well as perpetrators) are (still) our contemporaries.³ Its primary goal was extermination; this is what Auschwitz and the crematoria stand for. The slave trade (though not slavery and its aftermath), however, had reached its peak in the late eighteenth century. Its victims were dehumanized, their labor was exploited, they were ripped apart from family, but nevertheless the trade remained first and foremost an economic enterprise. Furthermore, the issue is complicated by the question of African collaboration in the trade.

I do not want to engage in a historical argument about the factual comparability of the two systems (see Drescher 1996). However, the African Americans whom I encountered during my fieldwork often regarded the slave trade as “their holocaust,” and they demanded recognition of their collective sufferings and losses. The reason I draw parallels between Jews’ and African-American’s relations with the past and these people’s respective homecoming therefore lies in the shared emic perspective of the protagonists. This perspective concerns the significance of a particular history or historical event as well as its commemoration for the formation of specific group identities.

Israel and Poland constitute important topoi for American Jews today, yet with totally different memories and expectations attached to them. While both destinations hold a special significance in a collective Jewish imagination, the physical encounter with the “real places” may result in a conflictive engagement with the contemporary host-society. Thus, Nigel Rapport (1998) has demonstrated how the repatriation of American Jews to Israel does not necessarily lead to their complete integration into Israeli society, as one might assume that it would. On the contrary, in his analysis they “come to be at home in Israel . . . only to the extent that they are retaining their distinct American, individual, even diasporic identities—and by coming to terms with the paradox this represents” (*ibid.*: 62–63).⁴ The repatriation of African Americans to Ghana (which constitutes the most advanced stage on a continuum of homecoming) is characterized by similar dynamics.

With regard to the discussion of pilgrimage, the ambivalent attitude of American Jews toward the second destination, Poland, is of even greater interest. Jack Kugelmass (1992, 1996) has closely examined their institutionalized

tours to Europe and Poland in particular. This type of travel he characterizes as standing for

a memory culture that pertains to a . . . larger collectivity [that is, beyond immediate family ties]. And this memory culture has typically conflated time into the few short years of the Holocaust and place into a few of its principal camps of extermination—Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Majdanek. (1992: 401)

Kugelmass employs a categorical distinction between such reverential tours and other forms of tourism. In fact he rejects the application of the very term *tourism* for this particular phenomenon. According to Kugelmass, visiting Poland and the death camps, for Jews,

is ritualistic rather than ludic, a *form of religious service rather than leisure*. Indeed it is the very seriousness of such visits that ultimately distinguishes Jewish travel to Poland from tourism, that tells us that we are dealing not just with a matter of rite rather than festival, but with something completely devoid of any trace of festival. I believe that those who go . . . do so to participate in a *secular ritual that confirms who they are* as Jews, and perhaps even more so as American Jews. (1992: 402; my emphasis)

Jackie Feldman goes even further than Kugelmass by emphasizing the religious component of the Israeli youth voyages to Poland. To him, the voyage marks a “a civil religious pilgrimage, which *transforms* students into *victims, victorious survivors*, and finally, *olim* (immigrants . . .) to the Land of Israel and *witnesses of the witnesses*” (2008: 3; emphasis in the original). He goes on to state: “As in other pilgrimages, the significant markers in the landscape are narrated through sacred texts, while many other features are read out as irrelevant” (*ibid.*: 6).

I will return to Kugelmass’s employment of the concept of “secular ritual” (Moore and Myerhoff 1977) and its advantages and drawbacks as an analytical category for my examination of African-American homecoming. At this stage, however, I would like to come back to an aspect that is noticed by Rapport, Feldman, and Kugelmass and that to some extent matches my own observations in Ghana. All three authors point out the *distancing* between the “returnees” and the local population; a distancing that can also be observed in classical pilgrimage sites (McKevitt 1991). In the case discussed by Rapport, namely, an American Jewish couple’s repatriation to Israel, this estrangement

takes on the form of their attempts to teach the Israelis, especially the “Orientals,” “how to run the place” (1998: 75). Kugelmass and Feldman describe the deep cleavage between Polish residents and Jewish visitors. This manifests in mutual stereotyping and ignorance of each other’s sensibilities. Poles are accused of trivializing the Shoah and despising the dead—the white-washing debate at the Ghanaian slave castles/dungeons comes to mind. In the case of the travels to Poland, the stereotyping is a *negative* one. It is confirmed when Jewish tourists are called *zhid* (“Jew”) by Polish residents—they link this reference to their Jewishness with historical Polish anti-Semitism, which immediately brings about memories of the horrors of the Shoah.

In contrast, the initial stereotyping of African Americans coming to Ghana is a *positive* one, connected to expectations of a “family welcome” and easy acceptance on part of diasporans. Such expectations are frequently unfulfilled. Africans from the diaspora, just like Europeans and White Americans, are often called *oburo* by Ghanaians. *Oburo* may refer to a “person born overseas,” yet its usual translation is as “white person.” Despite the fact that it is not articulated with bad intentions, this appellation is perceived as an insult by many of the visitors, precisely because it ignores their self-definition as *Africans*. Instead of emphasizing kinship, it places them in one category with other tourists and is consequently regarded as a negation of the seriousness of the diasporan quest for home. In 2007 the renamed Ghanaian Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Affairs reacted to this problem by suggesting a new phrase to address diasporans, *Akwaaba Anyemi*—an artificial expression forged from two Ghanaian languages, Twi and Ga, meaning “welcome sibling” (see Schramm 2009). Outside official occasions, however, this expression has not gained much acceptance. And even calling African Americans “brother” or “sister,” as is often the case in commercial and curiosity-driven encounters that take place during homecoming tours, may serve as a marker of difference between Ghanaians and diasporans (Hartman 2002, 2007).

Such conflictive aspects of homecoming should be borne in mind in the following discussion of pilgrimage tourism. For most of the diasporans who come to Ghana, no matter their ideological divisions, the slave dungeons resemble shrines and are attributed with a strong potential to cathartic healing. What is referred to as a “continuing healing process” (Nana Okofo, interview 09.05.1999) is not connoted to the hope for the curing of a bodily ailment or, more significantly, for redemption in a religious sense. It is not their belief in God that motivates the travelers to come and visit the dungeons and similar places but rather a search for selfhood and reconnection with the past that is linked to a sense of spirituality and a strongly felt ancestral presence.⁵

This distinction from institutionalized religion is necessary for a better understanding of the specific dynamics that unfold during such a visit. In the introduction to their edited volume *Secular Ritual*, Sally Falk Moore and Barbara Myerhoff point out that “the sacred is a wider category than the religious” (1977: 3). They make special reference to the political sphere as an arena for the performance of “secular rituals.” Slavery and the slave trade are hotly debated in diasporan circles. Political issues, such as contemporary racism and the question of reparations, clearly form a background against which the voyage to the Motherland needs to be read. In addition, the voyage is very much an individual search for one’s Self, embedded in the conviction of one’s solidarity with fellow seekers, that is pursued through the journey “back home.” As one of my interlocutors expressed it: “In order for you to be whole . . . you have to acknowledge those things in your past.”

Healing, therefore, ought to be understood as a “healing of the soul” suffering from the psychological wounds of slavery. In the words of Cheryl Finley: “At the destinations of roots tourists, [such as] the monuments of Cape Coast and Elmina, the concept of memory is active and fluid as in the performative, human function of ‘re-remembering,’ that is, putting back together, restoring the body, making whole the body politics” (2004: 114).

In the eyes of the people who are affected by it, such healing may equal a “totally spiritual experience” and can take on the form of an “emotional possession” inside the dungeons (Rabbi Kohain, interview 09.02.1999). To some people, even the dungeons are too meaning-laden and potent to be visited—their ascribed power to change an individual may thus lead to anxiety. A woman who had recently repatriated with four of her children and two grandchildren to Ghana because, as she told me, she felt a strong need for connectivity with the Motherland, said that she did not want to go to the slave dungeons and confront herself with that experience, because she was too scared of what it might do to her.

This dimension of individual healing is omitted from Moore’s and Myerhoff’s discussion of secular ritual. They are more concerned with the formal aspects of and structural similarities between religious and political ceremonies as well as the creation and affirmation of authority and legitimacy via such rituals. Though their terminology is suggestive, it cannot fully account for the phenomenon of homecoming. In a similar vein, one cannot confine the above-described sentiments to the category of “existential tourism,” since it does not recognize the spiritual aspects of homecoming. Instead, they have to be analyzed in a pilgrimage framework, as I have outlined above.

However, one must not stop here but rather ask what happens when that sense of pilgrimage is taken up by the Ghanaian and American tourism

industries and turned into a commercial enterprise. It is precisely the growing tourism sector (addressing all kinds of potential visitors) that first of all *enables* African Americans to come and experience Ghana: The slave sites are symbolically produced as “special places” at least partly *because of* their insertion into tourism (see Lanfant 1995: 38)—a reality that is ignored, even fundamentally opposed, by many of the visitors.

The tourism framework is not just important from an organizational angle. To an even greater extent it works in terms of what Simon Coleman and Mike Crang have called the “dissemination of place” (2002: 11). Their argument can be referred back to Scott Lash and John Urry (1994), who have pointed out that “places and cultures are instantaneously communicated around the world, both intentionally through place-marketing and more generally through the economy of signs” (quoted in Rojek and Urry 1997: 15). In the case of homecoming, it is the tourism industry in close cooperation with media representations through which knowledge about Africa (Ghana) as a destination and about its attractions, which include the slave forts and castles, is spread.⁶ This situation calls into mind Arjun Appadurai’s (1990) conception of the global cultural flow and more precisely his reference to media- and ideoscapes as two out of five currents that are characteristic for disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy.⁷ Mediascapes, according to Appadurai’s classification, “provide... large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ‘ethnoscapes’ to viewers throughout the world” (*ibid.*: 299). The emphasis here is on “viewers”—Appadurai privileges the influence of TV, film, and video over that of other media such as newspapers. The print media were of supreme importance in the age of nascent nationalism, as Benedict Anderson (1983) has so convincingly demonstrated. In contrast, Appadurai argues that a shift has occurred—from “imagined communities” (Anderson) to “imagined worlds,” that is, “the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe” (Appadurai 1990: 296–297).

The tremendous success of the TV series *Roots* (1977), which has also been repeatedly screened in Ghana, is a case in point. Based on Alex Haley’s novel of the same title (1976), it recounts the story of the African diaspora in America from the perspective of one family—Haley’s. The destiny of its African progenitor, Kunta Kinte, is at the heart of the narrative. Despite (or perhaps, more accurately, *because of*) the fact that it was only a “strip of reality” (Appadurai 1990: 299), a particular interpretation of a complex history, which was offered to the series’ wide audience/s, it brought about a heritage boom and a “genealogical craze” (Kugelmass 1992: 406) that not only affected African Americans but likewise encouraged other communities in

their search for a “homeland” (*ibid.*). Among Black Americans, a once in a lifetime trip to the Gambian village of Juffure, the alleged place of birth of Kunta Kinte, became increasingly popular—a desire that was eagerly met by tourism agents on both sides of the Atlantic.⁸ David Lowenthal has analyzed the reasons for this triumph of the fictitious:

Haley’s Juffure was [an amalgamate of] West Africa with Avalon, Eden, and idealized small-town America in a Club Méditerranée type of Platonic city-state. Indeed, only such anachronisms enabled black Americans to identify *their* past with this remote and unlikely place; had Haley depicted Juffure as it actually was, his picture would have been not just disbelieved but ignored. In short, factual faithfulness was jettisoned for a symbolically serviceable past. And that past has triumphed, for tourist fame has since begun to transform Juffure into a facsimile of Haley’s eighteenth century idealization. . . . In what purports to be history, such as Haley’s *Roots*, “authenticity” means fidelity to feeling that swamps facts in anachronistic invention, a search for roots so *engagé* as to include very little of the actual past. (1985: 228, 231)

Apart from the construction of a place (be it Juffure or Cape Coast Castle) through the avenue of mediascapes, images of places also circulate via the “travelers’ tales” (Robertson et al. 1994) of those who have already “been there.” Thereby, a visit to the slave dungeons may turn into an obligation (Kugelmass 1992: 402) for the people who have not yet seen it, while the place and its aura get constantly re/produced through such visits.

Yet the negotiation of slavery and the slave trade in a tourism framework remains highly contested. Within the sphere of homecoming, the figures of the tourist and the pilgrim are represented as diametrically opposed—by tourism officials as well as the travelers themselves. The tourist and the pilgrim constitute the two poles of a metaphorical continuum on which they share their respective position with that of strangers and family members. A continuum implies the opportunity of changing subject positions. While the strict opposition between tourists and pilgrims is thus asserted in public rhetoric, it can be maintained neither on an empirical nor on an analytical level. Rather, I argue for the persistence of ambiguity, which is virtually embodied in the travelers themselves, as their roles are continually changing and their identities are perpetually re/created throughout the journey. I therefore speak of pilgrimage tourism in order to capture both the sacred and the secular dimensions of the phenomenon without giving analytical preference to just one of these poles.

What follows next is the discussion of Emancipation Day, an event in which the ambivalent character of pilgrimage tourism becomes particularly clear. Emancipation Day is all the more interesting, since it represents an attempt (involving both Ghanaian and diasporan actors) to institutionalize and better control the movement of the pilgrim/tourists and thereby to avoid an escalation of potential conflict (for example, between visitors and locals or among visitors of heterogeneous backgrounds). Yet, as I demonstrate, Emancipation Day unfolded its own dynamic—despite rigid planning and organization. This gave way to new antagonisms as well as to the creative forging and appropriation of sacred space.



CHAPTER SEVEN

EMANCIPATION DAY

A ROUTE TO UNDERSTANDING HOMECOMING

*Many years passed into centuries / And as part of our flesh to part of
Africa's soil / Wherever we go, far or near, / The soul still yearns for
the places / Where the umbilical cords of our forebears / Were buried
by their mothers: / Nostalgia is the umbilical cord stretched / To painful
length.* (Kwesi Brew, from "Dan Diego at Edina (Elmina)—The Great
Rebuff," in *Return of No Return and Other Poems*, 1995)

Since 1998, Emancipation Day is celebrated on an annual basis in Ghana. Together with PANAFEST it constitutes a major marker in the annual tourism calendar. Both events claim to overcome existing differences between continental and diasporan Africans and to reaffirm the striven-for racial commonality. The main attraction during Emancipation Day is a grand durbar at Assin Manso, a village located about 50 kilometers inland from Cape Coast. Here, the remains of two "slave ancestors" from Jamaica and the United States were re-interred in an elaborate ritual on the occasion of the first Emancipation Day. Meanwhile, as part of the recent Joseph Project initiative (see Finley 2006) that proclaimed the creation of a pilgrimage circuit to the various slave sites

Poetry from Brew, Kwesi, "Dan Diego at Edina (Elmina)—The Great Rebuff," in *Return of No Return and Other Poems*. Accra: Afram Publishers 1995, p. 9 (P.O.B. M.18, Accra, Ghana).

throughout Ghana, a reverential garden and memorial park have been erected around these graves and the adjacent riverside, where enslaved Africans are said to have had their “last bath” before being transferred to the coastal fortifications and eventually being shipped away. All references at the newly created memorial site in Assin Manso (be it the “ceremonial lawn,” “meditation lawn,” or “hall of prayer”) point out pilgrimage as the framework of expectation that tourists are to employ when visiting. The label of the sacred is thereby attached to the site as part of a marketing strategy (see Schramm 2008c). Assin Manso today resembles a religious theme park (cf. Ron 2009), and has a rather static appearance. In contrast, Emancipation Day 1998 was marked by a constant dynamics of ambivalence. In order to grasp this particular movement and the underlying processes of authentication, I will elaborate on pilgrimage tourism from an actor-centered and phenomenological point of view. I aim to show the intrinsic entanglement between pilgrimage (and its connection to the realm of the sacred) and tourism (with all its political and economic implications) that characterized the re-interment ceremony and is also partly applicable to journeys to the Ghanaian slave sites in general. Following the choreography of the Emancipation Day celebrations—though not confined to it—I take a close look at the attribution of the notion of a sacred journey to the homecoming experience. It will become clear that regardless of the seeming success of this particular event, the hiatus between mutual expectations of organizers, local communities and visitors, on the one hand, and the realities of their fulfillment, on the other, prevailed. Nevertheless, I also argue for the recognition of the creative and transformative potential of the homecoming process, which may take effect on an individual level as well as on a social and symbolic level.

To contextualize the events in Ghana, I need to situate them first in a broader framework of global commemorations of emancipation.

EMANCIPATION: A FESTIVAL OF THE DIASPORA

The final abolition of slavery was a gradual process. In 1807 the British government had officially terminated the transatlantic trade in slaves. But it took another thirty years before slavery was declared illegal in the British colonies of the Caribbean. In 1834 the institution was replaced by a system of apprenticeship, which was meant as a transitional period to enable both slaves and slave owners to adjust to the new situation. Yet, in reality, it was not much different from slavery. On August 1, 1838, two years earlier than originally intended, full freedom was eventually granted to the slaves. Still, other countries held on to slavery. In the United States, slavery was one of the

major contentious issues of the Civil War between the United States and the Confederacy. Here, the institution was kept up until 1865.¹ Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, as late as 1888. On the African continent, slave raiding and trading persisted even longer. For instance, the internal slave trade in the northern territories of the Gold Coast ceased in 1897, and the institution of domestic slavery in Asante was abolished only in 1908 (Der 1998; Getz 2004; Perbi 2004).

Abolition did not automatically lead to the economic and social advancement of the former slaves, not to mention to equality. While the planter class was rewarded compensation for the loss of their “property”—in the Caribbean alone this amounted to £20,000,000 (Bryan 1995: 1)—the slaves received nothing, and many continued to work as sharecroppers on the plantations of their former masters. Formal emancipation was therefore just the first step in a long way toward freedom (see DuBois 1903).

Nevertheless, the event was commemorated right from the beginning, even though with varying degrees of intensity. According to Bridget Brereton (1995), four different aspects can be distinguished in the celebration of August 1 in the British Caribbean. First of all, church activities and thanksgiving services were often dominated by the ruling White (and colored) elite who admonished the people to behave respectfully (and submissively) in order to prove that they were really worth their freedom. Second, some celebrations were organized by educated Blacks and coloreds with a “race-conscious” outlook. These aimed at inducing a sense of pride in Africa among the freed Blacks. Third, Brereton mentions that in the mid-nineteenth century, August 1 had almost lost its connection with slavery and had been turned into a purely secular holiday, dominated by horse racing and other Europeanized forms of entertainment. Finally, she lists rural folk festivities “that retained some link to the memory of slavery and Emancipation” (1995: 33).

On some Caribbean islands, the folk celebrations slowly developed into “centralized, baroque festivals” (Manning 1977: 270) during the twentieth century. Manning attributes this transformation to the growing importance of tourism for the island economies. In other cases, the celebrations’ original connection to emancipation gave way to a more inclusive evocation of (creole) national achievement. In Jamaica, from 1962 onward, August 1 was merged with the annual observance of Independence Day on August 6. Colleen Ballerino Cohen (1998) describes how Emancipation Day on the British Virgin Islands still serves as an occasion to emphasize national distinction, while at the same time acknowledging membership and pride in a pan-Caribbean culture.

The Trinidadian Carnival is another example for incorporation of the emancipation theme into popular cultural manifestations. Even though slavery was not always directly addressed during the Carnival, the festival nevertheless provided an effective way to rejoice about freedom and can therefore be regarded as “a deeply meaningful anniversary of deliverance from the most hateful form of human bondage” (Errol Hill, quot. in Breerton 1995: 38). Since 1985, however, August 1 is officially recognized as a day of public remembrance of slavery and emancipation in Trinidad and Tobago. It was installed only after violent clashes had evolved around a prior national holiday, so-called Discovery Day, commemorating the arrival of Christopher Columbus at Moruga on July 31, 1498—a date with an obviously quite different emphasis.

From the 1990s onward, a shift in official policy can be observed throughout the Caribbean. In 1997 both Jamaica and Barbados re-installed Emancipation Day as a public holiday in its own right, thereby bringing the history of slavery back into focus. In 2001 the government of Grenada appointed an Emancipation Day Coordinating Committee to counterbalance the street jamming and partying. The accompanying press release says that “these activities are expected to encourage research and create a greater awareness of what emancipation is all about” (Belgrafx.com 2001). Laurence Brown (2002), writing on Barbados, explains this official “rediscovery” of the emancipation theme, sometimes framed in a radical Pan-Caribbean or even Pan-African outlook, as a means of serving a vital self-interest of the state:

Popularly “invented” symbols . . . had to be incorporated into the symbolic repertoire [of the state] because they seemed to represent the voice of the people. But at the same time officials worked to discipline these popular forms and to impose their own. (Lynn Hunt, quoted in Brown 2002: 109; cf. Bongie 2001)

This aspect is well-illustrated by Daniel A. Segal who shows how “ancestral diversity” is embraced as a “defining national characteristic” in Trinidad and Tobago (1994: 221), a point that is also emphasized in John Steward’s (1986) analysis of the ever-increasing politicization of the Trinidadian carnival and its monopolization by the state. The official recognition of “Emancipation Day” as a national holiday can therefore be regarded as part of a strategy of the state to create an image of “unity in diversity,” which is nevertheless contradicted by social and class realities. By contrast, Black pressure groups, such as the Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad and Tobago, which was founded in 1992, take on a more critical position and expound the problems of

racial discrimination and inequality as a legacy of slavery that is still prevalent in the society.

Turning toward the situation in the United States, things look slightly different. William H. Wiggins, Jr., lists several dates for the commemoration of emancipation observed by different communities throughout the United States (1987). In their general outlook, they share many features with the festivities that I have described for the Caribbean; ranging from more formal church services to celebrations held in community parks, the latter dominated by games, barbecues, dancing, and “excessive alcohol drinking” (*ibid.*: xx). But there is one important difference: All these activities always took place *exclusively* on a folk level. Even though, from the beginning, some Whites participated in the celebrations, there was never an official attempt to establish Emancipation Day (or, for example, Juneteenth²) as a public holiday. The only date that would come close to such recognition could be seen in the installation of “Martin Luther King Day” by the Reagan administration in 1986. This choice of date, however, consciously avoids any direct references to the legacy of slavery in the United States and emphasizes African-American achievement after the Civil Rights era instead.

Part of an explanation for this lies in the differences between the social makeup of the United States and the Caribbean. In contrast to many Caribbean nations, the United States until recently held on to a self-definition as a “‘White’ country” with multiple *European* origins (Segal 1994: 221). Until the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States, Black people appeared only at the fringes of this national representation. Emancipation celebrations have therefore always been a cultural expression of an oppressed minority. For that matter, they have continuously served as befitting avenues of social protest. Wiggins sees a primary function of the emancipation celebrations throughout the decades in keeping “the Afro-American saga alive” (1987: 49). According to him, this saga is made up of four epochs: first, a glorious African past with Egypt and Ethiopia as the great civilizations; second, slavery in the Americas, including the slaves’ own resistance exemplified in the Underground Railroad³ and similar activities; third, emancipation itself, paying homage to Abraham Lincoln as well as to the superior morality of the slaves; and fourth, the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality. In the early twentieth century, this “saga” was repeatedly re-enacted in historical pageants and folk dramas. Later, it took on a different guise when the Civil Rights as well as the Black Power movements used emancipation events to publicize their political demands. The employment of African symbolism in the choice of clothes, hairstyles, and jewelry became increasingly visible during the celebrations from the 1970s onward.

Yet the major point of reference continued to be the society in which the African descendants live at present.

TRANSFERRING EMANCIPATION DAY TO THE CONTINENT: THE BACKGROUND OF THE 1998 CELEBRATIONS IN GHANA⁴

In July/August 1998, Ghana for the first time invited the “dispersed children of Africa” to participate in the celebration of Emancipation Day and thereby to “embark on a pilgrimage perceived as one of rediscovery of your roots” (Programme 1998). The participants were addressed in the language of kinship and encouraged to “discover the kith and kin and [to] satisfy all those ancestral yearnings too deep to be expressed, in the rejuvenating fountains in the land of our birth” (*ibid.*). Why this choice of Ghana as a venue for Emancipation Day?

Official lore during the time of my fieldwork had it that the initiative for Emancipation Day had stemmed from then-President Rawlings himself. He was said to have been inspired to take up the idea during a visit to the Caribbean in 1997, where he had been invited as a guest of honor to the celebrations in several countries. When I asked the then secretary of the national Emancipation Day planning committee about the reasons for inviting President Rawlings to the Caribbean, she answered:

I don't know why he was invited, but I believe it's because of his role in Pan-Africanism, his role in building our nation, his role in Africa and the leading examples that he has given as a political leader in Africa, not only as a political leader but as an economic leader, as a strong and firm believer in Pan-Africanism. . . . (Wilhelmina Asamoah, interview 03.09.1999)

Her statement reveals some of the key elements of the official rhetoric regarding Ghana's relationship with the African diaspora: a constant revocation of a Pan-African spirit, going hand in hand with the assertion of Ghana's entitlement to political leadership and national distinction (in the West African subregion) as well as the implicit reference to the economic sphere. All these aspects play an important role in the Ghanaian state's conception of homecoming, and they were all visible during the celebration of Emancipation Day. Similar to the recent revival of state commemorations of Emancipation in the Caribbean, the event in Ghana can be said to have been installed with the prospect of significant gains (in terms of prestige as well as anticipated economic progress) for the ruling government.⁵

Even though President Rawlings's trip definitely marked a decisive moment, it was by no means the first step toward the installation of Emancipation Day in Ghana. Without the close cooperation from African-American and Jamaican partners, such as the Jamaica National Heritage Trust, together with the active participation of the diasporan community in Ghana as well as the substantial support of traditional leaders, the event would never have been realized.

Since the late 1980s the community of repatriated Africans from the diaspora in Ghana has constantly expanded. This group of people played a significant part in initializing the move. They took on the role of mediators between the Ghanaian state and Pan-African-minded individuals and organizations in the diaspora, especially in the United States. One of these latter ones was Prof. Leonard Jeffries, a regular visitor to Africa and eminent member of official diasporan delegations to Ghana. Jeffries is known to favor a blatant racial essentialism in his comparison between Africans as good "sun people" characterized by a sense of community and harmony and Europeans as evil "ice people" marked by their inherent greed and materialism. In one of his documented speeches, he puts his theory in its political context:

Now, there's no "ice people, sun people" theory. What we had was a framework of analysis. We had a paradigm to organizing information. The white boy has given us a paradigm. Haves and have-nots. The haves are white folks. The have-nots are anybody that's not white. And that's ironic. Because even if the Africans have the gold, the diamonds, uranium, the platinum, the plutonium, the oil, they are considered the have-nots. Even if the white folks ain't got a pot to pee in they are considered the haves. So, I mean, that paradigm doesn't hold water. We have another paradigm, which is okay, nobody's criticizing it: "First World" and "Third World." We don't even know what the World is. You know that the First World, the First World is white folks. And everything else comes after that. The first people, the First World *were* African people, people of color, sun people and we stand on that. Everybody else comes after that. And we are the haves. We have had the beginning of the march of humankind. We are the mothers and fathers of civilization. We developed science, mathematics, and philosophy. And we stand on that. (Jeffries 1991: no page; emphasis in the original)

In a later part of this speech, however, he reaffirms the racialized sun people/ice people dichotomy and the intrinsic relation between ecology and biology, on the one hand, and culture, behavior, and identity, on the other. In

addition, Jeffries has claimed that the Jews were solely responsible for the transatlantic slave trade and the ongoing oppression of African Americans.⁶ In 1991 this led to his expulsion from his position as Director of the Black Studies Program of the New York City College.⁷ Despite his extremely controversial position, Jeffries and other activists of a similar orientation were welcome partners of the Ghanaian government in the organization of Emancipation Day in Ghana.

Another group that was instrumental in the planning of the event outside Ghana was the Committee of Descendants of the Afrikan Ancestral Burial Ground. In 1991 a slave cemetery was (re)discovered during construction works in Lower Manhattan, New York City (Blakey 2000; Howell & Ramsaran 2001; Kittles & Royal 2003; La Roche & Blakey 1997; Perry n.d.; see www.africanburialground.gov). The cemetery had originally been used between the late 1600s and 1796. It provides rare evidence of the existence of slavery in the northern part of the United States. After it had been closed, it was simply built over when the city expanded during the early nineteenth century. At the time, no consideration was given to the desecration involved in such an act. Over the years, the cemetery fell into oblivion. When the United States General Services Administration began to unearth a portion of the cemetery in order to build a multimillion dollar federal office tower, a dispute over the adequate treatment of the site and the remains of the people who had been buried there was started. Members of the African-American community raised protests against the excavation of the bodies, which was carried out without consulting any of their representatives or paying any attention to African-American sensibilities.

Finally, in 1992, a decision was taken by New York's first African-American mayor, David Dinkins, to stop construction and to transfer the skeletal remains of about 400 people to the Cobb Biological Anthropology Laboratory of Howard University for further examination under the control of African-American scientists (cf. Reardon 2005: 134). DNA testing was performed on the bones, and the origin of the remains was largely attributed to West Africa, even though the results of the genetic testing were rather difficult to interpret in terms of ethnic or geographic origin (Kittles & Royal 2003: 221).⁸ In 1995 a high-ranking delegation of Ghanaian chiefs, headed by the late Nana Oduro Numapau II, then president of the National House of Chiefs, visited the African Burial Ground on invitation of Fihankra, an organization of African descendants that had been granted 30,000 acres of land for relocation in Ghana by the Akwamu traditional council. At the site of the former cemetery, they poured libation to atone for any African participation in the slave trade. Later, the delegation went to Howard University to

have a look at the remains. Some of the material relics that were found inside the graves, such as glass beads and pieces of cloth, were attributed to Akan origins (Bianco, DeCorse, & Howson 2006: 403). The plans for a symbolic re-interment got started, as

[the delegation] identified those skeletons as the remains of their people and asked that samples of the cloth be sent to them to identify their tribal origin. From that moment on, everything was set into motion to return as many as feasible back to Ghana for a proper interment . . . away from the land of their enslavement, suffering, and shame and anything close to the memory of it. (In(Light)Mint n.d; 2: 7)

However, New York City authorities did not approve such a reburial in Africa. Nor did the entire African-American community desire it. Instead, measures were taken to bury the remains at the original site and erect a monument on the spot. In October 2003, after much controversy, this “African American homecoming,” as it was dubbed on the official website of the ABG, took place in New York.⁹

Five years earlier, in 1998, at least one slave-ancestor whose descendant had been involved in the controversy over the African Burial Ground had made his journey to his final resting place in Ghana. The late Sonny Carson, an important and controversial figure of the Black Nationalist Movement and member of the above-mentioned Committee of Descendants of the Afrikan Ancestral Burial Ground described how this re-interment in African soil eventually took shape:

This international commemoration of our enslaved ancestors [e.g., Emancipation Day in Ghana] began here in New York, from the sabotaging of our plans to transport to Africa remains from the African Burial Ground in downtown Manhattan to the discovery under the Brooklyn Navy Yard of our ancestors, some of whom had already been moved to the Cyprus Hills Cemetery. As a result of months of face-to-face confrontations and negotiations with the government, I reclaimed the body of my own lost ancestor and great-great uncle, Samuel Carson, a Navy seaman who had escaped South Carolina in the aftermath of the Denmark Vesey rebellion from the plantation where my ancestors were enslaved. (Carson 1999)

In July 1998, Samuel Carson, who had been killed in 1845 at the age of thirty, while fighting for the U.S. navy in the war against Mexico, made his

journey “back” to Ghana. Along with him went the skeletal remains of Crystal, identified as a former housemaid from St. Anne in Jamaica. She had starved to death in 1670 at the age of 80 (Daramani 1999). The choice of those two individuals was well thought through: a man and a woman; one from the United States, the other from the Caribbean; one young, the other old; their lifetimes marking almost the entire period of slavery in the Americas, both classified as runaway slaves—the bodies and the varied histories that they stood for were to be reunited on the Motherland. This return of the bones of the enslaved was to symbolize the final reversal of the original movement of dispersion that had first of all created the African diaspora under such painful and destructive circumstances. Given the sacred aura of skeletal remains as relics in a number of religions, the conflation of the commemorative ceremony and pilgrimage became particularly evident.

Meanwhile, the choice of August 1 (and not, for example, June 19) to demarcate this historical move was also convenient. Even before the full abolition of slavery in the United States, the Caribbean Emancipation Day had been celebrated there as well: “For Black Americans, August 1 was not a celebration of something already achieved, but an annual reminder of a continuing affliction,” writes Joy Lumsden (1995: 47). Now, this “reminder” was to be brought to the continent itself, although the “romantic narrative” (Holsey 2008: 137) of return that was performed during Emancipation Day aimed at closure rather than emphasizing ongoing struggles.

STAGING THE SACRED

“THE VICTORY HAS COME! EVEN THE BONES REACH BACK HERE TO LAY IN ITS HOMELAND”¹⁰

The 1998 celebrations in Ghana, announced as the first of its kind in Africa, were very special. They attracted a large body of visitors from all over the diaspora who participated in the weeklong festivities. On the agenda were not only a one-day conference on Emancipation and a youth forum but also a beach party, a fashion show, and a crafts market. The latter features are partly attributable to a general tourism framework. Attractions are built around an event to offer a broader choice to potential visitors and to prolong their stay. Yet such convivial activities were also very much in line with the popular celebrations in the Caribbean as well as the United States. Moreover, the beach party and fun fair in particular attracted lots of Ghanaian participants—mainly young men, but from a diversity of backgrounds. They can therefore be said to have provided avenues for Africans

from the continent and the diaspora to celebrate together and to better get to know one another.

Apart from these extravaganzas, the incontestable highlight of the program was the re-interment itself. Following a carefully mapped choreography, the participants were led to accompany the remains of Samuel Carson and Crystal through different stations on the “slave route.” Throughout that journey, the level of participation and involvement of those who had come to take part in Emancipation Day was continuously raised. From being a mere (though attentive) audience of a staged performance, the pilgrims/tourists slowly turned into the main producers of the event. One could argue that this was a calculated effect on part of the Ghanaian planning committee—a successfully “staged authenticity” (MacCannell 1973) whereby the difference between front and back regions was no longer detectable. However, one should note that the choreography of Emancipation Day was planned, at least in part, by the very people who were later affected by it in a very powerful way. Even though the event itself was not spontaneous, the reactions of the people who participated in it were. Thus, for example, during the re-interment ceremony, Sonny Carson proclaimed: “I’m a warrior and I’m not supposed to cry.¹¹ But I’m so moved . . . because *I never thought it would become like this*. I’m so proud of being an African and being here, that I cannot even describe it! I’m really overwhelmed” (Daramani 1999; my emphasis).

THE SLAVE TRADE RE-ENACTED

Throughout the week, several re-enactments of the slave trade took place. During the official opening ceremony at the International Conference Centre, the National Dance Company performed an abridged version of its dance drama *Musu: The Saga of the Slave* (cf. Olwig 1999). The piece tells the story of the enslavement of Africans—beginning with their capture (by Europeans) on the continent, followed by the Middle Passage and the auction block. African resistance, solidarity, and betrayal are themes touched on in the choreography. On the occasion of the opening ceremony, the choice of scenes concentrated on the portrayal of shackled slaves, guarded and maltreated by European soldiers who were characterized by white masks, khaki uniforms, and the carrying of Danish flags. Later that day, a totally different performance took place, the so-called Slave March. Dozens of members of the Ghana Actors Guild proceeded through the streets of Accra in metal chains. While on their way, they were being whipped and shouted at by fierce-looking “slave-raiders” who represented African middlemen and were dressed in northern-style clothes, wearing straw hats, calabashes, and raw-fiber overalls.

It is interesting that in those two performances any allusion to the involvement of African *chiefs* in the slave trade was scrupulously avoided. This could be attributed to the fact that within the Ghanaian cultural politics, (southern) Ghanaian chieftaincy with its splendid and colorful durbars stands for cultural wealth and national pride. Moreover, symbols associated with Akan royalty, such as *kente*-cloth, have long been appropriated by African Americans as part of their African heritage—not the heritage of slavery but the heritage of perseverance. Their appearance in the re-enactments would have disturbed the celebratory outlook that was inherent in the motto of “Emancipation: Our Heritage—Our Strength.”

Some people strongly opposed the whole idea of the Slave March. For example, Remel Moore, then director of the Du Bois Centre, said to me: “No matter how dramatic you make it, no matter how much you’ve rehearsed it—it’s not real, it’s never gonna be as painful, so in the end you’re just play acting and to me that’s insulting” (interview 12.17.1998). Despite such criticisms, the Slave March proved to be successful in terms of its emotional impact. In many respects, its authenticating effect was far more intense than that of the dance drama. In the safe, air-conditioned environs of the Conference Centre, the boundaries between stage and auditorium, show and reality, remained rather stable. In contrast, to watch the “slaves” marching along the streets produced an overwhelming sense of immediacy for some of the onlookers. The scenery that unfolded before their eyes gave way to deep feelings of compassion, grief, and anger. A woman was reported to have bought water for the “slaves” who were crying for it. When she gave it to the guard for him to share it among the “slaves,” he simply knocked it out of her hand and she started weeping. Other incidents involved White people who happened to pass by the scenery and were vehemently confronted by African-American participants accusing them of being the descendants of the perpetrators. When one of the organizers told me about those instants, he admitted:

I was scared myself because I realized that if you don’t take care the focus will be lost. The thing is not to intimidate anyone, it is just to tell a story. . . . But . . . there can be an announcement to that effect that this is just a performance, it is not a real thing and that emotions must not go out of control. (interview 12.21.1998)

This statement indicates the tensions that are implicit in the embedding of Emancipation Day and similar events in the wider context of the Ghanaian tourism industry. Although, on the one hand, one can count

on the emotional appeal of such an enactment and the resulting influx of people who would feel addressed by it, there are, on the other hand, legitimate fears that it could lead to a conflict with other tourists, namely Whites, who still constitute the largest group of foreigners (and investors) coming to Ghana.

Such considerations indicate opposing positions of Ghanaian organizers and diasporans regarding the significance of such a ceremony and the proclaimed “mourning” and “atonement” involved in it. In contrast to the concerns about necessary control over the Slave March’s emotional impact on part of the Ghanaian organizers, my African-American interlocutors interpreted the reported incidents on the roadside as meaningful elements of the healing process associated with the event. Thereby, so the argument ran, people from different backgrounds at least got *involved* in the debate over slavery and its legacy:

if you sit in something that makes you a little uncomfortable—it is words being thrown upon you and it is not anything compared to what we have experienced. So . . . being so concerned about protecting the White man or protecting future other White people to make sure that they are not being at all pained by this when it pains us—too bad. I think we’ve all got to experience the pain. . . . So everyone has to be burdened down to the cleanest part in order for all of us to emerge clean from it. We can’t just protect one segment. (Remel Moore, interview 12.17.1998)

The reactions of different people to a performance such as the Slave March could never be entirely predicted or even controlled. No announcement could possibly prevent the participants from being moved by it in their own, particular ways. Movement here, as throughout the whole event, needs to be understood in a twofold manner. On the one hand, it refers to the physical movement of the “slaves” together with the audience along the streets and more generally on the slave route. On the other hand, it also denotes the emotional stir that occurred in many of the pilgrims/tourists as they engaged in that physical motion. Participants from the diaspora who expressed their feelings in the above-described ways can be said to have fitted the (staged) Slave March into a framework of expectations that was linked to their collective memory of slavery, and thereby to have turned the march into a unique experience. Through such a process of transformation, a sense of “being there” was created that went beyond the mere physical “proximity” to a desired place as it may be achieved through traveling and “mobility” in general (Urry 2002).

“GETTING TOGETHER” AT KROMANTSE

A still higher degree of involvement was reached when the remains were eventually taken on their final journey. Friday, July 31, 1998, was assigned as “Martyr’s Day” in the official program. Early in the morning several buses left from Accra for Kromantse, the village where Fort Amsterdam is located. From here, the coffins would be transferred to a canoe to be taken to Cape Coast Castle by sea. The choice of Kromantse was convenient—first, because of its proximity to Cape Coast; second, because of the fame that is still associated with its name. On the promotional video of the event one can see a large gathering, comprising villagers and visitors embracing one another in joyous celebration. For the Emancipation Day planning committee at the Ministry of Tourism, this marked a great success, since it created the impression of a “true homecoming” and family welcome for the diasporan participants. Barriers of language, education, and historical separation seemed overcome during this moment of reunification:

When the remains got [there] nobody told the villagers to come out and weep, to come out and welcome them, we never went to Abanze and Kromantse throughout the whole project. . . . We didn’t do any serious work there. But the reception there was so tremendous, as soon as the remains got there, all the people, the community . . . all came out of their rooms and welcomed—they didn’t know who was an American, who was a Caribbean . . . who was a Ghanaian, but they welcomed everybody, we mixed nicely. And it was so tremendous, a lot of people still talk about that particular activity and the impact it had on them—not the Ghanaians alone. . . . (Asamoah, interview 03.09.1999)

What was the motivation for the villagers to engage so actively in the ceremony? When I spoke to an employee of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board who stemmed from Kromantse and who still had part of his family living there, he told me very frankly that in his view the local people had been “deceived.” First of all, slavery was of no priority to them. How could it be? The village was so poor that the inhabitants did not even have money to properly feed their children or to send them to school, not to mention to care about slavery. He questioned the spontaneous nature of the welcoming. In his opinion, the villagers had been enticed to participate in the celebrations:

to get Ghanaians of that caliber [e.g., the fisherfolk] to rally around such a program, you really have to convince them into believing that something else will be coming out of that to their advantage of course. If they

see nothing coming out of that—next time, they will not even come. . . . So if they are bringing bodies from outside, supposedly Africans . . . fine. What actually [will you] benefit from that? . . . So tell them that, ok, we reconnect, they were sent out of this place for somewhere else, they are coming back; this is the beginning. If you will accept them, they'll follow up. . . . They might open up this place by creating jobs . . . so let's all together welcome them . . . so they have that feeling of acceptance, so when they go, they'll come back. Then of course, you may get people to reason with you. So they will come, help you to welcome them! Then at the end of the day, if they go and don't come back, you will get disappointed. . . . (interview 05.12.2002)¹²

During the event itself, such considerations were of no immediate concern—at least they were not noticeable for the participants. The momentary emotional impact of the gathering was too overwhelming.

When the coffins were finally handed over to the sea, the temporary peak was reached at Kromantse. The sight, sound, and smell of the ocean had a great effect on the participants from the diaspora. The Atlantic had been the scene of death and dispersal—an “ocean of blood” as one of my African-American friends told me when we were sitting together on the beach. Now, on the occasion of Emancipation Day, this meaning was reversed: The former slaves would triumphantly return on that same ocean. When the canoe eventually left Kromantse, people enthusiastically waved good-bye to the bodies. Once those were out of sight, most of the villagers stayed behind, while the other participants got on their buses and moved on to the next station of their journey: Cape Coast Castle.

BACK THROUGH THE DOOR OF (NO) RETURN

Inside the fortress, one of the most significant places for many Africans from the diaspora (next to the slave dungeons) is the so-called Door of No Return, the symbolic representation of the final exit point for the slaves leaving Africa. Just like the slave dungeons, the Door of No Return serves to authenticate the history of the slave trade. Its tangibility marks a transitory space that can be appropriated to fulfill a memorial function.

When the boat carrying the remains reached the shore of Cape Coast Castle, the space outside the gate as well as on the castle balustrades was crowded with people anxiously awaiting its landing. On arrival, chiefs of the Oguaa Traditional Area and representatives of the diasporan community in Ghana performed an atonement ceremony to receive the remains.

This atonement was of great symbolic value, as it equaled an official apology for the involvement and profiting of some of the chiefs in the slave trade. Similar ceremonies had already been performed on several occasions, both in Ghana and the United States. When I asked the incumbent president of the National House of Chiefs about the motivation for the performance of the ceremony on part of the chiefs, he answered that it was mainly due to the interest of African Americans (Odeefuo Boa Amponsem III, interview). Again, one could speak here of “staged authenticity” and denounce the ceremony as a shallow tourist performance. Yet in the particular situation it also provided space for the emergence of a sense of community among the diverse participants by discursively erasing the historical (and present-day) differences and conflicts among African Americans and Ghanaians and proclaiming a unified “family identity” instead.

After the pouring of libation, the Door of No Return, which had been decorated from the outside with a new plaque reading “Door of Return,” was opened. A long procession of people filed through, past the female slave dungeons, into the castle. The staging of the return in that manner goes back to the commemorative ceremony “Thru’ [*sic*] the Door of No Return—The Return,” which has been organized on a regular basis by One Africa Tours & Specialty Services. Nana Okofo, one of the initiators of that ritual, told me of its origin:

I often . . . go and have my prayers in the dungeons, thanking my ancestors for being who they were, surviving this encounter so that I could be alive today to give testimony. And one day when I came out of . . . the male dungeon, I looked across the courtyard and saw the door [*hesitates*]. The spirit said, create something that will take the children who are coming home through that door where hundreds of millions of our ancestors went through and never knew what was happening to them, where they were going—I mean you’ve got a guy who is cutting his cassava and the next thing he finds himself down in this hell-hole in chains and shackles amongst many of his counterparts from different tribes, going through an experience that no one can explain. . . . So the “Door of No Return—The Return” is a process to take us through that experience as much as possible, and try to assimilate the feelings of our ancestors. And to go through that door and outside and give testimony and then returning through that door again, signifying to the ancestors, that they didn’t kill us all out there, some of us have come back to give testimony of survival and that is the basic premise of “The Door”. . . . When we go down in the dungeons, we ask those who are not of African descent to give us that moment. Because

when we were down there, there was no one down there but us. We had to lean on one another, we had to answer one another's question, we had to support. *So this is a very sacred time for us.* And we must go through it. (interview 09.05.1999; my emphasis)

The sacred appears as an emic category to describe the extraordinary quality of a visit to the dungeons for people of African descent. Nana Okofo drew a sharp line between various groups of visitors, their assumed historical agency (as perpetrators or victims) and the resulting differences in their relationship with the place. To him and his colleagues, the people "who are . . . of that experience" are in need of a "ceremonial rite and ritual" (Rabbi Kohain, interview) to monitor their feelings and to give them a true perspective for the aspired "healing" and "wholeness."

What is striking in this approach is the distinction on racial terms: White people are excluded from the "community of shared experience," while Black people of all backgrounds are incorporated. The slavery topos, which is at the heart of the diasporan desire for healing, is thereby subordinated to the more general categories of racism and discrimination as a possible threat to all people of color (see Schramm 2009). The *differing* experiences between Africans and Africans from the diaspora are not important here. On the contrary: By invoking racial commonality as a given *reality*, homecoming is made meaningful and psychologically satisfying. This can be said to work out well in a ritualized and highly emotional performance such as "Thru' the Door of No Return—The Return." By re-entering the Door of No Return, the African descendants not only celebrate their joyous return to the "Motherland"; they also "give testimony" of suffering and survival and thereby make a claim for their entitlement to this place.

In contrast to this particular outlook, Edward M. Bruner writes of Ghanaian re-enactments of the slave trade that usually end with the slaves leaving Africa and not returning (1996: 296). This he interprets as an expression of the incongruity of African and diasporan perspectives on the history of the slave trade. To me, however, his interpretation is only partly accurate. *Musu* of the National Dance Company for example, does not explicitly develop the motif of return. And yet Africa serves an important point of reference throughout the play; its memory is evoked as the rationale of resistance on part of the slaves. Other Ghanaian performances, too, make references to an eventual return (see Schramm 2000a). The 1998 staging of Emancipation Day under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Tourism therefore needs to be recognized as part of a longer-lasting effort by Ghanaians to meet diasporan desires and expectations concerning homecoming.

Coming back to the scenery of the opening of the Door of (No) Return during Emancipation Day: Who were the people who made that reverse move? Singing Ghanaian youths, members of the organizing committees from Ghana and the diaspora, and African Americans living in Ghana, as well some of the pilgrims/tourists who had come especially for the occasion—they all escorted the coffins into the castle courtyard, where the rest of the assembly were anticipating them. The fact that not all the participants entered the castle through the newly designated Door of Return was probably due to organizational problems as well as safety considerations. However, it also indicates a hierarchy among participants from VIP to ordinary. In the staging of Emancipation Day, different degrees of involvement manifested not only in the succession of events but also at each single station.

For those diasporan participants who passed through the gate, however, the emotional appeal was immense. Many of them were in tears, and some even broke down. Again, I would like to point out the connections between physical and spiritual movement. In their reverse entering of the castle through the newly labeled “Door of Return,” the African descendants took symbolic possession of the castle and turned it into a space of their own. Pressed against other bodies; pushed forward by the advancing crowd of people; from time to time touching against the outer walls of the slave dungeons; perchance catching a glimpse of the coffins while stepping on the very ground that could once have been the last piece of African soil tread on by a departing ancestor—all these sensual impressions lasted only for a short moment and nevertheless created a sense of what I would like to term *arrival in motion*. This tremendous physical and emotional impact was partly produced by the choreography itself; but it was also linked to the manifold hopes that were on the minds of the people who made the move. Prof. James Smalls, one of the diasporan organizers of the re-interment, summarized those expectations:

One of the reasons we want to bring the bodies back through the Door of No Return, so that we can destroy forever the myth of the Door of No Return. Now we know the Door of Return, that there is no longer a Door of No Return, it has been destroyed. Now there is a Door of Return for *all* Africans to return home. With those bones from Jamaica and the United States representing . . . the *hundreds of millions* of Africans killed in the slave trade. Now that they have come home, the spirits and the souls of the hundreds of millions have come. Now their children will be able to return. The myth of the Door of No Return has been destroyed. There is only now a Door of Return and Ghana is the

gateway to Africa representing that Door. (Daramani 1999; emphasis in the original)

When he evoked the “myth of the Door of No Return,” he referred to the cultural amnesia and sense of disconnection that slavery and the Middle Passage stand for. In this formulation the homecoming of the diaspora, epitomized in the renaming of the gate as “Door of Return,” becomes associated with healing and closure. However, the persistent repetition of the key formula in this sequence came close to an incantation, and one gains the impression that the speaker wanted to keep the Door (and for that matter the opportunities for African Americans in Ghana) open with all might (and against all odds). Moreover, he took up the formulation of Ghana as the “Gateway to (West-) Africa,” which stands exemplary for the economic policy of the Rawlings government and its eagerness to attract foreign investments of any kind (Ministry of Information n.d.),¹³ but he gave the phrase a distinctly Pan-African outlook. All in all, his statement was much in line with official Ghanaian representations of Emancipation Day in which the opening of the Door of (No) Return was always represented as a manifestation of Ghana’s seriousness in its attempt to receive back its “prodigal children.”



FIGURE. 7.1 “Door of (No) Return,” Cape Coast Castle, 1999.

ARRIVING HOME? THE "FINAL RESTING PLACE" AT ASSIN MANSO

Cape Coast Castle was not the last station of the pilgrimage. After a short interlude of prayers, the whole congregation moved on to Assin Manso, half an hour's drive from Cape Coast into the interior. Here, the bodies would find their final resting place. At first, there had been plans to have the re-interment at Elmina, but after some consideration the decision was taken to transfer the burial to Assin Manso. Barima Kwame Nkyi XII, Paramount Chief of the Assin Apimanin Traditional Area, whose palace and residence are situated at Assin Manso, had been a strong advocate for that change of location. Thereby, "the thing would assume a wider dimension" (interview with Nana Amba Eyiaba 05.02.2002); in other words, he hoped that the tourism sector, connected to the growing influx of people around Emancipation Day, would spread farther into the interior and thus benefit the development of the entire region.¹⁴

Assin Manso was a convenient venue. Within easy reach from both Cape Coast and Accra it has also been identified as one of the important slave markets on the slave route from the north down to the coast and to Cape Coast and Elmina Castles in particular (Perbi 2004).¹⁵ In the choreography of Emancipation Day, the village was furthermore staged as the place where the slaves used to have their "last bath" on African soil. The *Donkor Nsuo*, or Slave River, runs through a sacred grove, which is said to contain a mass grave for slaves who died on their way to the coast.

On their arrival at Assin Manso, the participants were first led to the *Donkor Nsuo*, following a narrow path through the sacred grove, which had been lined with a recently erected bamboo fence. When they stepped down to the river, many washed their faces with the water that mixed with their tears of simultaneous loss and relief. Some filled the water into small containers to take it along with them. At this stage of immediate contact, the participants had finally turned into pilgrims. They were now at the heart of the event, no more watching a performance but going through a unique experience, physically engaged with their environment (the river) and mentally or spiritually absorbed by the confrontation with selected aspects of a collective past. Along with the remains of the two slave ancestors they had moved to arrive here, at the place that was constructed as the sacred center of the slave route—even though their journey took place in air-conditioned buses and not on foot, as in most other pilgrimages.

To understand the degree to which the entire event "touched" and "moved" the participants, one has to look at the bodily and ceremonial aspects of the people's engagement with their environment, which determined the intensity of the encounter, not only at the *Donkor Nsuo* but also on the other stations



FIGURE. 7.2 “Last Bath,” *Donkor Nsuo*, Assin Manso, 1999.

of the slave route that the pilgrims/tourists traversed on their journey. In his analysis of embodied memory, Paul Connerton (1989) suggests that the elements of repetition and habitual behavior are of central importance in any commemorative act. This observation, however, cannot be transferred in a one-to-one fashion to Emancipation Day 1998, since it was the first of its kind and gained its power precisely from its uniqueness. Still, the event was full of allusions to well-known cultural motives and practices—the baptismal resonance of the “last bath” may be considered as a case in point.

The re-interment itself was enacted as a royal burial. Some of the participants were once again shifting positions on the tourist-pilgrim-continuum and turned into an audience, while the community of Assin Manso together with the VIPs from both Ghana and the diaspora took over as the major actors. A ceremonial exchange of greetings followed by some speeches took place, as is customary for any *durbar* of chiefs in southern Ghana. Wailing women were mourning the death of the two ancestors—symbolically for all those who had died during the slave trade and in slavery. Barima Kwame Nkyi XII, clad in his “war costume” (Programme 1998: 7), entered the *durbar* ground in a palanquin that was dressed with Black *chedda*-cloth. Between his lips he held a small bunch of pepper, “a symbol of emergency, of urgency, of life” (Daramani 1999). He was introduced as the chief mourner.

Barima Kwame Nkyi XII's direct involvement in the event is significant, because it demonstrates that none of the actors could simply be fixed on a predetermined subject position. The resulting ambivalence of Emancipation Day was embodied not only in the diasporan tourists/pilgrims but also in their Ghanaian counterparts. As I noted before, Barima Kwame Nkyi XII had been instrumental in bringing the remains to Assin Manso. During Emancipation Day 1999, he stated that Assin Manso was fast growing into a destination of pilgrimage for the "kith and kin" in the diaspora. He said: "We take it seriously. . . . The history of Assin Manso is too serious to be playing host to mere tourist adventure!" However, he was a member not only of the Planning Committee for Emancipation Day but also of the Central Region Tourism Development Committee (TODSCER). Interested in (and held responsible for) the advancement and development of his community he thus had (and still has) a clear interest in making Assin Manso a further attraction in Ghana—an interest that began to materialize with the construction of the above-mentioned "Garden of Reverence."

Barima Kwame Nkyi XII could therefore be regarded as a representative of the Ghanaian tourism industry who was able to adroitly manipulate the rhetorical spectrum of the homecoming discourse in order to serve his own ends. However, his full participation in the funeral rites challenges the assumption of



FIGURE. 7.3 Graves of Crystal and Carson, Assin Manso, 2002.



FIGURE. 7.4 Garden of Reverence with Ancestral Graveyard, Assin Manso, 2007.

a dichotomist opposition between an interest in commercialization on part of Ghanaians versus an interest in commemoration on part of African Americans. Just like the pilgrims/tourists from the diaspora, he, with the other local participants, created the event through his active involvement. The funeral was distinct from cultural performances put on stage for tourists.¹⁶ The application of powerful symbols, which derived their meaning from a distinctly local context, signified a genuine commitment toward Emancipation Day on part of the Assin Manso traditional authorities and community.

HOMEcoming TO WHERE? THE MEANING OF THE PILGRIMAGE

Finally, the journey for Samuel Carson and Crystal had come to an end. They were buried at the edge of the sacred grove. To the commentator on the video covering Emancipation Day 1998 this finalization signaled that a “circle has been completed, never to be broken again” (Daramani 1999).

Despite the overall success of the 1998 celebrations, the physical repatriation of the bones of the enslaved did not result in the definite “arrival” of the diasporans “back home.” Of course this would be too farfetched an assertion with regard to *the* African diaspora as such. But even on the level of the event

itself, the high expectations that were raised with the first Emancipation Day could not be matched in following editions. I have already indicated some of the frustrations of the villagers at Kromantse. The subsequent staging of Emancipation Day in 1999 was a great disappointment to those diasporans who had been instrumental in bringing the bodies to Ghana. Neither did the event attract an equally large group of participants, both local and foreign, nor did it reach the same emotional appeal as the initial ceremony. The schedule and the venues had been changed several times, and important parts of the program, including the Slave March, had been cancelled on very short notice. To Nana Okofo, for example, the difference between the 1998 and the 1999 event was that “between salt and pepper.” This failure he attributed to the work of “perpetrators:”

Those of us born and raised in America, my dear, there is nothing that any government, any group of people can bring forward to us that we didn't experience in America. . . . And so when we see the signs of resistance [against] justice and righteousness, we know that that's the enemy. Whether you be Black or White . . . from Europe or Africa. (interview 01.05.1999)

To him, it was the lack of “emancipation consciousness” among the “enemies” that had caused the debacle. Minion Phillips, the leader of the Jamaican delegation, who had been so enthusiastic about the “victory” that had been achieved with the re-interment in 1998, also expressed her resentment against the Ghanaians' lack of awareness in blatant terms. During the “Wake-keeping/Vigil and Solidarity Night” that took place at the Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum, the venue was almost empty. Only two buses with participants from the diaspora had made it to the memorial, and the Ghanaian attendance was close to none. Facing this situation, which formed such a sharp contrast to the 1998 event, she exclaimed angrily: “Why can't Africa see that her people must come home? It's sad, only a few brothers and sisters welcome us. . . . Be careful Africa! We are here in spirit and in place. We are coming back and we are coming in our numbers!”

Her statement resembled the vigorous rhetoric about the return of the “children of the hundreds of millions enslaved,” evoked by Prof. Smalls a year before; but it was devoid of any sense of closure or reconciliation. Despite her appeal to the kinship metaphor, her speech emphasized a conflict between the continental “brothers and sisters” and a diasporic “us.” The fact that only few diasporans had found their way to the venue as well was not reflected in the speech.

Later, those participants who had taken part in both events complained of the overt presence of commercial interests as well as the poor organization of the 1999 celebrations. The organizers, however, attributed the latter to a serious lack of financial resources on their part. The attempted institutionalization of pilgrimage tourism thus leads to a major and irresolvable conflict. On the one hand, there is a need to generate revenue from the events so that they can be performed on a regular and sustainable basis; on the other hand, the visibility of commercial considerations leads to a decline in their attraction, because people (especially those participants coming from the diaspora) then feel that they are spurious.

And yet, the re-interment of the slave ancestors has given rise to additional movement: It has produced a new place on the map of worship for pilgrims/tourists seeking a connection to the Motherland. Before Emancipation Day 1998 Assin Manso was not “known” among African descendants in the diaspora. Today, however, there are more than 2,000 entries about the village to be found on the internet, most of which refer directly to the existence of the Slave River and the memorial park. Equaling the slave dungeons, the *Donkor Nsuo* has become a memorial icon for African descendants in the diaspora. Probably many more people have heard about it than have actually visited it. The image of Assin Manso as a pilgrimage or sacred site has traveled (not least because of the impressive staging of the first Emancipation Day) and has created a desire in people to go there and experience it for themselves in a direct encounter (cf. Urry 2002).

The village has thus become a destination—in a spiritual as well as physical sense. In 1999, during PANAFEST, I met an African-American professor who was thinking of retiring in Ghana. He described his experience at the *Donkor Nsuo* as follows: The local guide who took him there had encouraged him to bend down and drink some of the water. At first, he did not want to do that—having in mind all the warnings about unwholesome water and terrible diseases associated with it. But then he gave it a second thought,

. . . and what I thought about was: maybe my great-great grandmother or . . . grandfather took their last bath on African soil in that river. Maybe they came through there. And here I was, standing there, so I reached down and got the water and drank it, so that always a part of me would be the last bath of my ancestors before they were taken away from Africa. So it's just kind of a ceremonial thing, that water of the last bath will always be a part of me. And that . . . is something I could tell my children; that I drank the water of the last bath of my ancestors and let them know where it is, so if they would ever visit, they could do the same.

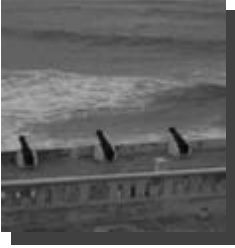
From one moment to the other his position had changed from that of an American tourist, unaccustomed to (and suspicious of) the local water, to that of a worshipper—bending down literally to the river and paying tribute to his ancestors. Through that small gesture, he had turned the *Donkor Nsuo* into a place of his own. It had become “sacred” to him. As John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (1991) have pointed out, however, the river (just like the slave dungeons) does not carry the property of “sacredness” as an inherent quality. Rather, the application of meaning to a shrine is what produces “sacredness,” and therefore the shrine derives its power precisely from “its character almost as a religious *void*, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices” (1991: 15, my emphasis). Such meaning evolves not only from an intellectual impulse or discursive embedding but, even more so, from a person’s or group’s bodily engagement in ritual practice.¹⁷

The experience described here is important in an additional respect. It points to the fact that a true sense of homecoming and healing be achieved only when the pilgrim/tourist reaches the center of *his/her own world*. I have demonstrated that for diasporan Africans who are coming to Ghana, the slave sites are of particular concern. They represent the history of slavery and dispersal, which is to a large extent the history of the African diaspora. In the rhetorical framework of pilgrimage tourism there is often talk about a search for “roots” among Africans from the diaspora. Yet this expression simplifies the complex motivations behind the homecoming-process. For example, Nana Okofo described his own repatriation as a return “home to [his] home.” He refused the application of the term “roots” altogether: “We are not coming home to find our roots, we are coming . . . to claim our inheritance. Because when I was taken from here, I must have had something, I had a family, I had a village, I had land . . . so this is an inheritance here that we have come to claim!” (interview 09.05.1999). Despite the assured commonality with those people who never left “home,” there is a second element in this phrase that needs to be pointed out. Nana Okofo indicates that diasporan Africans are *owed* their due—and not only from the former slave masters but also from their continental “brothers and sisters.” They, he implicitly claims, do *not share* in the experience of rupture, which was signified by the slave trade; at least they do not do so in the same way as diasporans.

History—and the history of slavery in particular—connects and divides. Therefore, I argue that it is not an *African* identity per se that is reinforced through a visit to the slave sites, but rather a specific *diasporic* identity. In his discussion of *The Black Atlantic* (1993) Paul Gilroy has opposed a diasporic with an essentialist consciousness among African Americans, expressed in the metaphoric language of “routes vs. roots.” The diasporic identity that I

am speaking of here does not follow this distinction. Many of the people who come to Ghana are proponents of an Afrocentric discourse that would perfectly fit into Gilroy's essentialist category. In my use of the term, the attribution of a diasporic identity does not necessarily mirror the pilgrim/tourists' conceptions of themselves; it rather serves as an analytical tool to grasp the specificity of the homecoming experience.

It is in such a diasporic sense that I understand homecoming as a pilgrimage. Without doubt, there are traces of archaic pilgrimage and nostalgia in the notion of return to an ancient ancestral land. In the next chapter I discuss this trope of a glorious past in more detail. However, the type of travel that I have dealt with in this chapter derives its specific quality (as pilgrimage) from the connection that it provides to the travelers' everyday reality. "Africa may be 'mother' land but it is also 'other' land," writes Martin E. Marty (1996: 252). And yet, as I have attempted to demonstrate, a sense of arrival and home, however fleeting, may occur when the travelers engage with *their* past on African soil. The interface between the familiar and the new constitutes a nodal point where the imagination is given a concrete place. The African environment is thereby transformed into a sacred landscape by (and for) the diaspora.



CHAPTER EIGHT

“THE RE-EMERGENCE OF AFRICAN CIVILIZATION— UNITING THE AFRICAN FAMILY”

CLAIMING A COMMON HERITAGE IN PANAFEST

*In the dark / a Tarantula crawls / into my daydream: // Black. Hairy.
Contorted. // Full of dis- / crepancies and dis- / jointed limbs. // Pitiless
and venomous / image / of history's dis- / tortions / of our furious Race.
(Kofi Anyidoho, from “Republica Dominica,” in *AncestralLogic and
Caribbeanblues*, 1992)*

The central historical referents of Emancipation Day have been the slave trade and slavery as well as their overcoming in the liberating act of emancipation. Yet the slavery past was not the only connection between Black people on the continent and in the diaspora. Within the Pan-African rhetoric that dominated the homecoming discourse, the kinship ties that were evoked in the celebration of Emancipation Day were said to reach back to the times when no

Poetry from Anyidoho, Kofi, “Republica Dominica,” in *Ancestrallogic & Caribbeanblues*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press 1993, p. 11 (P.O.B. 1892, Trenton, NJ 08607, USA).

Europeans had disturbed the cultural integrity of Africa. Despite the violent disruptions (associated with the slave trade and colonialism) that had shaped the Black experience over time, those cultural relations, referred to as ancient traditions, were still claimed to be vital and strong. The “African nobility narrative” (Clarke 2006: 134) employed here emphasized a shared cultural heritage as the basis on which Pan-African unity was to be built.

This aspect of constructing a common African heritage, represented as a means to affirm Black pride and self-esteem, is the central focus of this chapter. It featured most prominently in PANAFEST, a biannual cultural festival that carries the allusions to such African commonality in its twin-motto: “The Re-Emergence of African Civilization—Uniting the African Family.” Therefore, the festival serves as my main point of reference.

I regard PANAFEST as an arena in which different actors negotiated a great variety of topics. The unfolding spectrum of themes and interests literally blows up the narrow framework of the event itself and lays open conflicts and contradictions that are hard to overcome. They appear on various levels: ideology, intellectual discourse, cultural expression, and so on. In my discussion, I follow those lines of fracture in order to explore several dimensions of the politics of heritage. I am interested in the processes of objectification and commodification that underlie any definition of a specific heritage (cf. Handler 1988), be it in the variety of a national patrimony or the more encompassing assertion of a Pan-African identity. I also look at the creation of moments of authentication and examine their political implications.

Although PANAFEST is still a young festival, most of the cultural and historical references that dominated its deliberations are not new but rather draw on a rich ideological repertoire that goes back to the positions of Blyden and Garvey. Even the structure of the festival follows a model of cultural representation that is already known from other contexts. I begin my discussion with an exploration of those traces, looking at the evolution of the festival from idea to reality, as well as at the shape and objectives of some of its predecessors. The next part of the chapter is devoted to PANAFEST ‘99, in which I participated. Here I examine the topoi of the African heritage and the united “African family” on several grounds. First, I look at the position of the intellectuals, who can be said to have acted as the festival’s main supporters. Second, I analyze the festival’s opening ceremony as a performance of cultural unity. I pay particular attention to the prominence of cultural symbols, such as *kente*-cloth, and ask how and to what ends different actors utilized them. PANAFEST was by no means a direct implementation of theory into practice. Too many different interests were attached to the festival—organizers, traders, performers, journalists, participants from different backgrounds—all having

their own ideas about what the festival ought to represent and how it should be run. Therefore, in a third move, I attempt to unfold this spectrum of perspectives from an actor-centered point of view.

FESTIVAL FEATURES: FROM CONCEPT TO REALIZATION: THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PANAFEST

In 1980 the late Efua Sutherland (1924–1996), renowned Ghanaian playwright and founder of the Ghanaian National Theatre Movement (July 1987: 73–81), drafted her “Proposal for a Historical Drama Festival in Cape Coast.” Given the importance of Cape Coast Castle as a historical monument of slavery, she felt that the entire festival should be devoted to a thorough examination of the slave trade as a key event in the history of African people—both in the diaspora as well as on the continent. The castle itself was to serve as the major venue—at this place it would be impossible to deny the history of slavery. It was therefore just apt to start the debates from there. However, during the early 1980s slavery and the slave trade were by no means themes on the public agenda in Ghana. What, then, was Sutherland’s motivation for that move?

According to her daughter, Esi Sutherland-Addy, the main goal was precisely to break the silence and to create historical awareness among Ghanaians who were “pretending that it did not happen.” At the same time, Sutherland had wanted to initiate a process of mutual understanding and cooperation among Africans on both sides of the Atlantic:

. . . for Ghanaians there was the need to confront this history and for African Americans there was a need to exorcise the history from their lives so that they could carry on. And I think that those two combined . . . and knowing that theater is an art that can lead to catharsis, I think she felt that there should be some attempt to use an artistic means of creating catharsis in a way that would otherwise be violent or difficult. (interview 09.06.1999)

Efua Sutherland belonged to a generation of intellectuals who were in support of the Pan-African idea, as it had dominated the years of Kwame Nkrumah’s presidency. From the beginning, she was among the leading figures of the Ghanaian cultural scene. To her, art and politics were immediately connected. For example, the dictum of the “African Personality,” which was at the heart of early cultural politics in Ghana and which still continues to be influential among quite a few academics, entailed a notion of cultural decolonization as the most important step toward the achievement of a self-confident

and independent African subject-position. Moreover, it always included a strong diasporic component.

In addition, Efua Sutherland became personally involved with the suppressed history of slavery, and in several ways. In 1954, at the dawn of Ghanaian independence, she married Bill Sutherland, an African-American civil rights activist, who belonged to the early group of diasporans who had followed Kwame Nkrumah's invitation to come to Ghana and assist in the process of nation-building. She always remained closely associated with the diasporan community in Ghana and was well aware of the difficulties and mutual misunderstandings that arose from opposing expectations and the differing historical awareness and interpretation of the past on both sides (Angelou 1991: 11). Cape Coast Castle, the edifice of slavery and the slave trade, was a powerful symbol of this disparity. Having grown up in Cape Coast, Efua Sutherland had been living in the presence of the castle throughout her life. During her childhood and afterward, however, it was no more identified with the slave trade but instead housed colonial offices and later the General Post Office. Few of the local people were still aware of its past or cared about it (see Holsey 2008). For diasporans, however, the castle signified loss and dispersal. If the castle could now be turned into a site where an examination of that history would take place through the medium of artistic performances, this, Sutherland hoped, could eventually lead to an accommodation of the various perspectives in a Pan-African framework.

Following those initial considerations, the main objectives of the festival were stated as follows:

[PANAFEST constitutes] a bold attempt to:

Re-establish the truth about the history of Africa and the experience of its people using the vehicle of African performance arts.

Provide a forum to promote unity between Africans on the continent and in the diaspora.

Affirm the common heritage of the Black and African peoples and define our contribution towards the development of the continent and to world civilization. (Programme 1992: 7)

In other words, what Efua Sutherland had in mind when she designed her proposal was to "take African history and trying to make sense out of it, because a lot of it is so confusing and so traumatic" (K. Opoku-Agyemang, interview 08.03.1999). She had anticipated a festival in which each aspect would be "meaningful [and] symbolic" (E. Sutherland-Addy, interview 09.06.1999). The event should not just comprise drumming and

dancing but also feature carefully selected cultural elements that would offer ample space for necessary questions to be asked and long overdue debates to unfold—all concerning the impact of slavery (and colonialism) on today's world.

In Sutherland's vision, *asafo*-companies would have welcomed the people at the castle, by "enacting a little resistance thing outside the castle and so on" (Sutherland-Addy, 09.06.1999). Those companies are military organizations of the Fante ethnic group alongside the Ghanaian coast. The various companies are recognized by their colorful flags, which, because of their exquisite and original design, can nowadays be found in many African arts collections worldwide and are therefore well-known to an audience outside Ghana. Older flags sometimes feature an appliqué Union Jack in one of the corners. The distinct structure and style of the companies reflects the mediating role that was played by the coastal peoples in the trade between the Europeans and the hinterland from the fifteenth century onward. Elements from European sources (military pomp and ranks, uniforms, gun salutes, and so on) were combined with ritual and military components of African origin. In their military conflicts with other groups, such as the powerful Asante kingdom, Fante rulers did not hesitate to call on the support of Europeans if it suited their strategy. If the *asafo* were now represented as an example of African resistance against European invasion, this signifies their symbolic re-appropriation into the ideological framework of Pan-Africanism, with African defiance and agency as major themes.

According to Sutherland, PANAFEST was to highlight the "art of drama as such" (Sutherland n.d.: 2). This particular focus would guarantee the concentration needed to make the festival a success, to distinguish it from other "prestigious cultural programmes" (*ibid.*: 1) that neighboring African states might develop, and to move the festival into the future, artistically as well as in terms of content.

At the time, however, none of the governmental decision makers wanted to hear about it—let alone discuss its realization. A few years later, coinciding with the beginning of the tourism drive in Ghana, the situation began to change. Efua Sutherland counted on this atmospheric change, when, seven years after the original proposal, she wrote a short supplement to the first document. In it, she urges the Ghanaian government to "take quick action to substantiate [Ghana's] advantage" and not to "wipe out Ghana's chance to be the country in which such a FESTIVAL is located" (*ibid.*; original emphasis). The paper makes explicit mention of the economic advantages that the staging of the festival could have, especially "in the connection of its recommended location—CAPE COAST (OGUAA)" (*ibid.*: 2; emphasis in the original).

It was this potential promise of economic development, rather than the sudden insight into the need to come to terms with the legacy of slavery, that was mainly responsible for the renewed attention that was being paid to the PANAFEST idea by governmental agents. In addition, I argue that the interest in Sutherland's proposal arose from the realization that the cultural sphere was a suitable arena for recreating the legitimacy of the state, and more specifically of the government in charge—internally as well as with regard to the outside world. The fact that the festival's artistic focus soon turned away from "performing arts," which had been so dear to Efua Sutherland, to the all-encompassing "African arts and culture," is an indication of the direction taken as the festival came under the auspices of the state. This broad formulation made it possible to incorporate more entertaining features, such as musical concerts and the like, which better fitted the commercial framework in which PANAFEST was to operate.

In 1991 the national variant took place—the rehearsal for the first international PANAFEST, which was eventually celebrated in December 1992. Among the participants of that first international edition were high-ranking diasporan representatives such as Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, Public Enemy (USA), Rita Marley (Jamaica), and Isaac Hayes (USA) were among the performing artists. Other participants came from Zimbabwe, Gambia, Togo, Benin, Sierra Leone, and the United Kingdom. In his welcome address, Dr. Ben-Abdallah, then chairman of the National Commission on Culture, stated the official objectives behind PANAFEST as follows:

PANAFEST offers us a unique opportunity to affirm our heritage as Africans, celebrate the heroism of our people and investigate the horizons of our future. For, our future will continue to be hazy as long as we continue to allow our past to be interpreted through the eyes of others. (Ben-Abdallah 1992)

In this view, expressed by cultural officials and practitioners alike, "his/story," which was regarded as the outcome of an Eurocentric interpretation of the past, ought to be replaced with a different story; one that would "affirm the common heritage of the Black and African peoples and define our contribution towards the development of the continent and to world civilization" (Programme 1992: 7). In this conception, past, present, and future converge into a "romantic narrative of triumph" (Holsey 2008: 168), in which the "African family" appears as a given, and the recourse to ancient glories is presented as the basis for a shared Black identity.

This rhetoric of racial commonality is still one of the main features of the festival. It can be contrasted with the concrete organizational and performative practice,

to which I turn below. First, however, PANAFEST needs to be contextualized, so that its genuine character, which nevertheless follows a well-established pattern of cultural and political performance, can be better understood.

PANAFEST IN CONTEXT: INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL, AND LOCAL DIMENSIONS

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL CULTURE

PANAFEST in its present form does not stand alone. Over the years, there have been several attempts to realize a Pan-African ideal in the festival arena (Anyidoho 1989: 17). Even though all these grand festivals made explicit references to a general Pan-Africanism, none of them paid particular attention to the slave trade, at least not in an exclusive manner, as Efua Sutherland had envisioned it.

PANAFEST's predecessors can be distinguished along two major lines: first, with regard to their specific relation between national and Pan-African affiliation as well as the role of a culturalist rhetoric in that connection; second, following their particular conceptualization of the connection between African continent and her diaspora.

In 1966 under the patronage of the first Senegalese president and prominent representative of the *négritude*-movement, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the *Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres* (First World Festival of Negro Arts) took place in Dakar. It brought together artists and scholars from Africa, America, and Europe (mainly France). One of its stated objectives was the rehabilitation of African culture that had been suppressed and distorted during the years of colonialism. Yet, in the rhetoric of African cultural nationalism, this culture still existed; it needed only revitalization under newly defined social and political conditions. In the introduction to a volume documenting the festival colloquium, it says:

L'Afrique . . . fut naguère un pays riche en foyers de culture. Ces foyers ne sont pas totalement éteints. Trop conscients du drame qui a vidé la jeune génération africaine de son âme culturelle, nous n'avons pas eu la prétention de forger de toutes pièces une Afrique de rêves loin de l'Afrique réelle. Nous avons interrogé cette dernière; elle est encore debout. . . . Nous l'avons rencontrée, l'Afrique de la vérité, toujours debout et qui ne veut pas mourir. Ses chefs nous ont parlé par la voix de leurs descendants d'aujourd'hui. (Mveng 1967: 9)

The spirit of decolonization, so prominent during the early years of African independence, emanates from those lines (cf. Jules-Rosette 1992). Africa's "living past," genuine traditions, enormous cultural potential—all those factors combined ought to guide Africa into the future (see Jewsiewicki 1992: 106). The festival conception went beyond the mere re-affirmation of Blackness in terms of a negative stereotype turned upside down. Under the conditions of formal self-determination, the attempted cultural renaissance had to be streamlined with the political agenda of the new states. Hence, its premises, as apparent from Engelbert Mveng's contribution, were very similar to Kwame Nkrumah's concept of an African genius, formulated around the same period:

When I speak of the African genius. . . . I do not mean a vague brotherhood based on a criterion of colour or on the idea that Africans have no reason but only a sensitivity. By the African genius I mean something positive, our socialist conception of society, the efficiency and validity of our traditional statecraft, our highly developed code of morals, our hospitality and our purposeful energy. (Nkrumah 1963b: 5)

The 1960s were a time when, under the conditions of the newly achieved independence, the earlier differences between the culturalist *négritude*-movement and a politically motivated Pan-Africanism became more and more integrated into the more general concept of the African Personality, as expressed above (cf. Diop 1962).

During the Dakar festival, the focus was very much on the continent and the prospects for its future. The coming to terms with colonialism and European domination was the major priority. Diasporan artists who participated in the festival, Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, Alvin Aley, and Aime Césaire among them, were in support of this goal. The regeneration of African culture from the oppressive colonial grip was a symbolic act to which people in the diaspora could turn for inspiration and self-affirmation.

Despite the noble aims that were expressed during the colloquium (Colloque 1967) and throughout the festival, Pan-Africanism as a political movement was already on the decline. The dream of political unity and cultural renaissance was overshadowed by the growing national disintegration all over the continent. The high hopes of independence were soon to be crushed under the pressure of economic constraints and the brutal establishment of military regimes in many of the young African nations. Nevertheless, the summer of 1969 witnessed another festival with a Pan-African orientation, namely the *Premier Festival Culturel Panafricain* (1969), held in Algiers. The FLN-government

of Algeria, whose independence from France had been gained only through a bloody and brutal struggle, was in support of anti-imperialist movements worldwide. Among the delegates to the festival were presidents of many independent African states, but also representatives of the South African ANC and other African liberation movements. Activists of the Palestinian El Fath organization as well as high-ranking delegates from Vietnam participated in the festival. The Soviet Union had sent an official delegation, and so had the GDR. Eldridge Cleaver, then Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party (BPP), headed the large African-American delegation.¹ He and other members of the BPP, who were victims of political persecution in the United States, came to Algiers on invitation of the Algerian government. Cleaver and his wife Kathleen Neal Cleaver, who were both on the wanted list of the FBI, were also granted political asylum in Algeria. According to Robert E. Weisbord (1973: 205), the festival was characterized by a revolutionary Pan-African spirit. It focused on the progressive role of people's culture versus elite culture, much in line with a socialist cultural policy. International solidarity, which was not limited to African or Black people alone, was a major objective among festival participants. The majority of the African-American delegation, who followed a Marxist-Leninist ideological orientation, shared this sentiment. Other voices, such as that of Stokely Carmichael,² who demanded a more racialized focus in the anti-imperialist drive, were less dominant.

During the 1970s a few more events took place, which up to today serve as important cultural markers on the Pan-African historical record. In 1971 Ghana celebrated the fourteenth anniversary of its independence with a remarkable concert: "Soul-to-Soul" featured more than 140 of the leading African-American soul musicians, who were cheered by an excited crowd of over 200,000 Ghanaians. In 1974 Muhammad Ali and George Forman boxed in Kinshasa, Zaire. The fight, dubbed "The Rumble in the Jungle," was framed by an extensive cultural program. Muhammad Ali's firm criticism of the U.S. government and its racist and imperialist politics, along with his declared self-affirmation as an *African* man, gained him the excited support of his Zairean audience.

Then, in 1977, the second Pan-African festival of Black arts and culture was held in Lagos, Nigeria. FESTAC '77 was officially represented as the successor to the Dakar festival, eleven years earlier.³ FESTAC '77 (see Apter 1996, 2005), which was mainly held in the lavish premises of the newly built National Theatre in Lagos comprised three major parts: first, the colloquium; second, the choreographed performances of traditional arts from all over Nigeria and the African world; third, the exhibition of traditional arts and crafts as well as modern art works. When Lieutenant-General Olesugun Obasanjo,

at the time Nigeria's Head of State and Grand Patron of FESTAC declared that the objective of the festival was to "recapture the origins and authenticity of the African heritage" (quoted in Apter 1996: 441), this reflected the rhetoric of African cultural resurrection—a main feature of Pan-African ideology since its earliest conception. However, such cultural references were not only the outcome of an intellectual search for historical understanding. Articulated once again under the auspices of a postcolonial African state, they were at the same time adjusted to the political interests of the ruling elite. In contrast to the 1966 Dakar festival, the political framework in which the Pan-African repertoire was employed was no more the socialist humanism of *négritude* or African Personality provenance, but rather the euphoric embracing of global capitalism, in which Nigeria, thanks to the wealth of its oil resources, acted as an aspiring player (Apter 1996: 442). Hence, the explicit Pan-African outlook of this festival was applied by the Nigerian state in order to celebrate its own modernity in "conspicuous spending" (on modern, mainly imported, equipment) as well as "conspicuous consumption" (of traditional culture and artifacts).

From the beginnings, FESTAC was a controversial enterprise. Serious discord was evolving around the question of who was to be included in the festival program. Should the focus be more on intracontinental ties or rather on a conception of "Africanness" that would incorporate the African diaspora? In one of his essays, Molefi Kete Asante, who was a member of the African-American delegation, describes this dispute in some detail. According to him, "continental speakers paraded to the platform to give almost exclusive continental analyses" (1993: 154). Such a development was strictly opposed by diasporans, who objected that their struggles were not given adequate attention from continental participants—yet, as Maulana Karenga,⁴ leader of the African-American delegation put it, they could support African progress only if they were successful in their own countries (Walters 1993: 83).

The cultural commodification discernable during the Nigerian FESTAC '77 took another turn in the state-sponsored Ghanaian PANAFEST, where it was not the oil economy but the growing tourism industry, together with the promotion of Ghana as the "Gateway to (West) Africa," that formed the background for the staging of the cultural extravaganza and the proclamation of a common African heritage. A striking peculiarity of the transnational allusions during PANAFEST was the articulate focus on the African diaspora as the festival's main target group. In its appeal to diasporan visitors, the Ghanaian state counted mainly on the influx of people with considerable financial means, who would eventually be capable of investing in the Ghanaian economy. When continental ties were being invoked, as for example through the

presence of performers from other parts of Africa, this took on the character of an additional attraction to enhance the flavor of the festival and thereby to reach a greater portion of such prosperous international visitors.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL ANTECEDENTS

The specific intermingling of festive culture with the exercise of political authority, characteristic for all the Pan-African festivals that I have briefly described above, is by no means exclusive to them. In Ghana, for example, there is the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC), held on a regular basis since 1971. The initial idea for such a festival of arts and culture was developed at the Kumasi Centre for National Culture. What was originally a local cultural initiative was soon taken up by the Ghanaian state and elevated to the national level. The festival was broadened in scope, so as to include contributions from all the different regions in Ghana, and thereby to promote the idea of “unity in diversity,” one of the founding principles of Ghanaian (and, indeed, other postcolonial) nationalism (Forster 1994: 492; Schramm 2000a: 23–25). During the politically turbulent decade of the 1980s, NAFAC activities ceased, and it was only in 1992, coinciding with the first international PANAFEST, that the national cultural festival was held once again in Kumasi. Many of the cultural activists who were involved in PANAFEST also played a decisive role during NAFAC. Moreover, both events were characterized by a similar rhetoric and cultural politics, whereby certain cultural references are taken up and granted relevance and symbolic value while others are denounced as cultural adulteration.

Such politics of recognition, which goes hand in hand with the constant attempt of the state to control the avenues of cultural representation, is not only visible on a national or transnational level but is also manifested in the many local festivals that are widespread throughout Ghana.⁵ Since the 1990s, there has been a significant revival of such annually celebrated festivals. On the one hand, this is due to their capacity to serve as “public arenas where local cultural identities are articulated within a framework negotiated by the state and the media” (Lentz 2001: 47) and where the latitudes of local versus national interests are negotiated. On the other hand, this renewed attention (reflected in growing sponsorship and public attendance beyond the community level) can be attributed to their significance as a distinctive marketing feature of the Ghanaian tourism industry (Bruner 1996: 300). According to then Executive Director of the Ghana Tourism Board (GTB) Doreen Owusu-Fianko, such twofold dynamics needed to be monitored by agents such as the GTB. In her words, this task presented itself as follows:

We try to enhance the positive aspects of culture. Like the festivals. Some time ago, not much was being done to festivals. Now we help them [e.g., the local communities] to package it, we promote . . . advertise . . . we got some of the breweries to help us and also assist the communities to celebrate their festivals *the way it should be done*. . . . We try to encourage them . . . to have fixed dates or . . . periods, so that tour operators can plan their tours accordingly. And secondly we try to discourage them from including the . . . unsafe aspects of some of these festivals. . . . And then we also encourage them to draw up a program or timetable and stick to it so that people . . . can participate and know exactly what's happening. (interview 09.16.1999; my emphasis)

On the official website of the Ministry of Tourism/Ghana Tourist Board, one finds a list of festivals that stand emblematic for the rich cultural heritage of Ghana and hence constitute one of its main tourist attractions (cf. www.touringghana.com). In the above-cited statement, the Executive Director was implicitly referring to the “polishing” of local cultural expressions—a common demand in Ghanaian cultural politics.⁶ This understanding of cultural representation is part of the canonization of Ghanaian national patrimony. It is important in two ways: First, and ideally, such cultural standardization serves as an instrument of national identity formation. Second, it enhances Ghana's marketability in a highly competitive field of potential places of interest for foreign visitors. In the politics of heritage, the dimensions of national identification and outside representation are thus intrinsically linked.

PANAFEST '99: THE CULTURAL PERFORMANCE OF AFRICAN UNITY?

From its beginnings, with the adoption of the PANAFEST concept by such state agents as the National Commission on Culture and the Ministry of Tourism, the festival became incorporated into a framework of national administrative control.⁷ In its combination of intellectual deliberations and cultural entertainment, it resembles not only the earlier FESTAC but also the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC). Other of its formal features, such as the durbar of chiefs, can also be found at regional festivals. PANAFEST stands symbolically for a cultural politics that builds on the idea of a refined and clearly distinguishable heritage—epitomized in the motto of “the re-emergence of African civilization.” Yet it was not always clear what those cultural references should be or how they should affect present politics. PANAFEST attracted a range of participants who could not be easily

subsumed under a single heading. Different desires and expectations came together on the festival grounds, and sometimes they clashed. This confrontation of diverse positions during PANAFEST proved the second key motto of the festival—"Uniting the African Family"—a rather difficult enterprise.

AFRICAN INTELLECTUALS TAKING POSITION: THE COLLOQUIUM

Apart from musical and theatrical performances, PANAFEST '99 featured a three-day Pan-African colloquium that was held at the University of Cape Coast. It was supposed to generate a deeper intellectual debate over pressing political and other issues among participants. The major thread running through the workshop concerned the relationship between Africa's past and Africa's present and future perspectives. Many discussants demanded the recognition of African indigenous traditions in their own right, since they formed the basis on which the "re-emergence of African civilization" needed to be founded.

Such allusion to traditional culture as the means of progress has always been a feature of the culturalist rhetoric that can be found in both national as well as Pan-African discourse (see Falola 2001; Fanon 1961). In Ghana, the symbolic reference for this postulate lies in the figure of the *sankɔfa*-bird. *Sankɔfa* belongs to the popular *adinkra* symbols of the Akan (Kwami 1993). It can be translated as "return and take it." Originally represented as an abstract geometrical design, resembling a heart, it meanwhile also exists as the figurative representation of a bird with its feet pointing forward and its head twisted backward, holding an egg in his beak. The egg stands for the fragility of the relationship between past and present.

During my research, I encountered the *sankɔfa* symbol again and again. It was used during public speeches or in interviews that I conducted with Ghanaians, Africans from neighboring countries as well as African Americans. It was interpreted as a call to "recapture what you've lost" or as a reminder to "undo mistakes of the past" (Glover 1992). "The past" that featured in the multifarious applications of the *sankɔfa* symbolism encompassed a vast, almost endless, repertoire of possible historical references, be it the glory of Egypt or ancient African kingdoms (from Songhai to Asante); the bucolic imagery of innocent village life with unselfish individuals and harmonious family structures; or African rhythms, standards of beauty, or traditional forms of governance. In the context of homecoming and the orientation of PANAFEST, all these characteristics fused in the affirmation of an essential racial identity and unity, an inherent "Africanness," shared by Black people all over the world, regardless of the concrete circumstances of their current situation.

Building on this popular understanding, the colloquium aimed at a differentiated consideration of African cultural expressions and their potential for the achievement of African self-determination in all spheres—from education to economics. Despite the broad range of topics (from the “Impact of Structural Adjustment Programs on Agriculture” to “African American Artistic Didactic Value for Our Youth”), the root assumption of an African cultural or racial essence remained at the core of the arguments that were brought forth during the colloquium deliberations.

Most of the participants agreed that Africa had suffered so much from the denigration of its social, political, and cultural peculiarities that it was about time to overcome the resulting inferiority complex. As a priority, measures ought to be taken against negative outside influences working as an assault on the youth and African culture as such. Demands for censorship, that is, of foreign TV programs, were articulated and endorsed by a great portion of the audience.

Another theme concerned the ambivalent position of intellectuals vis-à-vis the rest of the population. Panelists lamented their (own) alienation from the society in general. One South-African delegate observed that there were two mutually exclusive systems operating in Africa. On the one hand, there was the formal, Westernized, system of governance and education. On the other hand, there were the so-called traditional institutions that were particularly effective in the rural areas. He decried the distancing of university-trained African intellectuals from their local communities, which was due to their lack of knowledge about (and respect for) the latter forms of social organization. If they were more integrated, they could help to “dynamize tradition” and to do away with “backward practices.”

Another delegate from Ghana spoke passionately in defense of the “traditional training” and “holistic education” that the so-called illiterates, or uneducated received in their own communities. This involved ceremonial initiation as well as more informal processes. The knowledge was passed on within families, by oral transmission, and by practical experience. Although the classroom, in her view, was marked by an orientation toward the individual, the traditional education was perceived as people- and community-centered. At the same time, those children who were involved in the latter system were brought up to become economically independent. When a child therefore helped her family—for example, by hawking—this was not to be condemned. It was rather a rich source from which children learned independence, confidence, handling of money, and so on. The current school curriculum, in contrast, was alienating to the students, in terms of the language that was being used (English) and in terms of its content. The children would learn more about the outside world than the one they lived in.⁸

She suggested that government should pay more attention to the informal sector, since it formed the life-world of the greatest portion of the Ghanaian populace. People in responsible positions should draw their inspiration from the rich knowledge that lay neglected “at the feet of [traditional] people.” If this focus was brought into the schools, for example, it would have the potential to render the entire educational system much more meaningful. The intellectuals ought to become aware of the fact that “those of us who have been to school, we are the headache! They [the people] should be calling us names [not vice versa]! We take the resources and produce nothing.”⁹

The discussion that ensued quickly focused on terminology and what it transported. Why it was that indigenous education was called “informal” and “traditional,” whereas “formal” or “modern” education was considered anything that followed Western standards and role models? A man from Michigan spoke of the need to “reeducate our children.” He narrated his experiences in America, where Black people increasingly founded new schools with “our own curriculum.” Such an African-centered (or Afrocentric) approach helped to “prepare [our children] to lead the world.” Another African American challenged Western education for its alleged reproduction of the ideology of White supremacy. This argument, which was shared among most of the participants, can be traced back to the beginnings of Pan-African thought, where the recognition of Black achievements and positive contributions to world civilization was among the first priorities. The fact that it was raised during a forum that took place in Ghana, an independent African nation whose politicians from its very beginnings had claimed the “African Personality” as the *leitmotif* of its development, makes the dilemma of African intellectuals quite clear: It lies not only in their alienation from society but also in their negligible influence on political decision makers who set priorities other than those set by the cultural-political elite.

The participants did not take up such contradictions. Instead, the discussion continued along the threat of African emancipation from European role models. Hereby, the “African family” served as the main symbolic referent. Some of the male participants objected against the notion of gender equality, which they regarded as an imposition from outside and as a threat to “our traditional family structure.” In an intact society, both men and women had to play their part and fulfill their specific responsibilities. If their respective roles were mixed up, this would lead to chaos and social destruction. Thus, the Nigerian Minister of Culture and Tourism, who was also present, began to speak of the dangers of equality. He said: “If the roles are not clearly defined [problems arise]. The more freedom we give to women, the more they lose us as men and the potency that comes with it!” He made references to Europe,

“where they now need Viagra,” and elaborated on this point by giving it a (twisted) Fanonian turn: “The slave trade already [constituted] a serious castration. It is a miracle that the African male could come out of it and remain intact to the admiration of White folks!”

In his *Peau Noir, Masques Blancs* (1952), Frantz Fanon dealt extensively with the sexual stereotyping of the Black male as an expression of White racism. According to Fanon, the hallucinatory sexual potency that is often ascribed to Black men serves to justify their oppression and social castration by a society that defines itself as “White.” The fact that the allusion to Black male potency now arose in the context of the colloquium has at least two dimensions. First, it can be connected to the Pan-African ideological paradigm that was already set by Edward W. Blyden. It concerns the re-establishment of Black manhood that has been threatened under the conditions of slavery and colonialism. Manhood, here, becomes synonymous with the power of Black people to make autonomous decisions and with the ability to resist the threat to (male) integrity. It therefore serves as a strong metaphor for decolonization. Second, however, it can also be regarded as an attempt to defend the status quo that gives men a privileged position in society, while women continue to be confined to a submissive position. It is a sign of the patriarchal conservatism that dominates much of the Afrocentric debate, be it on the continent or in the diaspora (cf. Gilroy 1993: 194).

The entire colloquium was marked by an inherent contradiction that arose from the ideological framework into which it had been fitted. The expected affirmation of the ultimate unity and intrinsic value of the “African family” made the discussion susceptible to a leveling that suppressed critical thoughts that were *not* directed against outside forces (namely a degenerate and imperialist West). But the critique of Westernization was articulated by people who were themselves the product of a Western system of education. How was it possible to bridge this gap? What would re-integration with “the people” look like? This was a question that was as pressing for the participants from the diaspora as it was for those who belonged to the African intellectual elite. It became most articulate in a debate over language policies. One of the speakers had suggested recognizing English as one of Ghana’s indigenous languages (Owusu-Ansah 1999). He argued that what had been the colonial master tongue had now been thoroughly transformed and adapted to indigenous speech patterns. Moreover, English had become a convenient means of communication across ethnic language borders.

In the course of the debate, this view, which reflected current debates in postcolonial literary studies (cf. Ashcroft, Griffith, & Tiffin 1989; Zabus 1991), was rejected as Eurocentric. One of the participants from Zimbabwe said that

he felt guilty and embarrassed that he was even thinking in English—to him, this was not a sign that the language had become a “natural part” of him, but rather that it was a symptom of his alienation as an intellectual, as a member of the elite who was detached from his people. An African-American participant called for the creation of an African *lingua franca* in order to do away with English: “Can we sit back and say that we created the pyramids and not be able to create a language to unite us?” Yet, as another African American noted afterward: “Those people arguing so strongly against English—if the paper would have been in Twi [the major Ghanaian language], they would have been lost!” In the end, the discussion was summarized by the chairperson, Prof. Kofi Anyidoho, who gave it a humorous touch by saying: “Well, I am a professor of English, but I would be more than happy to lose my job if we came out with a new language!”¹⁰

This attempt to resolve the problematic tension between radical ideal and practical demands (and existing realities) stands illustrative of the general dilemma characteristic of many left-wing intellectuals and, to an even greater extent, of intellectuals in a postcolonial situation, in which social cleavages are more sharply evident and because of that more difficult to ignore. Therefore, I focus my attention once again on this predicament, which concerns the role of intellectuals in the sphere of state politics and their need and desire to take position. What goes along with this commitment is the danger of the assimilation or even subjugation of critical thought to the dictum of party politics and state propaganda.

As I have demonstrated, PANAFEST stands in a long row of predecessors. The deliberations of most of the PANAFEST predecessors had been revised and published. For example, the contributions to the FESTAC ‘77 colloquium had been turned into a ten-volume documentation, covering the relationship of Black civilization with African government, literature, religion, pedagogy, historical awareness, science and technology, mass media, philosophy, and African languages as well as the arts (Okpaku et al. 1986).¹¹ Even though PANAFEST itself could not boast of any tangible documentation (mainly because of lack of funding), the question arises why the previous colloquia, symposia, and conventions, all concerned with the renaissance or re-emergence of Africa as a global player in its own right, have had such a small impact on the actual conduct of governments and other political bodies. The cultural references to African royalty and grandeur that were employed by brutal regimes such as Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire and other postcolonial states rather served the self-aggrandizement of their leaders and their favorites and added to the effective oppression of their populations (Callaghy 1980; cf. Mbembe 1992, 2003). One of the challenges concerning the positioning

of intellectuals in this context could have been to openly face these multiple entanglements of culture and politics and to search for opportunities to move the debate beyond the level of rhetoric. In connection with PANAFEST, such issues, just like any sign of possible dissent within the “African family,” were avoided. The colloquium and the entire festival thus remained subject to the conventions of cultural representation in a state setting.

However, not just the dangers of political corruption are of concern here. Moreover, the dilemma arises from the very act of being political, of forming an opinion on the world that is not devoid of passion and empathy—in other words, of taking on a standpoint in society. Thus, when the Ghanaian professor acknowledged that “we are the headache!” this was an expression of genuine concern. Many of the Pan-African-minded intellectuals whom I encountered during my fieldwork expressed a strong desire to challenge the status quo and to bring about a change in the global balance of power. “The people,” or, in a more Marxist jargon, the “masses,” were regarded as the decisive force—their interests ought to be the guiding principle of social development. This is not to say that all the people I talked to spoke with a unified voice. Nevertheless, there were a few standards to which many of them referred. One such common denominator was the trust in the “African people;” another important stream was the call for strong leadership to guide them. Sometimes, those seemingly contradictory arguments were advanced by one and the same person; at other times, they were articulated by different persons who were speaking on a joint platform or at least moved in the same discursive field.

The ideological assumption that a unified force of African people existed, and that it would stand firmly against an equally monolithic bloc of a Western imperialist dominion, grants no space for the complex entanglements that have left their imprint on today’s world—as well as on the minds and bodies of the cosmopolitan intellectuals themselves. Authors such as Stuart Hall (1990) and Paul Gilroy (1993) have demonstrated how the diasporic condition cannot be understood without acknowledging the violent European presence as part and parcel of the Black self. In their view, the attempt to wipe it out in order to arrive at a Black racial essence is doomed to failure, since it operates in a setting that is already predetermined by discursive standards that are set by racial/racist thinking of European provenance. To them, the solution to this predicament partly lies in the positive evaluation of hybridity plus the assertion of a Black presence in the realms of White hegemony. Their argument was partly developed against the Afrocentric trend that has grown within the diaspora, a trend that Gilroy denounces as “Americentricity” because of its embedding in U.S. middle-class conceptions of culture and belonging. To him, the idea of family “is itself a characteristically American means for

comprehending the limits and dynamics of racial community” (1993: 191). In the context of PANAFEST, this American orientation was not so pronounced, as diasporan *as well as* African actors endorsed the notion of African family values as well as a more encompassing racialized kinship. The principles of Afrocentrism and the cultural conservatism associated with it guided the debate throughout.

In part, the colloquium was a forum in which unity was created among participants. However, its potential to reach out to “the people” was limited. It was this restriction that caused the self-criticism discernable in the anti-intellectual tone of the discussion. The participants did not view their hybrid status as enriching. To them, the idea of cosmopolitanism was not associated with a freedom of mind or an extraordinary creative potential, as it has been claimed in theories of globalization (cf. Hannerz 1990). Neither was it inspired by Du Bois’s understanding of “cosmopolitan nationalism” (Appiah 2007: 35),¹² in which he combined his conviction of the uniqueness of the “Negro race” with a concern for human brotherhood. Instead, they expressed their situation as a painful clash of identities. The critical awareness of one’s own elite status and the simultaneous retention of the associated privileges produced a state of betwixt and between from which it was desirable to escape. This desire ultimately led to a turn toward a serene, peaceful, and orderly utopia, which was partly located in the distant past. In that vein, Kofi Anyidoho has described the Pan-African ideal as “essentially a quest for coherence and for wholeness, a search for order, productive and satisfying order” (1989: 10).

Interestingly, it was continental African intellectuals alone who articulated this position of doubt. In many respects, their position in society differs greatly from that of their diasporan counterparts. Thus, for example, their ability to travel abroad as well as their comparatively high living standard set them apart from a vast part of the population, who may dream of going to Europe or America at all costs. The harsh criticism that intellectuals brought forth against the Western system derived from an actual experience in these societies, which was, however, denied to most of their compatriots. This situation increased the gap between them and people with a different background.

As Cornel West (1985) has argued, the dilemma of Black intellectuals—characterized by their rejection by both the Black community and the White establishment in the United States—is different. According to West, the Black intelligentsia seems to be confined to the nonsatisfactory choice between a liberal pseudo-cosmopolitanism, which ignores existing inequalities and power structures and thereby submerges to the dominant White society, and a tendentious racial provincialism that remains self-referential and therefore stale. West suggests a new “model of rebellion” in which intellectuals would take on

the role of critical-organic catalysts. Such a model would hold elements from bourgeois, Marxist, and Foucauldian theory, without losing sight of either the specific institutionalized practices of Black (popular) culture or of the need to actively resist the oppressive and racist capitalist system.

This model of rebellion did not seem attractive to the people who had come to Ghana from the diaspora. They rather opted to stand by the Afrocentric ideal as it was described above—out of motivations that were powered by the circumstances that had shaped them in their specific social environment. It was in the (unfulfilled) search for wholeness, arising from different reasons and articulated from different standpoints, that continental and diasporan participants converged during the colloquium.

Such a generation of order from chaos as part of the political ideology of Pan-Africanism necessarily involves cutting off the rough ends of social reality, a negation of ambivalence and contradictions or, to put it differently, of all that stands in contrast to the presuppositions at the core of the political ideal. The insistence on the need to resist the White supremacist (and imperialist) system in order to liberate the African people and thereby to arrive at a “productive and satisfying order” (Anyidoho 1989: 10)—an order that would lead Africans to their true selves and to their rightful place in history as well as in the contemporary world—was a common denominator of the Pan-African rhetoric of opposition that was employed during the colloquium. I term this discourse “ideological,” in order to emphasize its constructive nature and its link to identity politics (cf. Eagleton 1991: 1).¹³ In my usage of the term, *ideology* implies a process of essentializing that attempts to overcome differences and internal contradictions, yet ultimately engenders new ones.

As I have shown, the colloquium was a forum in which the ideological direction of PANAFEST became transparent. Yet the colloquium was attracting only a marginal portion of visitors. Activities on the festival grounds were dominated by diverse performances, one of which I now examine in some detail. This section offers a glimpse into the ways by which the ambitious themes of the festival were enacted in practice.

THE PAST AS A SHOWCASE: THE CELEBRATION OF POMP AND PAGEANTRY DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY

The Setting The opening ceremony was announced as a “Grand Durbar of Chiefs and Peoples.” Previous PANAFEST durbars had taken place at Victoria Park, an open space within sight of Cape Coast Castle. This time, the event had been shifted to the Cape Coast Sports Stadium, for the reason that there was more space and less dust. The stadium is somewhat remote and

is restricted from outside view. Its construction made it possible to separate a VIP area from the gallery. Admittance to the inner circle was restricted to invited dignitaries, representatives of the diplomatic corps, the press, and the like (including me, as an anthropologist). Barbed wire separated these people from the rest of the crowd, who were left out. They either stood behind the fences or had to take a seat on the stone steps that flank the stadium on both sides. Canopies had been erected for the VIPs; however, the sun scorched the popular stands.

Later, my Ghanaian hostess told me that she did not take notice of the durbar when she was driving through town. She said that she regretted the shift of venues, because, formerly, when it was still held at Victoria Park, “people from all walks of life” had been able to watch the procession. They had been climbing trees or looking out of their houses—even from the surrounding hills it had been possible to catch a glimpse of the event. In her eyes, this large audience had “added to the beauty of the program.” This impression was confirmed by one of the African-American festival participants whom I was able to interview. He remembered his first PANAFEST in 1997:

[At that time] the opening ceremony . . . with the procession of the kings, it was held at Victoria Park, right outside Cape Coast Castle. [That] was



FIGURE 8.1 Chief sitting in palanquin (with barbed wire separating the durbar ground from the popular stalls), Opening Ceremony of PANAFEST, 1999.

an extremely moving experience for me. I had read about the Ashanti, but I had never seen a person who was an Ashanti. And when they came in with the *kente*-cloth and all their ceremonial robes and with the scenery of the castle behind them and the ocean. . . . I felt personally that it was a welcoming home for those of us in the diaspora. [If] I have to compare the two PANAFESTs, the first in '97 I think I enjoyed more. It wasn't that I was used to the festival the second time. It was that there were more local people attending. . . . (interview 08.09.1999)

At the beginning of the ceremony this afternoon, the audience participation was comparatively low. Because of the burning heat, many of the seats on the sunny side of the stadium were still empty. The sheer size of the football pitch made it difficult for an intimate ambience to build up. Slowly, more and more people appeared on the stalls, as representatives of all the international delegations arrived one after the other on the durbar grounds amid music and dancing. There were brass bands among them, playing popular songs such as "Guantanamo" and "By the Rivers of Babylon." The whole atmosphere drew into mind the imagery of a carnival, yet with a particular emphasis on traditional (or folkloric) culture.

Material Connections: *Kente* Then the chiefs, most of whom came from Cape Coast or the wider Central Region, entered the durbar ground in full regalia. Slowly, the atmosphere grew more and more intense. Some of the chiefs were walking majestically among their entourage. Those of higher ranks were riding and dancing in palanquins that rested on the shoulders of their four bearers. The large velvet umbrellas, insignias of chiefly power and grace, were swirling through the air, constantly held in motion by the men entrusted with that task. The chiefs' entry was accompanied by the sound of *fontomfrom*, huge drums associated with Akan royalty. Quite a few of the chiefs and queen mothers were wearing *kente*-cloth, with each of the complicated patterns of yellow, green, orange, and blue threads executed in a different style. This sensual impression was taken up in the appearance of the members of the Ghanaian governmental delegation, who were, with only one exception, all dressed in *kente*-attire.

The *kente*-design was visible not only during the opening ceremony. It also appeared on the cover of the Official Souvenir Brochure (1999). Besides, many *kente*-products, woven and printed, were sold on the PANAFEST-market. This abundance of *kente* was by no means accidental. Rather, it was a sign for the organizers' intention to provide a means of broad cultural identification among audience and artists alike. *Kente*-cloth can be said to be *the* national cultural

symbol in Ghana (Hagen 1993: 12). In addition to its national significance, it is also extremely popular among African Americans. In an impressive exhibition and resulting volume, Doran Ross (1998) has documented the career of the cloth in both Ghana and the United States. It was not only Ghanaian politicians, starting with Kwame Nkrumah, who showed themselves in *kente*-cloth (cf. Schramm 2004b); the Tanzanian head of state, Julius Nyerere, also had an official photograph taken of him wearing *kente*. Later on, *kente* enriched the popular imagination of African Americans. Ross writes:

Its initial associations with royalty, wealth, and status were enlisted to help defeat notions of “primitive” African cultures as the source for slaves. As *kente* rose to prominence with Nkrumah’s independence initiatives, it became allied with the Pan African and Black nationalist ideologies of the time and helped promote ideas of “Black power,” “Black pride,” and Black is beautiful. As understanding of the cloth increased, it became a premier symbol of African heritage and a tangible link with the African continent and its history. (1998: 187)

Although in the 1960s, the use of and knowledge about *kente* were restricted to a small group of Africa-conscious activists, it has since become part of (African) American popular culture (Quick 1998). *Kente*-designs can be found on Valentine greeting cards, umbrellas, pencils, hats, chairs, backpacks, T-shirts, and so on. Strips of *kente*-cloth, sometimes with inscriptions woven into the pattern, are used during graduation ceremonies and in church. In addition, the cloth has become an important element in the layout of Kwanzaa, the African-American holiday that was designed by Maulana Ron Karenga. This seven-day festival takes place every year between December 26 and January 1, thereby “conveniently coinciding with Christmas, Hanukkah, the New Year, and school vacations, when families and friends everywhere are most likely to assemble in celebration” (Hernández-Reguant 1999: 105). Despite its obviously invented character, it has become a fixed date in many African-American homes. Its symbolism combines cultural elements from Africa (exemplified in the usage of Swahili terminology) with those from the African diaspora (such as the colors of the Garvey movement—red, black, and green) and references to American thanksgiving festivals (fruit and corn).

In this symbolic universe of contemporary African-American culture, *kente* is appropriated as a signifier of Africanness and tradition—it provides a connection to an ancient and glorious heritage. Its specific origin and meaning in the Ghanaian context (which is, no doubt, ever-changing) is not of prior importance (cf. Ross 1998: 276). However, in the context that is discussed

here—PANAFEST and the Ghanaian tourism industry in general—this logic has been turned around, as the origin of the cloth *in Ghana* was emphasized and became its most crucial feature. This strategy enabled the Ghanaian state to distinguish itself as a destination for diasporan Africans and to assert earlier claims in the hoped-for cooperation. Not only were the slave castles posed as reminders of the long period of history shared by the diaspora and Ghana (standing symbolically for the whole of Africa); cultural products such as *kente*-cloth were utilized as proof of this connection as well.

Although many of the participants during the opening ceremony stuck to the *kente*-convention, it was by far not the only cloth worn at the durbar grounds. Some of the chiefs and queen mothers had put on togas made of brocade or similarly luxurious materials of European origin. Such textiles have a long history in West Africa, since cloth(e)s were important trade items from the very beginning of the African-European encounter. It has been argued that this had some devastating effect on the local textile manufacture—especially with the introduction of cheaply produced cotton after the beginning of industrial revolution in Britain and elsewhere. Walter Rodney speaks of an effect of “technological arrest” (1981: 104) on African economies. John Thornton, in contrast, notes that it was precisely those areas that produced high-quality textiles that were the greatest purchasers of European cloth, attributing this to an attitude of “conspicuous consumption” (1998: 50), whereby European wares were cherished for their difference and novelty. He also points out that Africans sometimes thoroughly transformed European cloth, which they unraveled and then rewove in their own style (*ibid.*: 52), a fact also mentioned by Rodney in connection with the production of *kente*-cloth (1981: 107). This practice of appropriation and transformation is significant, since it indicates the multifarious character of any “indigenous” or “authentic” heritage. In the rhetoric that dominated PANAFEST this complexity was not taken note of, since it would not have fitted the ideological guidelines that spoke of authentic African culture in strict opposition to Westernization and cultural deformation.

Performing Unity, Speaking Difference: Libation and Speeches The final seating order followed a common pattern in Ghana (and throughout West Africa), noticeable whenever there is a meeting of chiefs with state representatives or other official visitors. It takes the form of a face-to-face arrangement with the traditional authorities and the official delegation seated opposite each other. On this morning, the High Table consisted of members of the PANAFEST Board as well as representatives of some of the foreign delegations, such as the U.S. ambassador to Ghana and the Jamaican Minister of Tourism. Microphones had been set before the two parties.

As soon as the dignitaries' entry into the durbar arena was completed, and the obligatory greetings had been exchanged, there was a short break devoted to the pouring of libation, which was being carried out from the side of the chiefs. The acoustics at the venue made it difficult for the audience to understand all the details of the invocation. And still, the libation played an important symbolic role here, since it emphasized a spiritual affinity between different groups of people: first, those who were present; second, those members of the "African family" who had to remain absent in body; third, those who had passed away. As Emmanuel Akyeamong observes, libation involves three simultaneous processes: "invoking the presence of the Supreme Being, the gods, and the ancestors; explaining to these supernatural beings the occasion for the human gathering; and supplicating these spirits to grant the human assembly success in their endeavors" (1996: 5, n. 24; cf. Sarpong 1996).

This religious dimension has been appropriated and transformed by the Ghanaian state by incorporating the ceremony into its state protocol. During the era of independence, such a reduction of libation to its symbolic function worked as a means to effectively control the institution of Ghanaian chieftaincy. However, this was not the case in the period before Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) had secured power. At that time, libation was still a hotly debated issue. Akyeamong cites an incident during the 1954 Gold Coast elections, where a CPP candidate won against his opponent, who had counted on the support of the chiefs (and the ancestors): "The pouring of libation, a rite male elders and chiefs had controlled, harped back to the days of traditional political power. Aaron Ofori Atta [the CPP candidate] argued that the old educated elites . . . could not comprehend that those days were over" (1996: 129). With the CPP victory and the attainment of independence, libation came to be no more regarded as an outdated ritual but rather as a signifier of the cultural foundation of the new nation and the African Personality on which it was built.

It is characteristic for recent cultural politics that the recognition of and appeal to the ancestors is performed mostly during public events aiming at the reaffirmation of African cultural values or emphasizing a Pan-African connection. In the language of cultural nationalism, libation is presented as a "traditional prayer" that needs to be observed and respected because of its authentic and indigenous character. In addition, libation is also regarded as a sacred act by Africa-conscious diasporans.

Just like the utilization of the *kente*-design by different actors (Akan royals, state officials, Ghanaian spectators, and African-American visitors), the performance of libation needs to be interpreted as a means to provide a forum where all kinds of participants would be able to position themselves as part of a

(fictitious) PANAFEST community and, in extension, of the “African family” as such. The traditional authorities that were entrusted with the enactment of the libation were hereby represented as the custodians of a valuable cultural heritage, and as powerful mediators between different spiritual (for example, earth and hereafter) and physical (for example, continent and diaspora) worlds. PANAFEST could never survive without their active participation, because the whole event relies heavily on the representation of traditional culture and the demonstrations of chiefly demeanor. Spectators from the diaspora, however, were given an opportunity to identify with the occasion on the grounds of a spiritual connection. Despite the fact that the libation was performed in Fante, a language most of the visitors did not understand, it addressed them in a direct manner as members of the “African family.” Moreover, the fact that it was not translated emphasized its “authentic” character and the presumed possibility of an understanding beyond words among Africans.

The Durbar: Emblem of Tradition, Colonial Invention Later, a newspaper article commented on the Opening Ceremony:

. . . the first day’s programme began with a procession of chiefs and various clans to give the festival a traditional touch. Hundreds of African-Americans who gathered at . . . the PANAFEST grounds were treated to Carribean [*sic*] music as they waited patiently for the arrival of the gorgeously dressed chiefs. . . . (*Daily Graphic Supplement* 1999: 9)

Clearly, the journalist’s emphasis was on the visitors from overseas and their fascination with African “traditions,” exemplified in the demonstration of royal power and cultural distinction. And, indeed, those features hold a great attraction for Africans from the diaspora—to an even greater extent than for visitors from other backgrounds, to whom such a display of traditional culture often merely amounts to an exotic spectacle, categorized, in the logic of tourism, as a delightful memory to take home. When, in contrast, diasporan spectators express their fascination with African chieftaincy, it is also an indication of their longing for a heritage of their own, a heritage that they can refer to with pride (see Schramm 2004b). In the Afrocentric understanding that dominated the homecoming discourse, this unique African cultural legacy was mainly projected onto the mythical time of a precolonial past.

However, if one takes a closer look at the organization of the durbar itself, it becomes clear that this very emblem of tradition is intrinsically linked to *colonial* strategies of political representation. Originally, the durbar was an Indian court ritual, designated to affirm and reinforce the relationship between

the Mughal emperor and his subjects through an “act of incorporation” (Cohn 1983: 168). In the nineteenth century, when the British were about to intensify their grip on the Indian subcontinent, the ritual was soon adopted by the merchants and administrators who presented themselves as the new rulers. The logic behind this appropriation stemmed from the realization that “loyalty had to be symbolized to be effective in the eyes of subordinates and followers” (*ibid.*: 171). This understanding of effective subordination was part of a thorough transformation of the symbolic and political-economic universe that had formerly underlain the Mughal ceremony. It was precisely this transformed practice that was later imported to the new colonies in Africa, where it was streamlined with indigenous representative ceremonies (cf. Apter 1999; Lentz 2001). The complex seating arrangement, the exchange of gifts, and the bestowing of titles to loyal chiefs were all part of the politics of indirect rule that was the preferred form of administration by the British colonizers. In his fascinating study of the Indian *darbar*, Bernard S. Cohn shows that the colonialists did apply the idea of a “useable past” (J. H. Plumb, quoted on p. 167; cf. Lowenthal 1985) not only to stately ceremonies and the like. This idea also formed the basis for the identification of a discrete Indian “heritage” and the accompanying rhetoric of cultural preservation (*ibid.*: 183). Cohn demonstrates that the projection of a glorious past onto ancient times was part of the colonial fantasy and thus of strategic value to the colonial administration—it firmly established and essentialized cultural differences and justified the imperialist project as the order of the future (*ibid.*: 184; cf. Rosaldo 1989).

Ironically, the process of cultural decolonization that was regarded as a major precondition for successful nation-building by the newly independent states in Africa and elsewhere was partly built on similar assumptions concerning the foundations of a modern society. As a result, the relationship of the newly independent governments with traditional culture was far from unambiguous. First of all, the institution of chieftaincy itself had been deeply immersed in colonial patterns of governance (see Boaten 1996: 132; Rathbone 2000: 10; Ray 2001: 2) and was therefore condemned by the new elites—Western-educated and urbanized—as a reactionary force that ran counter to the nationalist project and for that matter needed to be restrained. In 1950, during the CPP’s Positive Action Campaign for “Self-government now!,” Kwame Nkrumah made that position very clear when he declared: “Those of our chiefs who are with us . . . we do honour . . . ; those . . . who join forces with the imperialists . . . there shall come a time when they will run away fast and leave their sandals behind them . . .” (quoted in Rathbone 2000: 22). But the modern elites themselves had become alienated from rural, “traditional” life. They had passed Western educational institutions and had become imbued with a sense of

suspicion against the old ways. Apart from that, there was considerable rivalry between them and the chiefs over access to power and influence.

The colonial regime had relied on the institution of chieftaincy in order to ensure administrative control over the rural areas;¹⁴ the Ghanaian postcolonial state took over the symbolic resources of Akan chieftaincy while at the same time attempting to reduce its political significance. The new state rituals combined ceremonial elements from the British monarchy and the colonial administration with local traditions. The symbolic appropriation of the latter was not just visible in the attire of the state representatives but also in the emblems of state power such as the “chair of state,” the “seat of state,” the golden “state sword,” and the “state mace,” all designed by Ghanaian sculptor Kofi Antubam. Those artifacts incorporated motifs of traditional Akan stool-designs and well-known *adinkra*-ornaments, signifying power, state sovereignty, and the readiness of individuals to make sacrifices to the well-being of society (Abbey 1997: 53). In addition, newly created (or elsewhere adopted) national symbols such as the Black star (*soroma-bire*), “symbolizing the supremacy of the nation over all the component states that make up the nation,” (*ibid.*) were also utilized.

These symbolic markers represented an undisturbed African cultural legacy, one that could be associated with ancient glories and positively connoted values. A national patrimony was thereby carved out that served to legitimize the new state by rooting it in a past constructed as unimpaired and spiritually distinct from Western role models. At the same time, this re-appropriation of Africanness did not go hand in hand with a thorough transformation of the institutional arrangements that were left by the colonial administration (cf. Chatterjee 1993: 15). The rationality of modern statecraft was seen as the right means of progress and development. This dynamic becomes most evident if one considers Kwame Nkrumah’s conception of the new nation, which he expressed during a durbar that was held in Kumasi, the old capital of the Asante-empire, on December 10, 1960. In his speech he evoked a vision of “great cities in Ghana with large factories and cultural institutions, inhabited by people who are happy, cheerful, and resilient, venturing forth unto the realms of knowledge, science, industry, and technology” (in Obeng 1997, Vol. 1: 238). Colonialism had denied Africans such progress; it had only extracted the natural and human resources from the continent and thereby arrested indigenous developments, which the postcolonial state henceforth attempted to bring about at a fast pace.

Although it was maintained that the new state ought to take inspiration and guidance from the principals of traditional authority and the peculiarities of African culture, these became more or less confined to the domain of cultural representation.¹⁵ As a result, a notion of heritage was formed that

attempted to transmute culture into a neatly definable asset of the nation-state. Of course, as Arjun Appadurai (1989) has argued, the past is not a limitless or plastic symbolic source. There are social, cultural, as well as formal constraints interfering with any arbitrary usage of the past. Yet, even though the official representational strategies were operating within the limits of such restrictions, they did not reflect the complex historical connections, intricacies, and cross-references that I referred to above. Moreover, they remained suspicious about the everyday cultural practice of people, if it took place outside the realms of state control.

The notion of an uninterrupted continuity with the past that would be intrinsic to the African “soul” and manifest in the expressions of traditional culture, as it is evoked in the PANAFEST-motto of the re-emergence of African civilization, needs to be carefully and critically examined. Fran Markowitz, Sara Helman, and Dafna Shir-Vertesh have offered a definition of the African-American concept of “soul” that is useful for understanding the representational strategies at work here: “Soul expresses belonging to a community of sufferers in opposition to those in power and pivots on a . . . ‘double’ (after Du Bois . . .) vision and talk” (2003: 309, n. 1; cf. Du Bois 1903). In the discursive setting of PANAFEST (and homecoming in general), “soul” takes on an additional meaning: It is used by protagonists to express a racial essence that surpasses any historical circumstances, such as slavery, or the specific experiences that went along with them.

Moreover, references to “the past” or “our traditions” form part of an ideological framework by which the legitimacy of the state is established in the popular realm of public performances. At the same time, they are an expression of ideological continuity reaching back to the earliest declarations of Pan-African consciousness. The allusions to African commonality that became discernable during the opening ceremony and throughout the festival were integral to the Ghanaian conception of a national heritage and can be said to have multiple political significance, both inward bound as well as outward bound, to those outside Ghana. If PANAFEST formed part of the Ghanaian (and also global) heritage industry, the references to African traditions and a shared racial destiny were employed as effective means of ensuring a broad international participation that would consequently indicate the positive outside recognition of the current government and thereby help to stabilize its position.

PANAFEST '99: INSIGHTS AND VOICES

On the evening before the Opening Ceremony, I had joined the family of my hostess, a teacher at one of the Cape Coast senior secondary schools, at the

Centre for National Culture (CNC), which served as the main performance venue. A fence had been put up around the whole area. Inside this restricted space, the PANAFEST market was going to be located. From the following day onward, people were to pay 1,000 cedis before they could even enter here. If one was not in possession of the official passport, which cost 150 U.S. dollars, there was an extra charge of 2,000 to 5,000 cedis per ticket for each performance.¹⁶ In comparison with international standards, those fees seemed rather low; yet they were almost unaffordable for most of the Cape Coast residents. That night, however, we were still allowed to pass through the gate without paying. The vendors were busily erecting their market stalls. Some of the food joints had already opened, so we sat down for some beer and kebab. My hostess told me:

At this time of the year, there is always something exciting happening in Cape Coast. If it is not PANAFEST, it is the Central EXPO, if it is not that, it is NAFAC.¹⁷ Last time [during PANAFEST], we just went to the CNC in the evenings, not necessarily to watch anything, but just to sit there and see the people passing. . . .

This year, she would not be able to do so very often, since it would become too expensive for her and her two children. We stayed on for a little while, chatting and enjoying the mild breeze, before we walked back home.

All in all, her position was exceptional, because it reflects an initial interest in the event. Other Cape Coasters whom I had a chance to talk to did not attribute much significance to PANAFEST. It was perceived as something that was being staged for outsiders, tourists. On the one hand, this was a well-articulated criticism on part of Pan-African minded intellectuals who regarded the festival in its present form as a mere jamboree. On the other hand, the advertising machinery did not really reach the greater portion of the Cape Coast residents. The earlier idea of home-stay programs, which could have contributed to a greater intermingling of Cape Coasters and outsiders as well as to more direct benefits, material and otherwise, for the municipality, had been abandoned.

PANAFEST stands in sharp contrast to the indigenous festivals, such as the Elmina *Bakatue* or the Oguaa (Cape Coast) *Fetu Afahye* festival. Despite the efforts by the Ministry of Tourism and other state agents to make those festivals commensurable with the tastes and expectations of foreign visitors, they still fulfill a more intimate function as occasions for family gatherings and the negotiation of communal interests.¹⁸ It does not come as a surprise that the attempts to dovetail PANAFEST with *Fetu Afahye*, which had its premiere

during the 1997 celebrations, were soon met with fierce resistance by some of the traditional authorities and local people who felt that PANAFEST had overshadowed their own gathering. The reduction of the local festival to one among many features on the itinerary of foreign visitors, meant only to provide a more “authentic” flair to their program, was not in the interest of its protagonists and consequently had to be abandoned by the PANAFEST organizers.

Nevertheless, PANAFEST changed the atmosphere in town. The presence of visitors was discernable, even though most of them were more or less confined to their hotels and the festival venue.¹⁹ The program that was awaiting the PANAFEST community was ambitious; it was packed from early morning until late at night. Some of the scheduled events, such as the Gospel Rock Show, were attractive for both locals and foreigners, perhaps even more so for the Ghanaian audience. National stars, otherwise visible only on TV or known from cassettes, would come live on stage. Whether or not local people would be able to enjoy those parts of the program would depend, as mentioned before, on their financial situation. In most cases, the fishermen of Elmina and Cape Coast, the women selling pineapples within close range to the castle, and the taxi-drivers carrying visitors from one location to the other were excluded from taking part.

While the colloquium was addressing people who were already familiar with the theme and purpose of the festival, the performances would ideally appeal to a larger group of people. So how did they reflect the themes of African cultural and social renaissance, of historical re-appraisal and political reconstitution? The afternoon program comprised a series of Regional Days, each of which was dedicated to a different part of the African world. This arrangement bore clear parallels with the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC), which also featured Regional Days, only within the narrower framework of the Ghanaian nation-state. Depending on the prevailing context, the underlying concept of “unity in diversity” has the potential to be stretched widely, so as to suit national as well as continental or even Pan-African ideological dispositions.

West Africa Day: When the first group was ready to mount the stage, the auditorium was still half empty. Some journalists and camera-teams had gathered to cover the show. A few prominent members of the PANAFEST Board had also taken their seats among the crowd. Comparatively many European visitors were there to watch the performances. The groups featured that afternoon came from Gambia, Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, and Ghana. The focus of their presentation was strictly on music and dance, which was the case with many of the performances that were brought on stage during PANAFEST. This concentration on presentable, prepackaged features of African culture

formed a sharp contrast with the often-repeated slogan of Ghanaian (and also of wider, Pan-African) cultural politics, stating: "Our culture is not just dancing and drumming!"

An MC conducted the program. His audience and the occasion in mind, he never ceased to emphasize the (Pan-)African nature of the cultural product that was on offer. For example, the Kusum Gboo Group from Ghana was announced in an elaborate manner: "This is how we dance! We don't separate music from dance, from birth to death we are accompanied by music! A baby's earliest contact with music is when the mother is singing while carrying it on her back." This widely used reference to the intrinsic "rhythmic disposition" of Africans can be traced back to Léopold Sédar Senghor's famous *négritude*-expression "Je danse, donc je suis," wherein he equated African physicality and spirituality with European rationality—both conceptualized as embodied cultural (and racial) essences. The Ghanaian group was then performing a so-called Zulu-dance from South Africa. Cross-continental references such as this were welcomed and applauded by the MC who was busily making an effort to animate the atmosphere. From time to time, he sprinkled his moderation with references to the peculiarities of African traditional culture: "Even though this is a Western stage, we want to go like traditional African theatre which is characterized by participation: so feel free to boogie!" However, the people in the audience were reluctant to follow the invitation. Nobody was dancing.

The evening program featured theater companies and larger dance ensembles. Groups such as AGORO from Cape Coast in Ghana and NASA²⁰ from Zimbabwe came on stage with dance dramas that incorporated elements from a wide range of sources, such as songs, African dance segments, and components of Western theatre. Others, as, for example, the Nigerian Cultural Troupe, opted for a more standardized repertoire of traditional dances. Puppetry was also part of the program, as were mask-dances from Gambia. When the colorful masks were moving gracefully onto the stage, an African-American acquaintance sitting next to me asked: "Don't you want to take a picture of that? You are probably not going to see it again, apart from some book on African arts and culture!" He was fascinated by the splendor and grandeur of an African culture that was inexorably drifting into the realms of the past. From there, it could be retrieved only by a conscious preservation effort. At an occasion such as PANAFEST, the conserved heritage could then be put on display for a culture-conscious audience to marvel at.

Despite the mix of performances, the attendance was rather low. Every evening, the auditorium slowly began to fill while the show was already going on, but only between one-third and one-half of the seats were taken by the end of each show. When my interlocutors compared PANAFEST '99 with previous

editions, some mentioned that formerly there had been greater enthusiasm among the audience. That disparity was interpreted in different ways, according to the particular standpoint from which people were assessing the festival.

During the final plenary session of the colloquium a general evaluation of the whole event and its future course took place. One of the Ghanaian participants demanded that the festival, given its great potential, especially in the field of tourism, ought to remain in Ghana by all means. The OAU should be asked to prescribe that "Ghana has been chosen as permanent headquarters so that other countries do not take it away from us." Other participants from South Africa and Nigeria had suggested that the festival should circulate. They argued that, if many African countries took up the idea, PANAFEST could really become a venue to put the Pan-African idea to test. Apart from the greater input that could be achieved if the organizing committees varied and if different people brought in fresh ideas, the change of locations would also enhance the festival's attraction to visitors. A fruitful exchange could thereby evolve, not only with the diaspora but also among Africans of various nationalities and backgrounds. The fact that the actual management of the festival had remained solely in the hands of Ghanaians who were reluctant to let it go, or even to allow for a substantial input from outside Ghana, provoked serious objections. As one Nigerian journalist put it: "The moment you make it an all-Ghanaian affair . . . it should be called Ghanafest and not PANAFEST!" To him, this restricted radius of the festival rendered the omnipresent Pan-African rhetoric unconvincing, which, in turn, diminished its appeal to its original clientele.²¹

Other people regarded the co-existence of two international festivals, Emancipation Day and PANAFEST, as a major problem. This was an argument that was mainly enforced by those who had been involved in the organization of the respective events. Despite their proximity in topic, it was not exactly the same set of people who were in support of either PANAFEST or Emancipation Day. On the contrary, I met people who accused Emancipation Day of having taken all the resources from PANAFEST and vice versa. Sponsors had not been very willing to give money to two events with a similar theme. In the end, both suffered from the lack of coordination. Personal rivalries and attempts to make one's mark in association with one or the other homecoming-event were also part of the problem.²²

Another view concerned the quality of performances. The leader of one of the Ghanaian groups commented:

PANAFEST is becoming a bit ordinary . . . [There is] nothing really special to call [people's] attention. The money that is put in doesn't go

to the performers, but all into the organization. But you should make every effort to get the best performers and not spend it on airfare for the organizers to go and launch PANAFEST overseas!

And indeed, all the performers had to pay a fee to participate in the festival, which prevented many of the local groups from joining. Efua Sutherland's original idea, wherein she saw the festival as an artistic forum that would, aside from other things, lead the theater movement in Ghana (and the African world) to new heights, was pushed to the background by the overt focus on tourists as the major patrons of PANAFEST. Any group ready to pay the fee was invited to perform, regardless of the actual content and form of the presentation. Artistic standards were of secondary importance.

One African-American participant advanced yet another argument. Just like many other critics who accused the festival of having been "monetized," he attributed the difference between PANAFEST '99 and '97 to the omnipresence of financial barriers that had prevented people from coming to the festival grounds this time:

If you went to the place [during PANAFEST '97] you had to go early to get a good seat because of the [large number of] people. . . . This time, it was about a third of the seats that were occupied. . . . The reason for that is that the costs were just too high for the locals. The first time, you didn't have to pay anything to get into the . . . area. . . . I much prefer viewing performances with the local people. (Gary L. Hunter, interview 08.09.1999)

He then suggested how to deal with this problem: "You can charge non-Ghanaians more, just let the locals in, so that they can enjoy." This position contrasts with the often-reproduced stereotype of African Americans who travel to Ghana and demand to be immediately accepted as family while denying all differences between them and Ghanaians. It offers a glimpse into the broad spectrum of people and views that made up the PANAFEST community.

Back in the United States, my interview partner was a professor of African and African-American philosophy. He was in his late fifties and was considering retiring to Africa. At first, Tanzania was on his mind, but then a friend had recommended Ghana. So he visited his first PANAFEST in 1997 and fell in love with the country. By the time of our meeting, he had plans to build a hotel along the coast. Prof. Hunter stressed that he recognized that he was a stranger in many ways, and yet he could feel at home and engage with Ghanaians on the grounds of a historical as well as a personal connection. To him, the

understanding among Africans—which he found desirable—was not a given fact but had to be acted out and gained, just as with any person, regardless of his or her background. He saw PANAFEST as an opportunity to establish a linkage with Ghanaians and thereby to crosscheck his dreams and ideas about Africa with the realities on the ground. He felt that there was a need to educate one another about one's differing experiences. To him, despite his reservations, the festival worked as a forum of true exchange. Yet it was only by his personal initiative that he was able to satisfy this desire for integration. The festival, in its actual outlook, almost produced the opposite effect, because it excluded a great portion of the Ghanaian population and marked the visitors as complete strangers: affluent and lofty—worlds apart.

FESTIVAL POLITICS: THE CHALLENGE OF CONTRADICTING INTERESTS AND REALITIES

On the cover of the PANAFEST Official Souvenir Brochure (1999), one finds the portraits of several Black men and women who are connected to the Pan-African project in one way or another: W. E. B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Efua Sutherland, Maya Angelou, Bob Marley, Haile Sellassie, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Yaa Asantewa.²³

Apart from this official program, several other publications with a PANAFEST heading circulated during the festival. Among those was a Special Commemorative Issue devoted to PANAFEST and Emancipation Day, which had been edited by Micromedia Consultants Ltd. (1999), a U.K.-based company that also published *Ghana Review International*, a popular magazine with a focus on Ghanaian politics, culture, tourism, and business. This glossy brochure was part of the package that was handed out to participants of the PANAFEST colloquium. On its front page, it featured a portrait of Miss South Africa wearing a two-piece dress that played with traditional aesthetic elements, such as geometrical designs, bead embroidery, as well as a metal collar optically stretching her neck. What was striking about the choice of this motif was the fact that the woman was blond, straight-haired, and of obvious European descent.

This brochure became the subject of heated debates, since many of the PANAFEST-supporters felt that it was utterly inappropriate and stood in sharp contrast to the announced theme and direction of the festival. Their emphasis was clearly on a racial commonality that was inclusive of diasporans yet not of African nationals of other backgrounds. In the underlying genealogy of heritage, the congruence of racial and cultural markers was assumed to be a given, resident in the black body.²⁴ Any appropriation of “African traditions”



FIGURE 8.2 PANAFEST-Brochure, 1999.

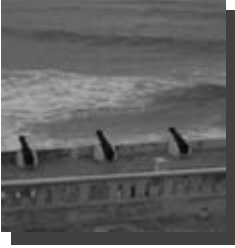
that cut across these racial boundaries was perceived as cultural adulteration: inauthentic kitsch at best, racist mockery at worst.

In response to such criticisms, the organizers distanced themselves from the publication, emphasizing that it was not a publication of the PANAFEST Board. Whereas the International Board did not authorize the magazine, the PANAFEST secretariat, which was directly responsible for the organization of the festival, did. This authorization of the magazine, just like its inclusion in the colloquium folder, was not merely accidental. It rather suggested the problematic lack of coherence

in the planning and running of the entire event. There were discrepancies among original intention, official rhetoric, and concrete execution.

This inconsistency speaks of the impossibility of a one-to-one implementation of the Pan-African ideological premise, which is in itself full of contradictions, to the sphere of social interaction. PANAFEST constituted an interface where different social actors converged, each of whom advanced various political, cultural, and economic interests. Even if those interests could have been better synchronized, they could never have been homogenized. Moreover, the vision of an ultimate PANAFEST, wherein all differences could have been accommodated, was in sharp contrast to the actual capacities of the planning committee. The people working there were desperately trying to keep up to the challenges of limited resources of both manpower and money. Some of the people who worked at the secretariat were only completing their national service and had had no previous experience with the organization of such a major international event. In addition, the organizers were under pressure from many different sides: The Ghanaian government wanted to have a say in the shaping of the event, despite its pull-out from all financial obligations toward the festival's maintenance. Prominent individuals from both the diaspora and Ghana were laying claim to the idea of the festival. Visitors had to be attracted and entertained; traders needed to be allowed to make their profit; sponsors had to be convinced to support the event. Especially the financial pressure was immense. High-flying statements about the "re-emergence of African civilization" contrasted with the sheer facts of a neoliberal reality, where everybody is forced to make ends meet.

The conversion of PANAFEST from an individual proposal into a state-supported cultural enterprise and from there into a private-sponsored foundation is particularly relevant here, because it highlights the political dynamics behind the celebration. Whereas the decline of government involvement could definitely be observed in concrete financial terms, it was less evident in the fields of cultural representation and political appropriation. Given the general attention that the Ghanaian government paid to the building of closer relations between Ghana and the African diaspora as well as to the growth of the country's tourism sector, the festival continued to serve a purpose. If it were successful, the praise would fall on the government in charge; if it flopped, this failure could be attributed to organizational problems in the hands of a few individuals. No matter its concrete execution, as long as it took place in Ghana, PANAFEST could be cited as a proof of the nation's commitment to the Pan-African cause. As I have already indicated and will develop in the next chapter, this cause was not strictly defined but could rather be stretched so as to suit a variety of intentions.



CHAPTER NINE

PAN-~~A~~FRICANISM AS A RESOURCE

CONTESTED RELATIONSHIPS OF BELONGING IN THE PRACTICE OF HOMECOMING

*“He is one of those people who left us long ago, isn’t it?” he asked. / “What do you mean?” I asked. / “You don’t know the story of those who left, taken away many years ago?” he asked. / “Yes, I know of it. I’ve read of them in books. But you mean my friend in there?” / “Yes,” he said. “Yes, my father told me about them. His father told him.” (Kofi Awoonor, from *Comes the Voyager at Last*, 1992)*

TOWARD AN EXPLORATION OF THE STRATEGIC USE OF ESSENTIALISMS

If one compares the Pan-African revival of the 1990s and 2000s with the peak of the political movement in the mid-twentieth century, one notices continuities as well as striking differences. What is most remarkable in this development is a return to “racial” Pan-Africanism. The image that is continuously being evoked in the Afrocentric rhetoric is that of a united African *family*. The

Excerpt from Awoonor, Kofi, “Republica Dominica,” in *Comes the Voyager at Last: A Tale of Return to Africa*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press 1992, p. 111 (P.O.B. 1892, Trenton, NJ 08607, USA).

allusions of this ascription are based on kinship ties, founded on blood. In a deeply emotional language, racial commonality is presented as an unfailing link between people belonging to a joint stock; as a directed stream that in its perpetual flow will eventually absorb all differences between them.

Even though it monopolizes Kwame Nkrumah's charismatic personality, this approach has abandoned the political doctrine of his time, as continental cooperation has ceased to be a central concern of this neo-Pan-Africanism. Instead, the bridge across the Atlantic has become the principal symbol of Pan-African collaboration, and the diaspora-dimension has consequently regained its importance. One could assume that this development would have brought potential conflicts between continental and diasporan Africans over the meaning and value of Pan-Africanism to a halt. However, as the examples in the previous chapters have shown, this is hardly the case.

I now offer a theoretical explication of this ever-present tension. Through my approach I attempt to generate a deeper understanding of the essentializing practice that underlies the ideological formation of Pan-Africanism and, more specifically, the homecoming of diasporan Africans to Ghana. I do not approach this intrinsic essentialism of the Pan-Africanist discourse as an intellectual "Other"; but I deconstruct it in order to grasp its inherent dynamics. In other words, what I have in mind is to follow the process of objectification (cf. Werbner 1997a: 229) by which the "African family" is conceptualized and utilized. This also implies paying attention to the areas in which this collective label is undermined and called into question. The concept of a strategic use of essentialisms appears to me as an appropriate way of arriving at this delicate balance. Moreover, the concept provides useful categories through which it becomes possible to decipher the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion as they are at work in the homecoming process.

In her seminal discussion on subaltern studies, Gayatri Spivak speaks of "a *strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (1988: 205; emphasis in the original). She is concerned with the opportunities and limits of a historiography from the subaltern point of view, as well as with the critical role of intellectuals in that process. I understand her essay as a criticism of the process of reification implied in defining a group with a common consciousness, such as the "subaltern" or "insurgent" in the Indian context, no matter whether this definition builds on hegemonic preconceptions. To her, whereas the historians of the Subaltern Studies Group are opposed to elite constructions of social relations and the resulting interpretations thereof, they miss an important point, namely, their own embeddedness in political discourse. The attempt to define and speak *for* the subaltern remains unsatisfactory and caught up in the "game of knowledge as power" (1988:

207), as long as the accompanying political objective of such an endeavor is concealed.¹ Furthermore, Spivak argues that there is no singular “voice” by which the subaltern could be identified but that it becomes audible only situationally and unevenly. The very act of gaining a voice, therefore, involves a transgression of the subaltern status.

In a similar vein, Kwame Anthony Appiah has argued that the adherence to the myths of unity makes it impossible to recognize the processes of their generation (1992: 175). Yet, whereas Spivak recognizes the potential use of essentializing strategies to political action,² Appiah is extremely doubtful about the value of these tropes, such as that of racial solidarity, even in a strictly political arena. He views the responsibility of intellectuals in unraveling the “truth,” in pointing toward other kinds of alliances that avoid the recourse to racial, and racist, identifications. Whereas his argument for another Pan-Africanism, which would be based on “continental fraternity and sorority” (*ibid.*: 180), seems surprisingly uninspired, given the recent history of the Pan-African project with its continental focus, his more profound argument is directed toward the recognition of the *multiple* affiliations that determine each individual’s identity, or better, identities. Solidarity and cooperation must therefore, in Appiah’s view, cut across the boundaries of race and other similarly essentialist categories.³ But the question remains: How do those demands relate to the reality on the ground, or, in other words, from which position is this argument actually being advanced, and what does it say about its applicability to contexts of political struggle.

The contributors to Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood’s volume *Debating Cultural Hybridity* (1997) question the strict anti-essentialism that dominates the works of many postcolonial authors. They take on a radically anthropological approach and seek to look beyond cultural representations, or rather to examine their generation and transformation. This criticism has a very strong point: It asks why people employ essentialisms and to what purposes. And it allows the ethnographic subjects to act in a meaningful way, so that they do not merely appear as the victims of false ideologies (a tendency that runs through Appiah’s argument).⁴

Werbner (1997a, 1997b), in particular, argues for a differentiated view on essentialism(s). She sees a great danger in lumping together any acts of collective identification under a singular (and negatively connoted) label—that of essentialism. In her view, constructionism has gone too far “in denying the ontological grounds of experience as a source of cultural meaning, and particularly . . . the experience of racial violence and suffering and the collective identities this experience generates” (1997b: 226). To ignore this crucial dimension of violence would be cynical. Werbner distinguishes between

two acts of essentializing. The first, “reification,” is inherent to racism and its denial of subject status to, and silencing of, the victims of racism. The second, “objectification,” is the mode of expression of “normal ethnicity;” it is a “rightful performance or representation of multiple, valorised, and aestheticised identifications” (*ibid.*: 229). Werbner does not regard these identifications as static or eternal manifestations of identity. Rather, she views them as constantly debated and in flux. According to her—and in contrast to Spivak’s argument—such debates take place *within* the respective communities; however, they are mostly restricted to “invisible public arenas,” that is, they occur in alternative spaces outside the official public sphere, which is controlled by the hegemonic nation-state and its dominant agents.

Another argument in Werbner’s text is important and links it to a point stressed by Appiah. Given the force of racist violence in societies such as Britain, which is not directed against just one group of people, there emerge “communities of suffering,” which constitute a “hybrid assortment of Others” (*ibid.*: 235). To be the victim(s) of racism defines a common cause, and Werbner calls for new strategies to overcome particular interests in the face of “bureaucratic fictions of [separate] unity that work towards the undermining of broader alliances.” Yet, in contrast to Appiah, she sees the (never fixed and always mutable) self-essentializing of minorities as a mode of empowerment that may even be a precondition for the formulation of more general antiracist demands.⁵

While the debate that I have briefly outlined above is mainly concentrated on the essentializing strategies of minorities in opposition to a dominant society, Michael Herzfeld (1997) has moved the concept to a different ground. He is more concerned with the role of essentialisms—and their strategic application—in the arena of national identity. Here, his interest is not so much in oppositional politics but rather in the operation of the rhetoric of commonality across the spheres of the bureaucratic and the everyday. He asks about the struggle evolving around the issue of the “control over the external images of a national culture” (1997: ix) among the nation’s citizens and the representatives of the state apparatus. What does this process tell us about the mechanisms of identity formation that are usually not made public? In what ways are such images shared by the diverse ranges of social actors, and where (and how) are they subverted or turned around so as to carry totally different, or at least officially unintended, meanings?

Herzfeld outlines a theory of social poetics through which he attempts to understand the correlation between the disparate (self-)presentations of individual actors within the nation-state and the formal image of the national/collective self. He assumes that national identity manifests itself first and

foremost in everyday life and often in opposition to the dominant position of the state. This is the area in which “cultural intimacy” is achieved, in contrast to the formalism of cultural nationalism. “Cultural intimacy” delineates that domain where commonality is enacted through the concealment of either embarrassments or deviations from normative stereotypes. It consists of that which everybody knows, yet nobody speaks about. This shared space of cultural intimacy is carefully protected from intrusion—by holding on to the essentialist imagery of sameness (or iconicity) that official nationalism provides, while transgressing it in daily routine. Ironically, according to Herzfeld, social norms and conventions become thus reinforced by the very act of deforming and subverting them.

Herzfeld argues that it is important to take the official rhetoric and ideology seriously, because it constitutes the main battleground on which different interests are asserted by different groups of people within a society. Rhetoric is at the heart of social interaction. He points toward the connection between the use of a fixed cultural form and the play with cultural content. To him, essentialism—such as that of a “national character”—appears as a social strategy, applied by state officials and locals alike, if only to different ends. He writes: “Disputed pasts illustrate . . . that essentialism is a strategy that denies its own existence: no party to such a conflict can ever admit the possibility of multiple answers or of ambiguity” (*ibid.*: 93). His emphasis on the conflictive nature on which the strategic use of essentialisms is based enables us to call into question the apparent homogeneity of cultural ideologies in general.

This is the point where Herzfeld’s reflections become relevant for the context of homecoming and the Pan-African ideology immanent in that field. Although Herzfeld is operating solely in the sphere of the (Greek) nation-state, we can transfer some of his propositions to the transnational space of diasporic relationships. By doing so, we can show that it is not necessarily the state alone that takes on a dominant position in the public discourse on heritage and identity. Other agents may very powerfully seek to determine the modes of debate. Furthermore, I argue that cultural intimacy is negotiated not only between the state and “ordinary people” but also among different elites of a distinct background.

The process of essentializing is by no means one-dimensional; rather, it produces contextual affiliations and segmentations. To me, therefore, the concept of a “strategic use of essentialisms” provides a meaningful analytical tool in a twofold manner. First, the Pan-African ideology takes on a self-defined “antiposition” against the hegemonic forces of Western imperialism and racism. In that respect, the proclaimed unity of Black people may be regarded as a strategy seeking empowerment against a White society that is equally

portrayed as a homogeneous bloc (or even as “the enemy”).⁶ In this sense, the recourse to racial stereotypes can be understood in Spivak’s (1988) or Werbner’s (1997b) terms. Herzfeld opens up yet another important dimension in which the concept may be applied. His “strategic use of essentialisms” refers to the *internal dynamics* of group formation. Given the fact that the proclamation of an “African family,” as it appears in Ghana today, is based on multiple interests and a variety of motivations, Herzfeld’s sense of the term may lead to a better understanding of the complex relationship underlying the current rhetoric of Pan-Africanism.

Moreover, the concept of “cultural intimacy” is also important here. It could be argued that the debates over the meaning and the reality of the Pan-African project, especially as they were acted out in the concrete encounters that I describe in this book, were actually fought over the realms of cultural intimacy. Whereas in some areas, this intimacy (as a signifier of Blackness) did surely exist and is shared across national or personal boundaries, there were other areas where it was interrupted. The tensions and misunderstandings between Ghanaian and diasporan actors, as they occurred throughout the discourse and practice of homecoming, may thus be explained in terms of mutually exclusive spheres of cultural intimacy.

PAN-AFRICAN IDEOLOGY AS A STRATEGY IN MULTIPLE FIELDS

The theoretical framework that I have developed above is well suited to generate a deeper understanding of the inherent contradictions in the field of homecoming. It becomes particularly important when one looks at the most literal form of homecoming—repatriation, which can be said to be the touchstone for the proclaimed commonality among all Black people.

In the following discussion, I demonstrate how the strategic application of Pan-African references by different actors contributes to the reproduction of that ideology of essential Africanness, and how it simultaneously represents a charged field of contestation among those same actors.

A CENTRAL PLACE ON THE MARGINS: THE W. E. B. DU BOIS MEMORIAL CENTRE FOR PAN-AFRICAN CULTURE IN ACCRA

The Site For the visitor coming from the hot, noisy city center of Accra, the W. E. B. Du Bois Memorial Centre for Pan-African Culture seems like an oasis. The extensive, shady grounds are usually very peaceful (cf. Graham Du Bois 1971: 332–333). From time to time a tour group, frequently consisting of African Americans, is led through the center at whose entrance stands the bronze bust of Dr. Du Bois. Straight ahead one finds a small museum, housed

in the former home of the Du Bois family. Entering the museum, visitors pass a small counter where they can purchase books on W. E. B. Du Bois, on Ghanaian customs and traditions, a travel-guide to Ghana, or children's storybooks of Ananse, the trickster-hero of Akan folktales. They can also buy cassettes and CDs with recorded speeches of Du Bois and Nkrumah. At the time of my fieldwork, there were wall-hangings by Hamet M. Maulana, an African-American expatriate and research fellow at the Du Bois Centre, exhibited for sale. They were labeled "The Theft of African Civilization" and depicted migration roots of African peoples from Ancient Egypt across the entire continent, and to West Africa in particular.

In the hall of the museum, a series of photographs of Pan-Africanist theorists and Black activists is displayed. The guided tour leads visitors through this vestibule into the other rooms. Unfortunately, none of the original furniture has been preserved in the more than twenty years that the house was used as a residence for civil servants. So what remains to be seen are small artifacts and some photographs and awards. One of the rooms contains part of Du Bois's library and a collection of his works, both of which are made available to researchers. During the tour, some background information on the center as well as on Du Bois's life and work is provided. The building also houses a small public library that is equipped with Pan-Africanist and Afrocentric literature, donated to the center by visitors and supporters.

Stepping out of the museum, one may stroll through the large garden stretching behind the building. It includes the open-air theater, the venue for most of the lectures and performances. There is also the Marcus Garvey Guest House, where up to six researchers and other visitors can rent rooms. In the late 1990s an additional building was put up on the premises. It was designated to serve as a permanent exhibition hall for the so-called Black Inventions Museum. This exhibition goes back to an initiative by an African-American woman, Lady Sala S. Shabazz (a.k.a. Valerie J. Robinson), whose "dedication to the promotion of positive images and self-esteem are exemplified in her endeavors of research, investigation, and documentation of the magnificent contributions of African people throughout the world" (from the foreword to a book accompanying the exhibition, Shabazz 1998: xiv). The museum consists of inventions as diverse as cosmetics and medicine in ancient Egypt, the invention of the automatic traffic light by African American Gerrett Morgan, and Marcus Garvey's red, black, and green flag. The exhibition was planned as a circulating display and has already toured widely, both within the United States and internationally. The project attempts to include in its archives any Black person who is holding a patent. However, the inauguration of the museum on the Du Bois Centre grounds on August 2, 1999 took place in an

empty building, because the money to complete the construction ceased to flow shortly before the exhibition was about to move in—ten years later, the building was still not finished.

The most important feature of the Du Bois Centre is a small octagonal pavilion opposite the former residence of the Du Bois family. It shelters the grave of W. E. B. Du Bois and the ashes of his wife Shirley Graham Du Bois. During the official tour the attentive listener learns that the mausoleum was designed in the style of a Ghanaian “chief’s palace.” The ceiling of the structure resembles a spider’s web, reminding the viewer of Ananse, the spider-trickster, and his playful wisdom. Carved stools, each one finely decorated with an *adinkra*-ornament, are placed in the eight corners. Among the symbols that are represented are *gye nyame* (“except God”), *sankɔfa* (“return and take it”), *nyansapɔw* (“wisdom knot”), and *akoma* (“the heart”).

Especially the first two have become icons of a proud Black identity, not just in their original environment in Ghana and Ivory Coast but also among many African Americans. *Gye nyame*, one of the oldest *adinkra*-symbols, formerly reserved for the *Asantehene* (the king of Asante), is particularly popular among Ghanaians. For many of them it serves as convenient shorthand for expressing trust in a powerful God. Hence, it is widely used and therefore



FIGURE 9.1 Pavilion with the grave of W. E. B. Du Bois, Du Bois Centre, Accra, 1999.

widely known. Responding to the growing popularity of the symbol, artisans such as jewelers or carvers started to produce *gye nyame* designs for a national as well as a foreign clientele. Likewise, the *sankɔfa*-symbol is extremely popular today—not only in the context of Ghanaian cultural politics but also among Africa-conscious diasporans who identify with its message. As it calls for the need of a solid foundation in the past in order to meet the future, it mirrors their quest for a spiritual (as well as physical) return to Africa. *Sankɔfa* has thus become a symbol to express an Afrocentric worldview and identity—be it in the form of furniture decoration, T-shirts, earrings, or business logos. Both *gye nyame* and *sankɔfa* seem exceptionally fitting symbols for a shrine devoted to the memory of W. E. B. Du Bois. The fact that they are widely known within as well as outside Ghana allows visitors to immediately identify with the message as well as the place. Nevertheless, whether the intentions of the center's founding mothers and fathers concur with the differing interpretations of visitors or state officials remains an open question.

The Du Bois Centre was opened to the public on June 22, 1985. Du Bois's coffin, which had previously lain in Christiansbourg Castle—one of the former slave castles and to date the seat of the Ghanaian government⁷—was re-interred, and the urn of his wife was transferred back to Ghana from China, where she had died while on a trip from Egypt, her exile-home after Nkrumah's overthrow. Even though it had been her will that her ashes should be laid to rest at her husband's grave, it took more than seven years before that wish could be accomplished. Kofi Anyidoho, one of the founders of the Du Bois Centre, explained this delay as a result of the adverse political climate at the time she died, when “we had a power in government which was still hostile to ideas of Pan-Africanism broadly. Or precisely, anyone who had anything to do with Nkrumah was not necessarily welcome.” Then, in November 1985, the center became a national memorial and was thereby elevated to the same status as, for example, the numerous slave castles and forts along Ghana's coastline.

Canonizing the African Family When the center was founded, primarily a small group of Africa-conscious and highly politicized intellectuals adopted and debated Pan-Africanism. Today, this situation has changed, and, as I have demonstrated throughout, the Pan-African rhetoric is broadly applied on all kinds of occasions. Africa is featured as the Motherland and the home of all people of African descent. Differences and discontinuities among people seem to fade in the sight of the repeatedly evoked image of the “African family.” Within the conceptualization of African identity as first and foremost racial identity, the existence of a strong bond between Africa and its diaspora

is assumed. This bond is supposedly manifested in the various festivals and events that have sprung up as part of the recent Pan-African revival.

In this general discursive framework surrounding the newly recreated Pan-Africanism in Ghana, a fixed canon of Pan-African heroes and heroines has emerged. It includes first and foremost people who have exerted great, although diverse, influence on the historical Pan-African movement. Among these are Kwame Nkrumah and W. E. B. Du Bois, as well as Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X. On various occasions, such as a forum on reparations (12. 10. 1998), the opening ceremony of PANAFEST (07. 31. 1999), and the pouring of libation during the First Annual Pan-African Jazz Festival at the Du Bois Centre (02. 19. 1999), these personalities were mentioned side by side.

At the same time a figure such as Yaa Asantewa, the queenmother of the Asante kingdom, who resisted the British colonizers by refusing to surrender the Golden Stool—the most vital symbol of the Asante nation—has also been integrated into this canon (see McCaskie 2007). Thereby, local and national history is reframed in order to suit a broader Pan-African discourse. Real or potential contradictions between the different personalities and positions are not taken account of in this kind of canonization. Thus, for example, the opposition that existed between W. E. B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey is blurred; instead, their working toward the same end is emphasized. The naming of the guesthouse on the Du Bois Centre grounds after Marcus Garvey can therefore be read as an indication of this attempt toward the construction of an “African family” and its cultural and political homogenization.

Within the above-described Black canon, the assertion of commonality is based on a single yet substantial threat: the vehement resistance of all of those included in the pantheon against Western hegemony. This kind of unification can become a very important strategy in the struggle against racial discrimination and oppression. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge that the “common struggle” serves as a conceptual bracket for a variety of positions that are otherwise incompatible. In some contexts, symbols of unity may turn into signs of hierarchy and even disjunction. For example, one of the visitors to the Du Bois Centre, who had just repatriated to Ghana, was very disappointed when she saw the Marcus Garvey Guest House and regarded it as a provocation: “They gave him the boys’ quarters!” Even though this judgment did not correspond with the actual situation (the guest house being a replica of the original building), her statement is revealing. Empress Basema, a committed Rastafarian, was disinclined to identify with the snobbish elitism that the figure of Du Bois personified in her eyes. The pairing of Marcus Garvey (whom she adored) and W. E. B. Du Bois (whom she detested) on the same

patch of ground did not work for her, even though she was a firm believer in Pan-Africanism.

The Center's (Official) Function In the whole discourse on Pan-Africanism in Ghana, the Du Bois Centre took on a position of simultaneous marginality and centrality (cf. Shields 1991). Contrary to PANAFEST and Emancipation Day, which appeared, so to speak, on the main stage of the re-emergent Pan-Africanism, the Du Bois Centre played only a minor role in that setting: Apart from its occasional appearance on the pages of tourism brochures, where it was advertised as a place to be seen, it was virtually absent from the broader conscience of the Ghanaian public. Barely was it mentioned in the media, and only few people were aware of its program. In addition, its hidden location in a residential area of Accra made it difficult to access. When asked about the reasons for this seeming lack of attention, Kofi Anyidoho explained: "What is important to keep in mind [is that] people are expecting from the center major, spectacular... events. [But] no, it's a center devoted to consciousness-raising and a lot of its best work will have to happen quietly" (interview 09.17.1999). This view was supported by the center's official statement of purpose; here, research and education were among the first priorities (see <http://webdubois-gh.org>, accessed 02.01.2009). The annual Du Bois/Padmore/Nkrumah Lectures, where well-known scholars such as Molefi Kete Asante, Ngugi wa Thiongo, and Ali Mazrui have spoken, were therefore among the highlights of the program.

Alongside the lectures, all my contacts named the work with young people as a particular focus. In 1999, this aspect was emphasized when the First Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit was hosted on the center-grounds (cf. Du Bois Centre 1999). Furthermore, under the auspices of the center, Pan-African Youth Clubs were formed in various secondary schools throughout the country, where "the kids learned about the history of African peoples outside their normal syllabus in which normally they don't tell them anything about it" (Anyidoho, interview 09.17.1999).

From these objectives one can conclude that the Pan-Africanist impulse that initially guided the formation of the Du Bois Centre and its policy clearly transcended the festival craze that soon began to dominate the public rhetoric with regard to Pan-Africanism; and it continued to do so during the time of my fieldwork.⁸ Therefore, although the center might be considered marginal in terms of public acknowledgment, its political function cannot be underestimated. It may be called a yardstick against which the reality of Pan-Africanism in today's Ghana can be measured.

When asked about the relevance of Pan-Africanism as a feature of contemporary Ghanaian politics, some interview-partners cited the sheer existence

of the center as a proof of Ghana's serious commitment to the Pan-African cause. For example, the deputy chairman of the National Commission on Culture, who had also served as the Du Bois Centre's acting director for two periods, said: "The establishment of the [center] . . . was a very significant move. . . . Ghana can do anything, but at least there is a center that is drawing attention to Pan-Africanism again" (interview 06.15.1999). "Anything," in his remark, referred to the government's economic policy and Ghana's turning to the IMF and World Bank, with their conformity to structural adjustment programs and massive privatization. This means that the Pan-African revival that could be observed on a rhetorical level was seemingly contradicted by the economic reality and general political course. In its recast understanding of Pan-Africanism, the Ghanaian state was trying to reconcile these different agendas.

At the time of my fieldwork, the center had an African-American executive director, Remel Moore, who had repatriated to Ghana in 1995. However, Ghana was not the first African country where she had lived—before, she had stayed in Liberia for seven years. There, she had served as coordinator of student affairs at the university and later headed the Liberia branch of the Fulbright Commission until the civil war broke out and she had to leave. After four years in the United States, she decided to come back to Africa and, with her husband and three sons, settled in Ghana. Jointly, they operated a small business, offering training and counseling services to the public. When the job at the Du Bois Centre was announced, the president of the African-American Association of Ghana, an organization that represents the interests of African Americans who have taken permanent residence in Ghana, suggested she apply. She did—and was selected. She was the first diasporan to be on that job.⁹ Before that, employees of the National Commission on Culture were regularly appointed to the post of acting director. Often that choice was not necessarily determined by their Pan-Africanist commitment but by the internal staff policies of that authority. The fact that an African-American executive director was now chosen to head the center is particularly significant, because it could be interpreted as a proof of the reality of the "family union." However, a closer examination reveals fractures and gaps in this picture that deserve to be discussed in greater detail.

Diverse Appropriations: The Center as National Asset and Diasporan Social Base When I interviewed one of the board members of the Du Bois Centre, he spoke angrily about claims to Du Bois's remains allegedly asserted by some African Americans. He stressed:

They want the body back. . . . “Du Bois is for them.” But what do you say—Du Bois is for Africa! You come here! So we’ve refused to send it. They have some Du Bois Center in the United States, so they think they are better entitled. They’ve forgotten that when he was sacked from the U.S., we took him and gave him a home! *It was a good role we played. We deserve to have his body here, if for nothing, at least to honor us for also honoring him.* (interview 06.15.1999; my emphasis)

Keeping in mind the design of his burial place in the style of a Ghanaian chief’s palace, one can speak here of Du Bois’s assimilation into Ghanaian national history. It appears as if Ghana “owned” Dr. Du Bois, the same way that it “owned” PANAFEST and the slave castles—all these were used to distinguish Ghana from other West African countries and to make it attractive to visitors: “You come here!” To promote its national interests, most importantly in terms of economic advancement, the Ghanaian state thus fell back on Ghana’s historical position as the hub of the Pan-African world. This understanding indicates that Pan-Africanism may serve as an integrative point of reference; it can be said to constitute a cultural form that provides the matrix for a variety of intentions and works as a “cover for social action” (Herzfeld 1997: 2). As has become evident in the re-interpretation of a figure such as Yaa Asantewa as a Pan-Africanist role model—or the appropriation of W. E. B. Du Bois as a precious national asset—the concept is flexible and can be bent in different directions, depending on the prevailing context.

Whereas the Ghanaian state saw great economic potential in heritage, or roots, tourism and consequently made plans to put the Du Bois Centre under the direct control of the Ministry of Tourism, Remel Moore, the African-American executive director, dismissed these endeavors:

We are not only a tourism site. Tourism tends to be just that site—you are coming to see something. But here we want to involve people in the community in activities. . . . In fact at most of the programs, you wouldn’t find any tourist. The tourists come to look at the museum . . . and then they go home. But the people who stay here and who really imbue the whole sense of Pan-Africanism which is the main purpose of this center, we are doing it right here with the people of the community where we are! (interview 12.17.1998)

“The community” that she referred to chiefly consisted of a small group of African Americans and other diasporans living in Ghana. They shaped the image of the Du Bois Centre for the outside world. Of course, there is no such

thing as a homogeneous “African-American community,” neither in Ghana nor in the United States. Here, I refer only to people who actively engaged in the debate on Pan-Africanism and who used the Du Bois Centre as a place to do so. Thus, for example, the African American Association of Ghana (AAAG) had its office at the center. In its self-description it is stated that the organization seeks, among other things.

to promote greater social interaction between families of Association members; . . . to serve as a resource for visiting African Americans . . . ; to celebrate traditional African American holidays; to support selected Ghanaian institutions and commemorate Pan-African leaders. (AAAG 1999: 1)

This list shows a strong desire for connectivity among repatriates. It expresses a need to “feel home away from home,” whereby “home” does not refer to the abstract notion of the Motherland but to the habitual intimacy of shared food, festivities, lifestyle, political convictions, and even jokes and daily routines that are not self-evident in the Ghanaian setting.

Another group that was given office space at the Du Bois Centre was the Afrikan World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission (AWRRTC), which addressed the public on various occasions. The focus of its work was the demand for reparations for the transatlantic slave trade as well as for an unrestricted right of return and citizenship for all people of African descent—issues that have a long history in the struggle of Black people in the United States but that have only recently been raised in Africa in connection with initiatives for debt cancellation (cf. Soyinka 1999). Consequently, the commission was mainly made up of diasporan repatriates, with a few Ghanaian students supporting it. The two chairpersons, Mrs. Debrah Kofie and Dr. Hamet M. Maulana, both relocated from the United States to Ghana in the late 1980s.¹⁰

Repatriates (as well as some of the first-time visitors) often articulated a great longing for integration into the African community. At the same time they were seeking the comforts of familiar grounds, which they shared mostly with fellow diasporans. The Du Bois Centre served as one such a forum, where African Americans could feel free, among like-minded persons. In this context, therefore, the Pan-African rhetoric focused on issues that are an integral part of public debate within Black communities of the diaspora, such as the demands for reparations and repatriation.

It was not the Du Bois Centre alone where strategic applications of the topos of the “African family” became visible. More generally, they could be

detected in the diverse utilization of Pan-Africanism in the political sphere. In Ghana, Pan-African allusions were not relevant only as cultural marketing tools to boost the tourism sphere; they were also employed in the field of economics. This direction was pursued not only by the Ghanaian state but also by diasporan actors, who emphasized the connection between homecoming and the need to make a contribution to the development of Ghana. Yet the concrete shape of such contributions remained an issue of ongoing debate and conflict.

MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS: "COME HOME AND INVEST" VS. THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF REPATRIATION

The Economic Turn in Pan-Africanism In a conversation I had with one of the speech writers for Mike Gizo, then Minister of Tourism, an employee of the tourism ministry described the change in Pan-Africanism since the 1960s as follows: "In those days the issue was on liberation and freedom, getting rid of colonial rule. Now, we want to use Pan-Africanism more in terms of economic integration, investment and advancement" (interview 03.03.1999). This observation is relevant in two ways. First, it counterpoises the apologetic tone with which the above-quoted NCC-official had responded to the apparent discrepancy between Pan-African ideology and Ghana's current political orientation. Instead of viewing the two as contradictory, the administrator proposed a modified version of Pan-Africanism. No more the revolutionary ideology of decolonization, but rather a convenient means of economic cooperation in the face of global competition—that was the new Pan-African vision officially held by his ministry. And it was not only the Ministry of Tourism that favored this approach—indeed, the approach can be said to represent a general political trend.

The second aspect concerns the role of the diaspora within this new Pan-African agenda. When the employee of the Ministry spoke of Pan-Africanism in connection with economic growth, it was mainly the investment potential of African Americans and other diasporans that he had in mind. During my research, I observed this hope in Black economic partnership and development cooperation on many different occasions. Frequently, African Americans were called on to show a stronger financial commitment to the continent. This commitment could take the form of supporting institutions and events with a specifically Pan-African orientation, such as the Du Bois Centre or PANAFEST, but it was also thought of in terms of general economic contributions. Such expectations can be summarized in the widespread slogan "Come home and invest."¹¹

Clearly, the mention of home in this catchword bore a general reference to the Motherland as an imagined place of origin for diasporans. It appealed

to African Americans to make the dream of a prospering and powerful African continent come true. Yet, one cannot miss the point that it was not any particular place in Africa that was referred to as home; it was the nation of Ghana who welcomed the members of the “family” back home and asked for their support. Additionally, the linking of homecoming and investment clearly left out a great portion of diasporans who may want to return but who could never meet such high demands. The desire for reconnection on part of the Ghanaian state has therefore been criticized for being limited to the prospects of immediate gains: “If you don’t have money and you want to come, you are not welcomed!” (Nii-Noi Northey, Ghanaian musician, interview 06.09.1999). Nevertheless, the focus on economic advantages was not a new trend but was already a prominent position in the 1960s, when quite a few African governments emphasized training and money as the primary criteria for welcoming migration from the diaspora to the continent (cf. Weisbord 1973).

Despite a broad consensus about the redirection of the Pan-African drive among policy makers, critics of this course regarded it as a sell-out of Pan-Africanism. For example, in the view of one of my interview-partners, references to Pan-Africanism by politicians in Ghana and elsewhere on the continent amounted to nothing more but lip service: “Monday it is heritage; Tuesday, it is so-called trade and investment!” (interview 05.25.1999). To her, this type of “national Pan-Africanism” was meant only to disguise a neoliberal agenda, which was irreconcilable with her own Pan-African ideal, namely, that of an African socialist society. She was quite aware that this ideal was no longer in vogue in public discourse and that only few people shared it. To her, working toward African debt cancellation was but a compromise that allowed for political action that promised at least some results.

Critics of the official appropriation of Pan-Africanism rejected the economic orientation toward tourism and the business sector and demanded a more thorough debate over the diasporan presence in Ghana:

As it is now . . . the dialogue is starting in the market place. . . . Don’t go into the marketplace and start bargaining how to receive a member back into the family! . . . Instead, you want to receive a family member and pose this to yourself: How do we accept back into the family people who were taken away as slaves with our help? How do we do that? And how do we then relate to Europe for its role in this? (Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang, interview 08.03.1999)

Opoku-Agyemang here refers to the question of responsibility for past wrongs and the moral dilemmas it entails. However, the faith in diasporan

economic and political working to Africa's advantage was not built on mere illusion. It rather resonated with a certain public image promoted by African Americans themselves, who, on various occasions in Ghana, repeatedly stated the great investment potential of their community as one of the biggest economies in the world (in terms of its gross financial potential). The economic turn in Pan-Africanism, which went hand in hand with a firm market orientation, was therefore not only characteristic for recent political developments within the Ghanaian state; it was also noticeable in diasporan discourse, especially in its United States guise. African Americans of diverse political alignments, be they members of the Nation of Islam, representatives of multinational and small-scale business corporations, or Afrocentric scholars such as Leonard Jeffries, joined in the chorus of Black capitalism, which might either take the form of racially based business cooperation or resonate in the repeated call for a "Marshall Plan" for Africa in connection with demands for reparations.

Implementations: Debating African-American Contributions during the Fifth African/African-American Summit During my fieldwork, I was able to witness an impressive manifestation of this fundamental readjustment of Pan-Africanism. In May 1999 the Fifth African/African-American Summit was held at the International Conference Centre in Accra. On this occasion Ghana hosted close to 3,500 delegates from all over Africa as well as the diaspora, including thirteen African Heads of State. Business executives of large American companies such as Coca Cola and General Motors joined a high-ranking U.S. government delegation led by Rev. Jesse Jackson. The series of summits goes back to the initiative of the late Rev. Leon H. Sullivan,¹² who had introduced them in 1991 as a way to bridge the gap between Africa and the United States. On the official summit logo, this bridge takes the shape of a modern superhighway. The oceanic divide between the continents has shrunk to a small passage, easy to traverse. So how was the crossing conceptualized during the summit?

Rev. Sullivan and his supporters advocated the transfer of skills and technology acquired by former slaves in the New World back to Africa, to help the continent to advance. This was summarized in his motto: "I left in a slave-ship—I came back with a jet plane!" Whether or not Black people actually controlled the capital that was to flow through major companies, such as Shell and Chevron, to Africa was not addressed. The general theme of the Accra conference was "Business, Trade and Investment: Africa Can Compete." According to a lawyer at the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) who was directly involved in the preparations for the summit, it was the Ghanaian side that had insisted that "they should make sure that it turns

itself into a business promotion focus.” He also stated that it had been Ghana’s firm interest to “have some focus and . . . definitely not a group of Americans just coming to Africans and tell[ing] them what to do.” To him, the summit was part of a general drive for more foreign investments in the Ghanaian economy. If it could help to increase the level of Black American involvement and partnership, that would be a positive result. So far, the percentage of such joint ventures was negligible with regard to the general economic framework.

One of the major objectives of the summit was the creation of an enabling environment to support market economies. Throughout the workshops and panel sessions one heard the keywords *deregulation* and *privatization*, which belong to the standard formulae of the IMF and the World Bank. They were presented as the appropriate strategies by which the goal of a better standard of living for African people could be achieved. In his inaugural address to the summit participants, whom he referred to as “my brothers and sisters” (Rawlings 1999: 9), Ghana’s President Jerry John Rawlings employed the emotional language of homecoming when he spoke of a relationship between Africans and African Americans “that spans centuries and connects our people around the globe through ties of blood and shared cultural heritage” (*ibid.*: 6). He urged both groups to “embark on an exciting new adventure of development together” and to let the words and declarations of good will be followed by serious action. On part of the government of Ghana he announced an important step in the direction of mutually beneficial cooperation: A bill was soon to be considered by Parliament that “will enable any person of African descent to apply for Right of Abode in Ghana” (*ibid.*: 9). Successful applicants would be exempted from the need for visas as well as residence and work permits, thus making it easier and for them to live and invest in Ghana. In addition, the Right of Abode would be granted to those Ghanaians who had lost their citizenship through naturalization in other countries.

The announcement concerning the Right of Abode caused a great stir, especially among African Americans already residing in Ghana. It had not been the first time that such a promise was being made. As far back as 1995, during a rally in Harlem, President Rawlings had announced automatic citizenship to African Americans coming to Ghana. However, the people who followed his call were confronted with many obstacles. Until 2002 none of the new repatriates had been able to obtain Ghanaian (dual) citizenship (Info-Ghana 2002b). Obviously the law was intended to attract former Ghanaian citizens whose economic potential and, above all, commitment was perceived as far greater than that of their African-American counterparts. By 2007 many of them had taken advantage of the Dual Citizenship Law, whereas only a

handful of diasporans had been granted the Right of Abode (E. Adjei, Director Ghana Immigration Service, interview 08.08.2007).

Thus, the status of many repatriates continued to be very insecure. Since it was difficult to obtain (or prolong) a residence permit if one was not affluent, some people had entered the country on tourist visas that had long since expired, and thus they always faced the danger of deportation. For example, I learned about a case in which a woman who had lived in Ghana for more than four years was forced to leave the country after a quarrel with her Ghanaian landlord.¹³

Even if one was able to obtain legal status and to travel back and forth between Ghana and the United States, making a living in Ghana was definitely still a problem. First, because of extraordinarily high duties, it was very expensive to ship personal belongings from the United States or elsewhere to Ghana—a situation resulting in considerable financial pressure on repatriates from the very beginning of their endeavor. Second, and more important, the environment for small-scale investments (the league in which most African Americans played) was not as safe as the brochures of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre would have people believe. I was told of many African Americans who had not been able to protect their investments, “because they didn’t know how to work in this very insular system.” In the eyes of African-American residents, the opportunity to apply for dual citizenship would provide a safety net by which such disasters could be averted.

In addition to such practical considerations, the issue of dual citizenship needs to be viewed in the broader framework of diasporan identity politics. Those people who sought to repatriate often saw this move as their natural right; the return to the Motherland was “due” them. In a spiritual sense it was Africa where they felt they belonged. According to Markowitz and associates, such an idea of belonging can be termed “soul citizenship,” emphasizing “the right of individuals and groups to assert who they are by matching their self-defined identities with existing states” (2003: 302). Identity as an African “ascendant from slavery” was central to the returnees; the concrete realization in Ghana (as a nation-state) was of secondary importance. However, official recognition of diasporans’ inner striving in form of a Right of Abode or even of dual citizenship would enable the soulmates to achieve “soul citizenship.” By at least recognizing this striving, Ghana therefore increased its attractiveness as a destination for homecoming.

The Bill, however, included a clause that was rejected by many of the people who already had years of experience in Ghana. During the First Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit, which took place at the Du Bois Centre in July 1999, the late Yvonne Akosua Steward, a teacher and founder of the

Marcus Garvey Youth League in Ghana who had moved to Ghana from the United Kingdom around 1990, called for critical evaluation of the paragraph that said that the Right of Abode would be granted only to “those who have to offer a meaningful contribution to society.” Many diasporans whom I encountered were seriously offended by the ever-repeated demands heaved upon their shoulders. For example, Steward articulated her frustrations during a workshop at the African/African-American Summit:

I have been informed on a number of occasions that “you people, you owe us. We need you to help us.” At times I am infuriated by this statement. As we were kidnapped, enslaved, and shipped out, we are the fortunate ones, so some say. We landed in the place of opportunity. We have access to so much that affords us the chance to return home to work alongside our brothers and sisters. We are able to bring home what we have acquired and help lift Africa out of the doldrums. There is also the impression that we are the deliverers; we are the saviors. This load can be rather heavy to bear, and may result in a withdrawal of support if one feels the responsibility is too much, particularly if our fellow Africans appear to stand on the side, as if helpless; which is the message often given. (Steward 1999: 3)

Steward was convinced that virtually all the people who came from the diaspora would want to make “meaningful contributions” to Ghana’s development, but she doubted that the actual substance of those offerings could be adequately measured. Besides, controversial views might exist regarding the definition of what could be termed “meaningful” and what not.

However, there were quite a few Ghanaians who doubted the seriousness of the diasporan commitment. One of my interview-partners at the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre was very critical of the demands for dual citizenship. To illustrate his point, he posed a rhetorical question: Why would people want to maintain the citizenship of the countries they supposedly detested so much? Why not follow the example of Dr. Du Bois and drop your American citizenship for the Ghanaian one? He was ready with an answer: “Well, I have to have that home behind home just in case things aren’t good enough . . . they start slaughtering people, I’d better have my quick exit to Dallas and be back comfortably in my home downtown” (interview 07.21.1999). According to him, mutual stereotypes persisted, despite all assertions to the contrary.

Even though his observations can be said to derive from very abstract assumptions not necessarily reflecting the concrete circumstances of repatriation and the complicated and intimidating immigration procedures, they also indicate

a general problem in the relationship between Africans and African Americans. It was not only diasporans who were distressed by the ever-present expectations on part of Ghanaians. Ghanaians, too, felt a similar pressure, if only from a different angle. Thus, for example, I was told that African Americans often asked for impossible business concessions that they would never be granted elsewhere. Furthermore, their often haughty and aggressive behavior could make it difficult to deal with them, and such behavior could also run counter to their expectations of a warm welcome and acceptance as kith and kin. Little understanding was developed with regard to the reasons for such hostility. Such profound misunderstanding is illustrated by an excerpt from an article on the homepage of Info-Ghana, a website created by returning African descendants that was meant to provide useful information for other people considering the move to Ghana. Here, the situation for diasporan investors was decried:

. . . the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, the governmental agency that was created to facilitate investors, [does] not show any partiality towards humble repatriates, however they have not made a separate entrance for repatriates, forcing us into the narrow doorway that was created to attract exploiters of the continent rather than sons and daughters of the continent. . . . They rather hold contempt feelings toward repatriates who come without the deep pockets of our foreign counterparts. (Info-Ghana 2002)

There may therefore be a common denominator on a rhetorical level where homogeneous intentions of Ghanaians and African Americans are declared. When it comes to ideas of their realization, however, this commonality is broken, and opposing views are exhibited.

“And Today You Call Me Queen!”: The Enstoolment¹⁴ of the Executive Director of the Du Bois Centre The above-described controversies aside, the Ghanaian government and private sector as well as the repatriates’ community made every effort to render the Fifth African/African-American Summit a success. As the summit manager, Ralph A. Perkins, told me, the organizers had worked closely with the African-American community in Ghana, relying on their experiences and expertise: “I had meetings with [the Du Bois Centre staff]. . . . They have developed . . . programs every night, and although delegates are free to choose where they want to go, I’m sure many of them will support the Du Bois Centre, also financially” (interview 05.14.1999).

As a result of this cooperation, the center’s program was included in the official delegates’ information package, and the management therefore hoped

for the more than 1,000 overseas delegates to show an enthusiastic interest in the activities. Such massive attention would have automatically increased the center's public visibility. Various traders had put up their stalls on the center grounds and throughout the summit period waited patiently for potential customers. During a fairly well-attended reception held by the African American Association of Ghana (AAAG), the four-day program that ran concurrently with the official summit sessions was announced. It included a two-day meeting of the Afrikan World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission (AWRRTC) as well as a special Millennium Durbar of Chiefs designated to "set the stage for Africa's redemption in the 21st Century in honour of the African/African-American Summit." This would comprise these main events:

The enstoolment of the Chief Executive office of Du-Bois Centre.

RIGHTS OF PASSAGE—An African Divine Re-naming Ceremony for African descendants returning home by his holiness, the head of Afrikania Mission.

ORACLE CONSULTATION: By Divine African traditional seers.

AN EXHIBITION OF STONES OF TEARS IN NATURAL ART—(These are the original Stones, which were use[d] in building the Cape Co[a]st and Elmina Castles).

Eventually, this "Millennium Durbar" collided with the closing ceremony of the summit. While Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rev. Leon Sullivan, Ghanaian Vice President John Atta Mills, and President Jerry John Rawlings were addressing an excited crowd at the International Conference Centre, only few participants made their way to the Du Bois Centre. Nothing happened there. At the Conference Centre, Jesse Jackson spoke about "healing time, hope time" for Africans everywhere. Leon Sullivan ended his mesmerizing speech with a very emotional appeal to help him in his crusade for a prosperous Africa. Without exception, all the speakers referred to the summit as a great success that had radiated the "message of hope." With a prayer led by Dr. Delois Blakely, Community Mayor of Harlem, in which she called on the spirits of the African ancestors as well as of the "sons and daughters, yet unborn," the ceremony came to a close.

There was still no sign of activities at the Du Bois Centre. One after another, people left the venue. Around 4 P.M., the sound of drums broke the heavy silence. A small procession, made up of drummers, a few prominent members of the diasporan community in Ghana as well as representatives of a group of Ghanaian chiefs, the so-called Tower of Return Foundation,¹⁵ and

Osofo Ameve, then leader of the Afrikania/African Renaissance Mission,¹⁶ marched in. Walking a bit unsteadily in her unaccustomed attire was the director of the Du Bois Centre. Her husband and her youngest son accompanied her. She was wearing a two-piece toga made from white *chedda*-cloth and another expensive material in green and gold. In addition, she was adorned with necklaces and bracelets, composed of glass and gold beads, as well as a slim golden crown. One of the long-time African-American residents in Ghana danced *adowa*, a royal dance of the Akan, to welcome her.

Then the dignitaries took their seats on the podium. The small audience remained in the auditorium, at a distance from the happenings on the stage. Remel Moore was enstooled under the stool name Nana Ama Adom Nsa I to “honor her efforts towards the brothers and sisters relocating in . . . Ghana.” Three times she was seated on her stool before libation was poured to the ancestors. Osofo Ameve exclaimed: “Let the spirits of Kwame Nkrumah and W. E. B. Du Bois . . .—of all ancestors of Africa enter into that stool.”

Following that, Dr. Delois Blakely spoke of a “divine day to have a descendant of the Mother of Civilization [become] the Mother of Africa, Queen of the Du Bois Centre.” After her interlude and an exchange of greetings between the new queenmother and the people who were present for the occasion,



FIGURE 9.2 Enstoolment of Remel Moore during the Fifth African/African-American Summit, Du Bois Centre, Accra, 1999.

there was time for more speeches. First, Nana Okofo, who held the title of *asafohene* (which he translated as “warrior chief”), took the floor. He testified that the honorary enstoolments were very important to African Americans: “We don’t take it lightly! During the slave trade, they’ve taken *asafohenes* and queenmothers away!” He underlined the need for reparations and repatriation and called on Africans to support those efforts. Dr. Lee, who was the next speaker, recounted his own search for his African roots and reminded those who were present of the steady flow of African Americans to Ghana, which had occurred since independence. Even though this particular event might appear to be a small occasion, it was of tremendous significance, and “millions of Africans in the diaspora would wish to do what we have just done.” A Ghanaian *ohemaa* (queenmother), who was a member of the Tower of Return Foundation, called on the dispersed Africans to “bring your wealth to Africa, here you belong!” In a biblical allegory she continued: “Leave Babylon, come back to Zion!”

Finally, a young man, who by his own account had just spent one week in Ghana and wanted to resettle, came on stage and exclaimed: “If they ask you: What time is it? It’s reparation time, repatriation time!” What he proclaimed here was not the conciliatory time of “healing and hope” that Rev. Jesse Jackson had called forth in the summit plenary session, but rather the uncompromising time of Black rage and resurrection. The slogan goes back to the Black Power Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, when it resounded throughout the United States: “What time is it? It’s nation time!” Later on, the Nation of Islam adopted it in connection with “reparation time.” Whereas all diasporans who were present knew what he was talking about, only few Ghanaians were aware of the specific context of his statement.

The man appealed to the people to call Remel Moore by her new name, so as to fill it with more power. Glancing at the drummers who had taken their seats on the fringe of the stage, he asked them to “play, so that I could do a little dance for our queen.” Since he did not tell them the exact rhythm he wanted them to use, the musicians were puzzled at first. Eventually, they decided on *kpanlogo*, an entertaining and joyful beat. To the pleasure of the gathering, he performed his improvised choreography, which had nothing to do with the *kpanlogo*-dance as a local (and specific) cultural expression but derived its meaning from the performer’s personal history instead, namely, that of a Black man from the diaspora who was reclaiming his Africanness in a forceful and releasing movement.

The entire enstoolment was a diasporan affair, even though Ghanaians were partly involved in its conception and realization. Initially, it was planned to bestow the honor on Rev. Sullivan. When he was not available,

Remel Moore was asked to step in, and she agreed. Unquestionably, her reasons for accepting this proposal were multifold. Certainly though, it is justified to say that her times in Ghana had not been as fulfilling as she had anticipated. At her post as the Du Bois Centre's executive director, she was confronted with an unexpected degree of suspicion and distrust. The pressure came from all sides. Being unfamiliar with the rules and regulations of Ghanaian bureaucracy as well as the concealed social norms of the society surrounding her, she was having difficulties with some of the center's staff and their seeming lack of commitment. At the same time, she felt obliged to the community of repatriates, who viewed her as a spokesperson and representative of their particular interests. As already indicated, this community, too, was heterogeneous. For example, different, even clashing, views were held on the issue of reparations and the concrete form that it should take: Should it go to African countries? Or were diasporans to be the sole beneficiaries? Should it be linked to repatriation? Furthermore, there was disagreement concerning the category of race—was it absolute, insurmountable; or was it possible to cooperate beyond the bounds of racial exclusiveness?

In this situation, it seemed impossible for Remel Moore to mediate effectively between the different positions of the Ghanaian state, the local Ghanaian community, the African American Association of Ghana, ultraradical voices, and her own dreams and personal aspirations with regard to her homecoming. Eventually, she decided to give up the job: "Some people tell me, I'm not a Pan-Africanist! Everybody has different ideas and I can't measure up to any of them!" (interview 05.14.1999). The enstoolment, which took place three months before she resigned from her post, seemed like a final opportunity to get relief from such constant pressure. It promised acceptance and a communal embrace. The honor was like an *a posteriori* recognition of her work that was otherwise lacking. Retrospectively, however, its practical implementation had the opposite effect:

There were certain routines that were probably overlooked. . . . I did hear that some staff people questioned the authenticity of the enstoolment, which ended up causing me additional problems regarding legitimacy. Likewise, because, indeed, it was different (in that it didn't traditionally represent a town or district, etc.), it was being like a step-child or adopted—in fact, adding to a feeling of not being quite "culturally-correct," which only served to add to my personal discomfort with the honor. Few African Americans referred to me by the name [Nana Ama Adom Nsa I], also, few Ghanaians did as well. People already knew me

by Remel Moore and were comfortable with that. I believe they were not comfortable with an ambiguous designation over an equally ambiguous community. (Remel Moore, personal email communication, 10.16.2003)

In a more general sense, the uneasiness she is referring to is characteristic of relationships of belonging within the discourse of homecoming. It amplifies the ambivalence in the assertion of an African identity, as expressed by Africans from the diaspora within the Ghanaian setting.

SEPARATE OR INTEGRATE? THE LIMITS OF CULTURAL INTIMACY

The ceremonial honoring of Remel Moore as “queenmother of the Du Bois Centre” needs to be viewed in connection with a growing trend in Ghanaian communities, namely, to enstool foreigners as *nkɔsohene* or *nkɔsohemaa*, or, in other words, as development chief or queenmother (cf. Bob-Millar 2009; Schramm 2004a). The previous Asantehene, Otumfuo Opoku Ware II, had introduced this designation in order to acknowledge and further entice the (financial) commitment of individuals to community development. The late president of the National House of Chiefs, Odeefuo Boa Amponsem III, told me that it was not a title reserved for foreigners alone. He said: “If chiefs had money, they could be development chiefs themselves!” (interview 09.03.1999).

Quite a few prominent African Americans have been made *nkɔsohene* and *nkosohemaa*. Among them are the singer Isaac Hayes as well as Afrocentric scholars such as Molefi Kete Asante, Leonard Jeffries, James Smalls, and John Henrik Clarke. Yet, the title is not solely attributed to members of the “African family.” There are many Europeans who have been enstooled as well (Steegstra 2006). This has created a great stir among a number of African Americans who feel that it represents a cultural travesty: “It is a sacrilege to bestow upon a European such an important cultural title and legacy, calling him Nana, this is our spiritual tradition . . . !”, writes John Watusi Branch (1999: 38)¹⁷ in response to an article in the *African Personality Magazine* on a European couple who were made chief and queenmother in the Sekyere Kwamang Traditional Area in Asante (cf. Afrim 1999).

Such authoritative claims to determine the way in which Ghanaians are supposed to handle their “customs and traditions” bore a strange note for many of them who interpreted it as African-American arrogance: “They are coming here to teach us. But who are they to tell us something about Africa which we, the Africans, do not know?” remarked a Ghanaian TV producer.

In addition, a lot of Ghanaians misunderstood the vehement criticism of their supposedly Westernized lifestyle (referring to clothing, hairdo, and so on) and the teachings about “true” history (referring mainly to the history of slavery) as an attempt to dictate to them.

It can therefore be said that even though constant references were being made by radical African Americans to Black solidarity and family union, once the “brothers and sisters” were of a different opinion or lacked an immediate understanding of the diaspora situation, the readiness on the part of African Americans to listen to them was diminishing. So far a situation has not yet been achieved in which there would be “a humbling on both sides, a humbling and a respect for where each other is coming from, what each one’s experience has been and what they bring onto the table,” as it was demanded by Rabbi Kohain in our interview (09.02.1999).

On the contrary, one could observe a trend toward separation on part of diasporan repatriates. Whereas a place like the Du Bois Centre at least offered a meeting ground for Ghanaians and diasporans, there were other projects with a different outlook. The Fihankra Community Land Development Project (www.fihankrainternational.org, accessed 12.01.2008) can be regarded as one such example for attempts to create model communities of repatriated diasporans in Ghana. Land was made available by the traditional authorities of the Akwamu Traditional Area to enable people of African descent who wish to return to Africa to relocate in Ghana. Fihankra derives its name from an *adinkra*-symbol signifying a rectangular house or compound. It stands for security and safety. In the context of the project it is translated as “When leaving home, good-byes could not be said.”

The Ghanaian initiator of the project, the late Odeneho Oduro Numapau II, formerly President of the National House of Chiefs, explained the use of the symbol as follows:

Fihankra is an architectural design in Akan. It is a rectangular house with only one entrance. All of us lived in the Fihankra. One day we realised that some of the family members were no longer in the House. They had been taken away to other parts of the world as slaves. We felt it was time they returned home. They need to know that their brothers and sisters on the continent are sorry for what happened in the past. They need to know they have a home to return to, if not in physical body, in spirit. (quoted in Odeefuo Boa Amponsem III 1999: 2–3)

The establishment of Fihankra and the allocation of land came as the result of an atonement ceremony by a group of Ghanaian and Nigerian chiefs

that equaled an official apology for the participation of African rulers in the enslavement and sell-out of African people. On December 9, 1994, people gathered at Bukom Square in Jamestown, Accra, to witness the performance of a purification ceremony in the course of which a carved stool and the skin of an animal were consecrated as the Fihankra stool and skin. This ritual purification was officially interpreted as follows:

In the traditions of Africa, both the Stool & Skin are sacred symbols of divine chieftaincy authority, in which resides [*sic*] the very spirit and soul of its people. Thus in keeping with this tradition Fihankra restores to Diasporans two sacred symbols in one (Chiefs of the north sit on skins and southern Chiefs sit on stools and their symbols equate to the European thrones), reaffirming the cultural and spiritual connections that were denied the Diasporans for centuries. (In(Light)Mint n.d.; 1: 6)

In 2003 the website of Fihankra International stated: “A citizen of the Fihankra Stool and Skin is any person who is a descendant of an African born in the Diaspora as a direct result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.” Six years later, the return of the diasporans and the provision of land to facilitate this process were still stated as the major priorities of the organization. In practice, this means that it is only people from the diaspora who are entitled to settle on the Fihankra-land. The housing designs are spacious and comfortable, ensuring the diasporan tenants all amenities of a middle-class environment. Plans do exist for the establishment of various cultural and educational facilities, and a clinic as well as agricultural holdings.

The whole project shall eventually lead to the establishment of Ye Fa Ogyeamu, a “model community” of diasporans in Ghana. The separation of Fihankra from its surroundings was emphasized by plans for a so-called Heritage Wall of Respect to honor “the countless millions who were the immediate victims of this tragic period,” that is, the transatlantic slave trade. Supporters of Fihankra were asked to contribute to its realization by purchasing a “Legacy Stone” in the memory of their own ancestors or living family members. By doing so, they were ensured to “follow the African tradition of encircling the area in which one resides as opposed to erecting individual... barriers.” Here, the rhetoric of an essential African heritage and tradition served to authenticate the claims of Fihankra to representational legitimacy.¹⁸ Nevertheless, I argue that the cultural expertise on which these claims were founded was built around the vast imaginary repertoire (Anderson 1983) of diasporan concepts of (Black/African) identity. It followed an idealized, almost mythical “Africanness” and combined it with the privilege of a comparatively

high living standard. Even though this aspired way of life was rather modest if measured in U.S. terms, it was far removed from that of an average household in Akwamufie, the neighboring village.

Another example of the separation between native Ghanaians and diasporans is the failure of a youth exchange program that had been initiated by the Fihankra youth organization, STEP, which was made up of Ghanaian as well as diasporan youths. Two of the Ghanaian participants told me of their disappointment: The program had enabled groups of Black American students to come and visit Ghana. However, it did not work so well for the Ghanaian students, who were supposed to go on a return visit, which never happened, despite the efforts made toward its realization by Ghanaian volunteers, who had arranged for a cultural program and had seen to the issuing of passports to the participants, and so on. In my discussion with the two volunteers, they blamed the failure on the lack of interest in their situation on part of the Fihankra officials.

This discrepancy was part of the dynamics of promise, expectations, and disappointment referred to above. Yet, it can also be said that those repatriates who were seeking the segregated environment of a diasporan enclave partly wanted to do so precisely because they did not want to face the many frustrations and disappointments that may go along with the homecoming experience. Building their own community after their own image meant to be able to live in the Motherland without “burning the bridges” to earlier affiliations. Fihankra entailed the promise to fulfill a dream that might otherwise fade in the face of the Ghanaian reality on the ground.¹⁹

There was, however, also a willingness to integrate, which became visible in the request of the Fihankrahene, Nana Akpan, to become an ordinary member of the Ghana National House of Chiefs, or at least to be granted an observer status. The president of the House answered this request with tactful diplomacy:

After he has been [chief] for some time and . . . when we have seen that their chieftaincy is going on, then we can make him an honorary member. But before that there are . . . many conditions to be fulfilled. You’ve got to get your own people. You can’t be a chief in isolation. So before a chief is admitted into the committee of the National House of Chiefs, he must have a base and many other [things]. (Odeefuo Boa Amponsem III, interview 09.03.1999)

What emanates from these words is both respect for and skepticism about the diasporan repatriates. Respect is shown for Fihankra’s commitment to the

institution of chiefly rule, which, even though it is widely spread throughout Ghana, is under constant threat from both political forces and religious antagonists. Support for the institution, especially from potential investors in whom the government is also interested, is therefore extremely welcome. The skepticism, however, is subtler. It derives from the desire on part of Ghanaian stakeholders to remain in control of the cultural capital symbolized in chieftaincy. Therefore, Fihankra could be granted an honorary representative, but it could never be accepted as absolutely equal to the established traditional districts and paramount chiefdoms.²⁰ Moreover, and perhaps most important, the institution of chieftaincy goes along with secret knowledge that is not revealed to commoners or foreigners. There are chiefs who are extremely skeptical about the bestowing of even honorary titles to African Americans. One of them told me:

That person could be a descendent of my ancestors' enemies whom they sold into slavery. So it would be a spiritual offence against my ancestors. And that wouldn't be right. We don't know anything about the people who are coming, about their ancestry etc., where exactly they came from etc. (interview 04.12.2006)

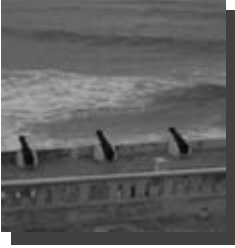
He thus emphasized the importance of genealogy in the conceptualization of chieftaincy—a genealogy that was not all-embracing as the rhetoric of the African family would suggest, but rather highly specific and differentiated.

In addition, the skepticism toward African-American attempts to gain a voice in Ghanaian local and/or national politics can also be interpreted as fear that a colonialist settler-mentality might motivate the desire for repatriation on the part of African Americans. To some of my Ghanaian interlocutors, the historic experience of the Republic of Liberia provided a negative example for the conflicts that could arise from the establishment of an African-American colony on African soil. The hesitation with which the issue and implementation of the Right of Abode or of Dual Citizenship have been treated in practice needs to be understood in a similar vein: There are concerns about the possibility of diasporan domination. Even outspoken Ghanaian supporters of repatriation, such as the Head of Mission Afrikania, viewed the voluntary segregation of diasporans in communities such as Fihankra with mixed feelings:

We want to encourage the homecoming. I personally like it that our brothers and sisters from the diaspora can come, but I would not like them to come and settle as a state, I would like them to come and mix with us. . . . Sit with us, if we are bathing on the coast they should be able

to take the common bath with us: Do as we do if this is their root. . . . But to acquire mass land somewhere and settle there—I don't accept it. That is even dangerous for the security of the nation. . . . If they go and create a distant state, they may not accept us culturally and we may not accept them. (interview 10.01.1999)

Despite such reservations, Fihankra is not the only example of an envisioned diasporan community in Ghana. Another one is the Rastafarian Bobo Shanti order (originally from Jamaica), which is building its Ghanaian base, with a spiritual center and tabernacle, at New Tafo, not far from the Fihankra land. People are coming on individual terms as well, even though the process of settling under such circumstances is more difficult (www.info-ghana.com). Some of these repatriates have found their peace in Ghana. Others, even after long periods of staying in Ghana, may eventually decide to return to the United States or other countries of origin, if their dreams and aspirations fail or if making a living in Ghana becomes too arduous.



CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

African Homecoming is an attempt to create a better understanding of the politics of heritage and homecoming as it unfolds in the encounter between diasporan and continental Africans in Ghana. On the one hand, this politics refers to the violent history of the slave trade and the resulting dispersal of African people; on the other hand, it is connected to the re-affirmation of Black commonality by means of a shared cultural heritage. In recent years, this encounter has been facilitated mainly by the growth of the Ghanaian tourism sector and the marketing of the slave routes connected to it via so-called heritage tourism.

However, homecoming is a phenomenon with a long history. It has its roots in the myths of the “flying Africans,” who were said to return home after death in bondage, and it found an expression in the first attempts of freed slaves to resettle on the African continent. It took concrete shape during the independence period and it has, in more recent times, been rekindled with new vigor—not only as heritage tourism but also in form of a new wave of repatriation. Over the years, as I have shown, there have been continuities as well as significant transformations in this complex diasporic relationship.

Pan-Africanism itself has gone through a variety of shifts and turns. From its very beginnings, the Pan-African ideology held the potential to unify as well as to divide people. Under the broad label of “Pan-Africanism” a variety of currents came into view: *négritude*, “Back to Africa,” African liberation, Black capitalism, and so on. All these were operating in the framework of a homogenized Africa, whatever its projected essence may have been in each particular case. As my discussion has indicated, the differences between these approaches may outwardly disappear behind a common rhetoric, such as, for example, that of the “African family.” Nevertheless, one must acknowledge and carefully elaborate those differences, for otherwise it becomes difficult to understand the discrepancies between a shared

rhetoric and practices that presumably contradict that very rhetoric. I argue that these discrepancies should not be understood as deviations from a “true” (or “essential”) Pan-Africanism. On the contrary: They are at the heart of the ideology, because it is from this very divergence that a productive tension emanates at whose interface the Pan-African ideology is constantly being reproduced and reconstructed.

Michael Herzfeld writes: “The play of power, while often oppositional, draws on shared symbols that are then differently used and interpreted according to the interests, resources, and desires of the actors” (1997: 25). I have outlined a variety of positions that are important in order to understand the struggle over the meaning and possible benefits of Pan-Africanism in Ghana today. It has become clear that all the actors who are involved in the Pan-African discourse enforce their arguments from very specific backgrounds and that their approach to and appropriation of the ideology is directed by particular interests. Those interests may be articulated as firm political convictions or very rational economic considerations. Yet they may also be less obvious and rather diffuse, even equivocal and contradictory, in outlook.

If one considers these developments within the framework of a “strategic use of essentialisms,” the term *strategic* implies a conscious application on part of the social actors. This has not always been the case in my example. A relativization of intentionality is therefore appropriate. On the one hand, the various agents involved in the Pan-African project uphold the rhetoric of sameness. The recourse to racial stereotypes and to the notion of “pure origins” as well as to a homogeneous group identity matches what Herzfeld has described as the production of iconicity, that is, “the way in which meaning is derived from resemblance” (1997: 56)—a central feature of all ideologies. Therefore, both the historic transformations of the Pan-African ideology as well as the many facets in which it is formulated and appears in social interactions can be analyzed through the framework of a strategic use of essentialisms—externally (in opposition to White hegemony) and internally (as the process through which an ideology comes into being and is sustained).

On the other hand, I argue that in the case of Pan-African identity politics and, more specifically, of the homecoming of diasporan Africans to Ghana, the scope of action provided by essentialisms such as that of the “African family” is also limited. As my examples have shown, there are many occasions in which it becomes impossible to conceal the ruptures between different social agents; ruptures that go much deeper than merely expressing ambiguity. Instead, they can be interpreted as indications for mutually exclusive, though not strictly bounded, spheres of cultural intimacy. Blackness is but one identity marker, which is sometimes subsumed by other cultural codes that

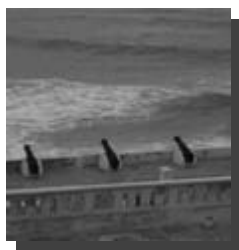
are not necessarily understood by outsiders. This very insider/outsider classification follows a pattern of irregular and relational attributions. Depending on the prevailing situation, people may therefore fall back to different communal affiliations. What is at work on all these levels, however, is precisely the dynamics of representation and social production, rhetoric and action, or, in other words, iconicity and transgression.

To me, it was therefore the *interplay* between the ideological propositions of unity, such as the claim of the “African family,” on the one hand, and practical manifestations of extreme dissimilarity between the various groups involved in it, on the other, that needed to be analyzed, not their dichotomy. I wanted to look behind the level of rhetoric and to arrive at an analysis of the *constitution* of commonality (and, even more important, of its assertion). As I have demonstrated, homecoming is an expression of complex social, historical, and political relations that cannot be reduced to a single line of conflict or agreement. It rather constitutes a contested field in which each actor moves on a continuum of subject positions.

Throughout this book I have shown the various entanglements that the politics of homecoming comprises. They have become most visible in the close linkage between past and present, which is underlying the conceptualizations of history, heritage, and African identity. I have taken up this relation from a variety of perspectives, which are congruous with the different dimensions of homecoming—historical, spiritual, cultural, and political as well as economic ones. Even though I have shown how the interests of diasporan and Ghanaian stakeholders converge at some points, the encounter between them is nevertheless full of conflicts, arising from a dynamics of mutual expectations and disappointments. Differences are articulated over the meaning of the past, the adequate forms of representing and commemorating it, and the issue of repatriation. Moreover, “Ghanaians” or “diasporans” are extremely heterogeneous. Consequently, it can be said that homecoming is, above all, entirely ambivalent. I have demonstrated how this ambivalence comes to the fore in the spheres of commemoration, cultural representation, and political participation. It finds its expression in the struggle over meaning at particular places, such as Cape Coast Castle (Chapters Four and Five). It also surfaces in the staging of various events that either pay reference to the slave trade, such as Emancipation Day (Chapter Seven), or make a claim for the unity of the “African family,” such as PANAFEST (Chapter Eight). It becomes evident in the diverse interpretation of homecoming in terms of repatriation or economic investment (Chapter Nine). It is also manifest in the role of the Ghanaian state that is advancing a Pan-Africanist rhetoric in some fields (especially tourism and the call for African-American investment in the economy) and totally

ignoring it in others (especially vis-à-vis other groups of investors or in terms of financial backing of cultural institutions).

Clearly, belonging is not an easy or one-dimensional affiliation. It is yearned for, negotiated, and often rejected. It may be inclusive or restricted to a limited circle of persons. It finds its expression in collective myths and political affiliations but also in the solace of fond familiarity. Together, all these different dimensions make up its significance as a powerful marker for individual as well as collective aspirations for homecoming. The idea of homecoming that I have described and analyzed more than anything else amounts to a desire, and cannot be fully realized. Nevertheless, it may have a powerful impact on people, be it in terms of political action, as, for example, the Pan-African solidarity of the mid-twentieth century, or grave personal decisions, such as the repatriation of the 1990s and beyond. In that respect, it needs to be regarded as a reality.

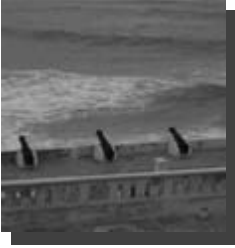


APPENDIX

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAAG	African American Association of Ghana
ADAF	African Descendants Association Foundation
ANC	African National Congress
AWRRTC	Afrikan World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission
BET	Black Entertainment Television
BPP	Black Panther Party
CEDECOM	Central Region Development Commission
CERIDEP	Central Region Integrated Development Programme
CI	Conservation International
CNC	Centre for National Culture
CPP	Convention People's Party
DBC	Du Bois Centre / Du Bois Memorial Centre for Pan-African Culture
FESTAC	Festival of Arts and Culture
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GIPC	Ghana Investment Promotion Centre
GMMB	Ghana Museums and Monuments Board
GTB	Ghana Tourist Board
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites

IMF	International Monetary Fund
MUCIA	Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAFAC	National Festival of Arts and Culture
NASA	Nostalgic Actors and Singers Alliance
NCC	National Commission on Culture
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPP	National Patriotic Party
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PANAFEST	Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival
TODSCER	Tourism Development Scheme for the Central Region
UGCC	United Gold Coast Convention
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Tourism Organization



NOTES

PROLOGUE

1. Some clarification concerning my terminology is needed here. In this study, the terms *diasporan*, *African from the diaspora*, and *African descendant* are used interchangeably to denote Black people who nowadays reside in the Western hemisphere as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. The particular designation *African American* is used for people of United States background; they form the largest group of people visiting or relocating in Ghana, and they are also considered the most important market segment for Ghanaian heritage tourism. Therefore, this term may also appear in more general contexts.

CHAPTER 1

1. The poetic subtext that runs as a prelude to some of the chapters stems exclusively from Ghanaian writers. They are reproduced here courtesy of Afram Publications Ghana Limited, Accra, Ghana.
2. Wright was born in 1908 as the son of poor Mississippi sharecroppers. His novel *Native Son* (1940) became an international bestseller. He died in 1960.

3. During the 1950s and 1960s, scholars began to speak of an African diaspora as a result of the transatlantic slave trade (cf. Harris, Introduction, 1993; Patterson & Kelley 2000: 14; Shepperson 1993: 41). The focus here was primarily on the *emergence* of an African diaspora, that is, on the slave trade and its aftermath. In addition, some scholars were concerned with the *dialectics* between African homeland and diaspora (Skinner 1993). Before the 1990s, only three comprehensive collections explicitly referred to the African diaspora: Kilson & Rotberg (1976); Thompson (1987); and Harris (1982). The last work was re-edited in 1993 and belongs to the standard works in the field. With the general boom of diaspora studies in the 1990s a proliferation of publications on the classical African diaspora was noticeable; for example, Segal (1995); Walvin (2000); Okpewo, Davies, & Mazrui (2001); Yelvington (2006); and Gomez (2006).
4. Recently, there have been many attempts by nation-states to tap the economic potential of the so-called new African diasporas (Koser 2003; cf. Akyeampong 2000) that came about as a result of more recent migrations and transnational networks. Sometimes, the rhetoric of homecoming is also applied in this context as a means of controlling the flow of remittances, and so on. I consider these rhetorical and practical overlaps in Chapter Nine. My focus, however, remains with the classical African diaspora, or, in other words, with the people who actively partake in diasporic imaginations and movements and their various encounters with Ghanaian people and institutions.
5. Much of this stream of thought, even though it is provided by a heterogeneous set of scholars as well as ideologues, has been summarized under the general label of “Afrocentrism” (cf. Howe 1998), a term that goes back to Molefi Kete Asante’s Afrocentricity (Asante 1987). For a response to his various critics, see Asante (1999).
6. Senghor and Césaire are probably the two most well-known proponents of *négritude*, the literary movement that sought to rehabilitate African culture by means of poetic and other artistic expressions. The journal *Présence Africaine*, founded by Alioune Diop, was one of the mouthpieces of the movement; see Mudimbe (1992).
7. Gilroy’s inherent androcentrism was criticized by Stefan Helmreich (1992) even before the publication of *The Black Atlantic*. Patterson and Kelley (2000: 29) have pointed toward the problematic lack of women’s perspectives in the entire discourse on diaspora (as well as on nationalism).
8. Some commercial companies offering genetic ancestry testing advertise their services as a means to overcome this genealogical gap and establish ethnic and national connections. However, as I argue elsewhere (Schramm

forthcoming), this procedure should not be regarded as a more objective method for determining connectivity; it merely adds another dimension to the imaginary repertoire by which belonging and identity are being constructed (cf. Nash 2004, 2008).

9. The perspective of White stakeholders in these representational struggles is addressed by a few authors. Teye and Timothy (2004) give an overview of the opinions that emerge from their study of the visitors' books at Elmina Castle. Gert Oostindie (2005) analyzes the place of Elmina Castle in the recent discussions of the Dutch role in the transatlantic slave trade as they have occurred in the Netherlands as well as in Ghana, and Bayo Halsey (2008) sees the distortion of that historical involvement through a private foundation's exaggerated emphasis on the preservation of Dutch colonial buildings in Elmina that would go hand in hand with a denial of the importance of the slave trade. This strategy of avoidance in relation to European responsibility for the slave trade is also observed by Manu Herbststein (2009) in his analysis of the British Council's celebrations of the bicentenary of abolition that took place inside Elmina Castle in 2007.
10. Between 2004 and 2008, under Minister Jake Obetsebi-Lamprey, the ministry was called Ministry for Tourism and Diasporan Relations—an indication of the importance attached to diasporan heritage-tourism as a major market segment. This designation was withdrawn with the political transformation from NPP to NDC government. Because the focus of this book is on the time before the year 2000, I will stick to the name Ministry of Tourism.
11. In a follow-up project, I have also incorporated the northern slave sites (see Schramm 2008c, 2010). Although some of my interpretations here are informed by this later work, the main data for this book were collected during 1998/1999 in the southern part of Ghana.
12. The critique of his/story (as a hegemonic representation of the past) was first articulated by feminist writers, who opposed it with her/story. This pairing, however, would only partly be appropriate for the homecoming discourse, because in the predominant version of our/story, his/story as a dominant Western and imperialist narrative is contested from exclusively male-centered notions of culture that go hand in hand with a very patriarchal conception of gender relations.

CHAPTER 2

1. Inspired by Melville Herskovits's influential studies on African and African-American culture, the most well-known being *The Myth of the*

Negro Past, first published in 1941 (Herskovits 1970 [1941]), some authors have focused on African survivals as the vital elements of this folklore, thereby suggesting an African cultural continuity in the New World (cf. Stuckey 1987). Henry Louis Gates, Jr. also acknowledges this pretext and traces the African-American vernacular rhetorical style of “signifyin(g)” back to West-African oral traditions by comparing the Signifying Monkey, an African-American folktale hero, with the Yorùbá trickster Esu-Elegbara. He argues that, under the condition of slavery in the New World, the previously unprecedented degree of cross-cultural contact led to the emergence of a unique and “truly Pan-African culture” (1988: 4). Other authors, Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall among them, have been more concerned with the political shaping of “Blackness” under the conditions of slavery and American racism. David Scott (1991) has sharply criticized the anthropological search for “survivals” in its postmodern guise. To him, this authenticating strategy leads to a neglect of *diaspora* as an analytical concept. More recently, however, Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley (2000) have argued for a positive re-examination of cultural continuities.

2. On the relationship between (proto-)Pan-Africanist and (European) Orientalist conceptions of African identity, see Schramm (2008b).
3. Much of the literature dealing with the early relationship of the diaspora to Africa takes the United States as its point of reference (cf. Adeleke 1998; Fierce 1993; Hickey & Wylie 1993; McCarthy 1983; Stuckey 1987; Weisbord 1973). For a Caribbean perspective, cf. Makonnen (1973). Joseph E. Harris (1993) is exceptional in that his edited volume attempts to arrive at an all-encompassing overview on the African diaspora, including its multifold relations to the continent.
4. I have decided against a lengthy exploration of the chronology of Pan-Africanism, since there already exist several comprehensive studies on the idea and the movement—for example, Esedebe (1982), Langley (1973), Magubane (1987), Moses (1998). Immanuel Geiss (1968) offered the first thoroughly documented overview, which is still useful for the historical details but somewhat diminished by its paternalistic style. John Henrik Clarke (1979) writes from an Afrocentric perspective, aiming at the rehabilitation of African history in a Pan-African framework.
5. Whenever I use the term *Negro*, I refer to the original terminology of the authors whom I discuss. In their time, the term represented a reclaiming of racial pride and self-esteem. On the positive evaluation of the term, cf. Carter G. Woodson (1969 [1933]), who devoted an entire chapter (“Much ado about a name”) to the defense of “Negro” as opposed to “black.” In the 1960s, with the Black Power movement, the pejorative association of

the term “black” vanished and gave way to a new pride in Blackness and Africanness. “Negro” had been used solely in the context of the United States. It now became fiercely opposed by Black Americans who were in favor of a more Pan-African point of view.

6. Note the parallels with contemporary polemics of some Afrocentric authors against postcolonial critics who deny the essential reality of race. Cf. Asante (1999: 41–42); Njubi (2002).
7. “All the themes which were to be developed by the *négritude* movement were already treated by Blyden in the middle of the nineteenth century, both the virtues of *négritude* and the proper modes of illustrating these virtues: through scholarly studies, life styles, and cultural creation” (Senghor 1978: xx).
8. Booker T. Washington (1856–1915) had founded the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, which was dedicated to practical education and industrial training of disadvantaged Blacks, especially in the rural American South.
9. 1868 was the year of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which formally guaranteed equal rights to all U.S. citizens, including former slaves. Eric J. Sundquist writes that “Du Bois spent his life attempting to make the equal protection clause of the amendment a reality for black Americans” (1996: 8).
10. Late in his life, with his radical turn toward communism, he would revise this concept and take on a more critical view on the issue of class; cf. Horne (1986: 224).
11. In a lecture on Du Bois and cosmopolitanism, Appiah contradicts his earlier interpretation, stating “we can tell at once from the easy movement back between talk of race and talk of nation that Du Bois’s conception of what accounted for the unity of the Negro people was not what we would call biology” (2007: 29). Unfortunately, he does not resolve this apparent inconsistency.
12. Here, I would agree with Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane, who has argued that “when one discusses African consciousness in the U.S. one must deal with this ideology as it appears, and trace it to its roots in the White social structure. In this society, as long as the black is not amalgamated socially, politically, and economically, black nationalism will develop. This reality must be dealt with despite liberal objections” (1987: 82).

CHAPTER 3

1. This popular designation is not quite correct, since Sudan had already gained its independence in 1956, as did Morocco and Tunisia (and

Libya in 1951). However, Ghana's formal independence was preceded by a six-year period in which Nkrumah had already been acting as prime minister of the Gold Coast colony, after he had won the general elections of 1951 and had installed an all-African cabinet.

2. The idea of a Pan-African congress movement originally stemmed from Henry Sylvester Williams from Trinidad, who had organized an early congress already in 1900. It was then taken up by W. E. B. Du Bois, who initiated the first Pan-African congress under his own patronage in 1919. There were three more such conventions, in 1921, 1923, and 1927. The demands that were raised during the different sessions ranged from rather modest calls for the betterment of the living conditions of Black people in the diaspora and for reforms in the colonies, to a more radical critique of imperialism and racism, as formulated in the 1921 London Manifesto (cf. Langley 1973: 76–77).
3. Padmore was born in Trinidad in 1902. In his twenties he moved to the United States, where he became a member of the Communist Party. After a brief interlude in Moscow he went to London and from there moved on to Ghana.
4. Nkrumah had studied in the United States between 1935 and 1945. Between 1945 and 1947 he stayed in London.
5. As early as 1962, C. L. R. James (1982) gave a thorough and sympathizing analysis of the rise and decline of Nkrumah. Himself being a Pan-Africanist, he acknowledges Nkrumah's great achievements and simultaneously cautions against the dangers of power-abuse and persecution mania.
6. The fact that Nkrumah got married to an Egyptian woman must be regarded as a symbolic manifestation of that broader alliance. Nkrumah wrote a personal letter to Gamal Abdul Nasser about his intentions to marry an Egyptian and was sent three photographs out of which he then chose his wife-to-be, Fathia Helim Rizik (Timothy 1981: 187).
7. During the McCarthy era, Du Bois's open sympathy with the Soviet Union and his protests against nuclear armament were discerned as treason by the U.S. government. Du Bois had to face criminal charges. His decision to relocate in Ghana may therefore be read as a reaction to this ostracism by the United States. A more detailed account of this final period in Du Bois's life is given by Jack B. Moore (1981: 114–117).
8. At first, he was involved in a school project, where he met his later wife, Efua Sutherland, one of Ghana's leading cultural activists. From 1957 he worked as the personal secretary to the Ghanaian Minister of Finance, Komla A. Gbedemah. In 1960 he gave up this post. When it was hard for

him to find new employment in Ghana he left the country and eventually moved on to Tanganyika, where he became an official at the Ministry of Information and Tourism. He still lived in Tanzania during the time of my fieldwork (personal communication, 08.21.1999).

9. Ghana's relations with the United States shifted from a close and friendly alliance to an extremely icy relationship after the introduction of the one-party system and Nkrumah's change of directions toward the Soviet Union. Malcolm X's visit to Ghana fell into the latter period.
10. Flt.-Lt. Jerry John Rawlings and the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) had seized power in a military coup in 1981. In 1992 democratic elections were held, and Rawlings became president of the NDC (National Democratic Congress) government. The NDC also won the elections in 1996, before handing over power to John Agyekum Kufuor and the oppositional NPP (National Patriotic Party) in 2000. The last elections in 2008 brought a narrow victory for the NDC under Prof. John Atta Mills, the former vice president of the Rawlings government.

CHAPTER 4

1. Information on the exact numbers varies. Albert van Dantzig (1998 [1980]), in his comprehensive study, lists fifty castles, forts, and lodges, some of which left no tangible traces. Kwesi James Anquandah estimates an average of one fort per every 15 kilometers (1999: 20). For an earlier architectural exploration, cf. Lawrence (1963). On its website, the Ghana Tourist Board (GTB) presents a selection of fifteen fortifications as attractions (www.touringghana.com/castles/index.asp, accessed 05.19.2009).
2. In 2008, just before the election, a new presidential palace was inaugurated: the so-called Golden Jubilee House. The Kufuor administration, who had commissioned the building, had stated that the Castle was no longer suitable as a seat of government, owing to its historical linkage with slavery. So far, however, the newly elected NDC-government has been reluctant to move to the edifice.
3. The incorporation of slavery in a tourism framework often engenders similar conflicts, cf. Dann & Seaton (2001); Handler & Gable (1997).
4. For the perspective of local residents and tour guides, see Holsey (2008).
5. What is referred to as *Cormantin* in older accounts is a term that was generally applied to Akan-speaking people from the whole of the Gold Coast (Campbell 1985: 41, 1988: 44–45; Curtin 1969: 186).
6. Recently, efforts have been made to restore the colonial heritage in several coastal towns in order to promote it as a new tourist attraction. Holsey

- writes about the Dutch “Save Elmina” initiative, which she interprets in terms of colonial nostalgia (2008: 116–118).
7. See O. Akyeampong (1996: 60, 106). On the negative impact of previous political instability on the tourism industry in Ghana, see Teye (1988).
 8. From 2000 onward, communities in northern Ghana have begun to demand a share in the country’s tourism development on similar grounds, only in the more modest dimensions of community-based eco-tourism. The northern slave sites (that is, markets, camps, hideouts) play a significant role in this claim-staking. On their incorporation into a transatlantic interpretative framework, see Schramm (2008c, 2010).
 9. On the role of slavery in recent Black identity politics, see Keizer (2004). On the (long neglected) commemoration of the slave trade in the European public sphere, see Kowaleski-Wallace (2006); cf. Oostindie (2001, 2005). On White Americans’ reactions to the representation of the slave trade at Elmina Castle, see Teye & Timothy (2004).
 10. Between 1972 and 1978 a military government under Ignatius Kutu Acheampong was in power.
 11. Brempong Osei-Tutu mentions an additional factor that hindered the realization of the project, namely, the protests of local people who feared that “anticipated changes would anger the spirits that protected them” (2007: 186).
 12. William Wilberforce (1759–1833), the most well-known British abolitionist, led a small but influential group of slavery opponents in the British parliament.
 13. See Davidson (1980: 83–84); Fryer (1984: 208); for a critical engagement with Williams’s theory, see Drescher (1999).
 14. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, were a group of radical Christians who, on religious grounds, stood firmly against slavery and played a major role in the antislavery movement in America. Less known is the fact that some of them, at least up to the 1750s, owned slaves themselves. Of course, it is indisputable that the abolitionists contributed substantially to the eventual ending of slavery and encountered more than enough scorn and fierce opposition. Nevertheless, they operated in a context of changing modes of capitalist production. Moreover, the popular view that attributes the whole merit of abolition to benevolent Europeans or White Americans does not take into account the agency and resistance of the enslaved, manifested in mutinies aboard ships (Jones 1987) as well as during bloody slave revolts on the plantations (Campbell 1985). The eventually successful rebellion on St. Domingue, led by Touissant L’Ouverture (c. 1744–1803), which finally resulted in the foundation of

the independent nation of Haiti in 1804, is often cited as a remarkable example of Black resistance (James 1963). In addition, Black people such as Frederick Douglass (1817–1895), Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745–1797), and Harriett Tubman (c. 1819–1913) were themselves active in the abolitionist movement.

15. This attitude was also prevalent during the celebrations of 300 years of “diplomatic relations” between the Netherlands and Ghana in 2002. Here, the history of the slave trade was incorporated into a framework that allowed for a celebratory and positive outlook (see van Kessel 2002).
16. Around \$10,000 (AM 27/3/79) had been collected from “Black people in America to reidentify themselves with their African origin by either physically or materially helping in the restoration” (Mr. Franklin Williams; AM 27/2, 08.13.1973).
17. On the history of the Black Hebrew Israelites, see interview with the leader of the group, Rahbee Ben Ammi (Goldschmidt 2006; Maayang 1994; cf. Markowitz 1996).
18. During the time of my fieldwork, the Okofos were operating their own travel agency in Elmina: “One Africa Productions, Tours & Specialty Services, Ltd.” They were also responsible for the staging of a commemorative ceremony (“Thru the Door of No Return—The Return”). Asked about his background, Nana Okofo told me that he had served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. He first came to Africa in 1956, as a member of the U.S. Air Force. About this trip he said: “But I wasn’t African conscious at that time, I was fighting for ‘democracy.’” Before he eventually relocated in Ghana, he worked as a taxi driver in New York City. In 2007 Nana Okofo died in a road accident in Ghana.
19. It is Maurice Halbwachs’s idea of memory as first and foremost a social phenomenon that serves as a point of departure for many contemporary discussions about memory and commemoration. Neglected in his analysis are the aspects of embodiment (cf. Connerton 1989) and social change (cf. Assmann 1992; Boyarin 1994). On the genesis of the academic preoccupation with collective memory in recent decades, cf. Berliner (2005); Klein (2000); Middleton & Edwards (1990); Radstone (2000).
20. On the aspect of intergenerational transmission in the memory of violence, see Argenti & Schramm (2009b).
21. For additional critical perspectives on the relationship between trauma and memory, cf. Antze & Lambek (1996); Argenti & Schramm (2009a).
22. Cf. Patricia Davison (1998), who writes on the re/production of public memory in museum spaces and the resulting problematic of authorized versions of the past versus the stubbornness of personal memory. Richard

- Handler, Eric Gable, and Anna Lawson (1992) discuss the difficulties and contradictions arising from an attempt to incorporate “marginalized histories,” namely, those of former slaves, into the official museum representation at a “national site” such as Colonial Williamsburg (USA). Michael Rowlands (1994: 134) points toward the potential conflict between historical research (archaeology) and the nationalist cause, thereby adding an important differentiation to the notion of “official representation.”
23. Today, another restaurant, which is very popular among Cape Coasters and visitors alike, operates just next to the castle.
 24. On the dangers of increasing Black and White antagonism that arise from utilizing the slave trade in tourism (and resulting management implications), see Austin (1999).
 25. I looked through the visitor books at Cape Coast Castle, starting from 1981 until the time of my first fieldwork 1998/99. Each entry is divided into three sections: date, place of origin, and comment. For an analysis of the visitor books at Elmina castle, cf. Teye & Timothy (2004); Timothy & Teye (2004).
 26. *Maafa* is a Kiswahili-term for “disaster” or “terrible occurrence.” In Afrocentric thought it is considered to be the word that “best describes the more than 500 . . . years of suffering of people of African descent through Slavery, Imperialism, Colonialism, Invasions, and Exploitation” (entry “Maafa” in *The Afrocentric Experience*; available online at www.sagga.com/maafa.htm, accessed 01.08.2003).
 27. This is a common spelling of “Africa” in radical Black discourse, in subversion of English as the colonial master tongue.

CHAPTER 5

1. For a historical description of the castle surroundings, see Cruickshank (1853, Vol. 1: 23–24); for a history of Cape Coast Castle during the Atlantic slave trade, see St. Clair (2006).
2. When I last visited Cape Coast Castle in 2007, these shops had been relocated to one of the inner courtyards inside the castle.
3. During my first visit to the castle, the fee for foreigners amounted to 10,000 cedis, about \$5, for a guided tour. Ghanaians had to pay 1,000 cedis—an affordable rate it seems, but indeed a lot of money for Ghanaians, whose monthly income averages less than \$100. A junior tour guide at Cape Coast Castle, for example, earned about 180,000 cedis a month.
4. During his visit to Cape Coast Castle in July 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama mentioned the location of the chapel above the male slave dungeon as the most impressive and disturbing part of the tour.

5. Kreamer (2006) offers a detailed account on the development and realization of the exhibition. She also mentions the controversies that have followed its implementation. Note that a new museum, including a refurbishment of the governor's quarters, was also part of the original proposal by Imahküs Okofo.
6. As both Paul Gilroy (1993) and Ingrid Monson (1995) have noted, "Black music" has often been taken as *the* signifier of an essential Black authenticity. In their detailed and careful analysis, both authors show that such a view ignores the complex and interactive character of musical expression. In their interpretation, music rather becomes an example for transnational cultural flows, for a Black identity that is not self-contained but hybrid and dynamic.
7. This view does not necessarily reflect a uniquely African (as opposed to diasporan) perspective. It was already expressed by Booker T. Washington in his autobiography *Up from Slavery* (1901), where he wrote: "the black man got nearly as much out of slavery as the white man did" (quot. in Eyerman 2001: 70).
8. This attitude goes back to the colonial period, where "many Africans... sought succor in images of America and black Americans" and created what Yekutiel Gershoni calls "the African-American myth" (1997: 2, 3). However, the assumed leadership role of African Americans, as it was, for example, formulated by Edward W. Blyden, was also heavily contested by African nationalists—for example, Casely Hayford (*ibid.*: 68).
9. Meanwhile, the gift shop has been relocated to the ground floor, where it is situated next to the "Condemned's Cell."
10. John Eade (1992: 27) has written on the commemorative value of the holy water of Lourdes, packed in plastic bottles shaped like the crowned virgin statue and sold to the pilgrims. On the intrinsic value of souvenirs as authenticating objects for Jewish tourists at an Israeli handicraft center, cf. Shehav-Keller (1995: 149).
11. The Bond of 1844 formalized the British protectorate that had virtually been established in the coastal areas under the jurisdiction of Governor Maclean (see Boahen 2000: 33–44).
12. She is the daughter of Efua Sutherland, the famous Ghanaian playwright who founded the Ghanaian "Theatre Movement" in the 1960s and also wrote the initial PANAFEST proposal, and Bill Sutherland, who was among the first African Americans who came to Ghana around independence. During the time of my fieldwork, she was a lecturer at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana.
13. Holsey (2008: 181) also notices that tour guides altered their presentations significantly according to the make-up of their audience. Yet in her

view, their main goal was to transform the attitudes of their Ghanaian audience and to develop a “protest narrative” that followed African American interpretations of history (much in line with what I have termed the “rhetoric of truth”). To me, this difference in experience (and interpretation) is inextricably linked to the contrasting subject-positions (or standpoints) of the researchers (cf. Schramm 2005).

14. According to Kreamer (2006: 467, n. 41), the original door through which the captives were taken to the ships has been blocked. The gateway that is now ascribed as the “Door of No Return” was primarily used to transport goods and barrels to and from the castle. Albert Van Dantzig (1980: 59–60) writes that this so-called Sea-Gate was constructed around 1773—so at least in theory, slaves could have passed through here as well.
15. In addition, multinational companies are also involved in the marketing of the slave sites as destinations for homecoming-tourism (see Ebron 2000).
16. For an interpretation of Cape Coast Castle as heterotopia, see Schramm 2004a.
17. The notion of counter-memory goes back to Michel Foucault to whom it “designated the residual or resistant strains that withstand official versions of historical continuity” (quoted in Zemon-Davis & Stern 1989: 2); cf. Nuttall & Coetzee (1998); Werbner (1998: 1).

CHAPTER 6

1. In his book *Life in Fragments* Bauman explains his use of the masculine form as a deliberate choice, due to the fact that the “modern construction of life as pilgrimage has [historically] applied to males only” (1995: 87).
2. This critique has been further elaborated by Jonathan Culler (1981: 129). John Urry (1990: 45) speaks of a “romantic” vs. a “collective” tourist gaze to circumscribe the different positions within a general tourism framework. It is also worth mentioning that the distinction of an intellectual (or professional) experience of the “other” from the superficial impressions usually gained by “ordinary” tourists is oftentimes reproduced in the discipline of anthropology (Pratt 1986: 27).
3. On the intergenerational shift from eye-witness to “victim by proxy,” as it takes place on Israeli Youth Tours to the Polish death camps, see Feldman (2009).
4. Fran Markowitz gives a fascinating account of a community of Black Hebrew Israelites in Dimona, Israel. Her analysis of their withdrawal

from American society and consequent re-building of “their own culture in Israel-as-Africa” (1996: 193) is an important supplement to Rapport’s findings.

5. On the construction of this ancestral presence, cf. Schramm (2010).
6. One example for such media-attention has been the much-discussed TV-series *Wonders of the African World*, hosted by Henri Louis Gates, Jr., which included a section on the Ghanaian slave castles. The Internet, of course, is another important source of information; cf. Basu (2007).
7. For a discussion of Appadurai with special regard to the importance of mediascapes, cf. Coleman (2000: 55–56). At this point, I am concentrating on mediascapes, but it is worth remembering Appadurai’s definition of “ideoscapes” as well: “[They] are also concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it” (1990: 299). With regard to the newly spread Pan-Africanism which can be observed in Ghana today, this definition needs to be extended beyond the scope of “state power.”
8. Since 1996, Gambia hosts the “International Roots Festival,” which bears many similarities to PANAFEST and Emancipation Day in Ghana; see www.rootsgambia.gm (accessed 10.20.2008).

CHAPTER 7

1. Already in 1863, Abraham Lincoln had read the Emancipation Proclamation that was not, however, accepted by the Southern Confederates. The formal abolition was authorized with the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in December 1865. The 14th and 15th Amendments guaranteed major rights of citizenship to the former slaves, including the right to vote (for males). However, Southern Whites in particular firmly opposed the formal equality and brought Reconstruction to a halt. The Ku Klux Klan began to introduce a regime of terror and lynching and played a major part in the eventual failure of the hopes that had been given rise with Emancipation.
2. On June 18, Union General Gordon Granger and 2,000 federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to take possession of the state and enforce the emancipation of only Texas’s slaves. On June 19, 1865, while standing on the balcony of Galveston’s Ashton Villa, Granger read the contents of “General Order No. 3.” Thus June 19 is popularly commemorated among African Americans as Juneteenth.

3. The Underground Railroad was a loosely constructed network of aid and assistance to fugitive slaves. It originated in the Southern part of the United States and stretched up North, as far as Canada. In the period before the final abolition of slavery, from 1830 to 1865, the Underground Railroad reached its peak. Harriet Tubman was one of the leading figures in that network. She helped at least 300 people to escape.
4. I did not take part in the 1998 event itself. The information presented here stems from several sources: (1) a promotional video covering the celebrations (Daramani 1999); (2) interviews with organizers as well as participants afterward; (3) additional materials, such as brochures, newspapers, photographs; (4) my participant observation during Emancipation Days 1999, 2005, and 2007.
5. During the NPP government (2000–2008), a similar role can be attributed to the Joseph Project, which followed a more neoliberal frame of reference (Schramm 2008a, 2008c).
6. On the sometimes tense relationship between Jews and African Americans in the United States, see Franklin (1998); Friedman (1998); Salzman & West (1997).
7. Jeffries took the City College to court, was reinstated, and won \$400,000 in damages. However, this judgment was reversed on appeal (Howe 1998: 222).
8. In her examination of the Human Genome Diversity Project, Reardon (2005) writes extensively on the problematic entanglement of biological and cultural categories in recent genomics.
9. Hand-carved wooden coffins were flown in from Ghana to carry the remains of four of the 419 bodies that were then re-interred in New York City. Other references to Akan culture include the elaborate use of Adinkra symbolism in the memorial design as well as the so-called Spirit of Sankɔfa, which ought to serve as a guiding principle for the treatment of the African Burial Ground as a sacred site (cf. National Park Service Draft Management Recommendations Report; available online at www.africanburialground.gov/ABG_FinalReports.htm, accessed 06.23.2008).
10. Minion Phillips, head of the Jamaican delegation, during the re-interment ceremony.
11. Sonny Carson became famous for his autobiography (also turned into a successful movie) *The Education of Sonny Carson*, in which he describes his youth as a gang member, followed by imprisonment and later transformation to community activist.
12. Another reason for the villagers' eager reception of the Emancipation Day participants can be seen in the diversion that the ceremony brought. It was

one of the rare occasions of entertainment. In May 2002 I visited the village of Kromantse with Dr. Donald Hill, an anthropologist from Oneonta State University in the United States, and Dr. Naana Opoku-Agyemang, a lecturer at the University of Cape Coast (cf. Hill 2002). The reason for our visit was our shared interest in the village history and its connection to the Maroon societies of the Caribbean. The three of us were greeted with dancing and drumming; canopies had been erected in front of the chief's palace. My impression that day was that the whole village had gathered to welcome our team. Of course, our visit was not disconnected from expectations on part of the villagers in terms of material gains, prestige, and future influx of foreigners who might contribute to community development in one way or another.

13. In 1998, as part of the Gateway program, Ghana received a \$50 million credit by the World Bank. The Gateway program was later continued by the NPP government under President Kufuor.
14. This strategy was continued in the following years, with the Joseph Project stretching into the northern part of Ghana.
15. Paul Lovejoy (2000: 100) also mentions Assin Manso as an important marketplace for the Asante slave traders. However, according to him, their major coastal destinations were Fort Abandze (Ft. Amsterdam) and Fort Anomabu, not Cape Coast and Elmina Castles, as claimed during the Emancipation Day statements.
16. It should once again be noted that there is probably no such thing as a "pure" tourism sphere as opposed to a real and/or sacred sphere; cf. Nikolaisen (2004), who demonstrates that even in a stage setting a sacred space can emerge.
17. The newly designed memorial park has changed the character of the site. The ambiguity that had characterized the *Donkor Nsuo* as a sacred space that could accommodate a multiplicity of meanings, including the promise of catharsis and emotional uplift for diasporan travelers, has now given way to a seemingly unequivocal, monumental historical representation.

CHAPTER 8

1. Eldridge Cleaver (1935–1998) had a turbulent political career. While in exile, he dissociated himself from Huey P. Newton and the left wing of the Black Panther Party. After his return to the United States in 1975, he was imprisoned, but one year later he regained his freedom. In the later part of his life, he completely changed his political convictions, became

a born-again Christian, embraced political conservatism, and even ran for public office as a Republican.

2. Stokely Carmichael (1941–1998), who was born in Trinidad and came to the United States at the age of seven, was a leading figure in the Civil Rights Movement and popularized the Black Power slogan. He was in favor of both racial segregation and Black repatriation to Africa (Carmichael 1997 [1968]). After his split from the Black Panther Party, he and his wife, South African singer Miriam Makeba, resettled in Guinea in 1968. There, he renamed himself Kwame Ture, after the Pan-Africanist leaders Kwame Nkrumah and Sekou Touré.
3. In 1980 a pre-colloquium in preparation of a Third World Festival of Negro Arts was held in Dakar, Senegal (Third World Festival of Negro Arts 1980). However, this third FESTAC never took place.
4. Maulana Ron Karenga was born in 1941. In the 1960s he became one of the leading proponents of Black cultural nationalism in the United States. His ideas were popularized through his organization US, which stood in opposition to the Marxist-Leninist-oriented Black Panthers. In 1966 Karenga created Kwanzaa, the extremely popular African-American holiday. He is cofounder of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations and currently lectures at the Department of Africana Studies at California State University, Long Beach.
5. Paulla Ebron (2002: 67–72) discusses yet another dimension of festival politics, namely, the competing visions and agendas involved in the performance of a translocal Mandinka festival.
6. Marijke Steegstra (2005) discusses this paradigm extensively in her work on Krobo initiation (*dipo*) in Ghana.
7. The relationship between the state, with its various cultural institutions, the tourism industry, the Ghanaian intellectual scene, and the diasporan actors is, of course, a complex one. At this point, I am mainly interested in the appropriation of the festival by the state. The rest of the chapter concerns the interpretation of the complexity indicated herein. Also, I need to restate that, since its conception, the festival has gone through many transformations. Thus, in 1999, it was the first time that the festival did not receive any financial support from the Ghanaian government. Nevertheless, the state continued to exercise considerable influence on the composition of the organizing committee and other features of the festival (comment by a Cape Coast resident). Then, in 2001, the festival chairmanship was handed over to Rabbi Kohain Nathanyah Halevi who, owing to his American background, was able to build up the relations with the diaspora, not only in terms of possible audiences but also on an

organizational level. Nevertheless, in all its recent editions, PANAFEST has not been able to attract similar crowds as in the beginning. Moreover, it continues to suffer from serious financial constraints.

8. On the cultural politics in Ghanaian schools, cf. Coe (2005).
9. Toyin Falola has characterized this self-criticism as a typical agenda of African cultural nationalism, tending “to assume that the intelligentsia and the masses are different in their relation to modernity—that... it is the intelligentsia, with investments in Western education and access to Western civilization, that is in trouble, but not the masses” (2001: 53).
10. In his book *The Pan-African Ideal in Literatures of the Black World*, Anyidoho has stated that language is “the key to the revelation of a people’s true identity” (1989: 23).
11. Other publications include the documentation of the *Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Negres* (Colloque 1967); the proceedings of the *Premier Festival Culturel Panafricain*, held in Algier in 1969 (Premier Festival Culturel Panafricain 1969); and the deliberations of the Sixth Pan African Congress, held in Tanzania in 1974 (Pan African Congress 1976).
12. As mentioned before, Appiah’s reflections on Du Bois and cosmopolitanism are in striking contrast to his earlier criticism of Du Bois’s “intrinsic racism” (Appiah 1992: 45).
13. As Karl Mannheim has pointed out in his reflections on a sociology of knowledge (1985 [1931]), there is no presuppositionless thought; my own observations and knowledge are also embedded in a specific historical, political, and social framework and could therefore be called “ideological” in themselves.
14. It needs to be kept in mind that chieftaincy was thoroughly transformed in the process of colonization. The colonial administration sought loyal subjects and attempted to install cooperative chiefs. However, this does not mean that the chiefs were mere dummies of the colonial rulers. They were also able to manipulate the system to serve their own ends. For example, in many cases their control over subordinates became stricter—all in the name of tradition (Ranger 1983: 254).
15. At this point I have not considered the developments in the sphere of arts where the dynamics of African cultural expressions were continuously explored and pushed toward new horizons. For this aspect of cultural politics in Ghana, see Schramm (2000a, 2000b).
16. During the time of my fieldwork, one dollar equaled about 2,000 cedis.
17. The National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC) was held in Cape Coast in 1996; 1997 witnessed another PANAFEST edition. In 1998 the Central EXPO took place in Cape Coast—leaving the Centre for National

Culture with a huge debt. Activities such as these stand in sharp contrast to the situation during the rest of the year, when the CNC is a very quiet place. This is partly attributable to the serious lack of funds that affects most of the cultural institutions in Ghana. A newspaper article stated the situation plainly: “In spite of their role in tourism’s high profile in Ghana, some of the various regional Centres for National Culture are in serious crises.... Most of the centres are now dead.... Even Cape Coast with its central place in Ghanaian arts and culture has been in serious trouble...” (Andam 1999: 1).

18. Despite their apparently greater appeal to the local population, one should keep in mind the linkage between tourism developments and the revival of those festivals (see Bendix 1989; Bruner 1996).
19. Given the high estimates in the run-up to the festival, the overall number of visitors in 1999 was rather low. The official “list of participants” comprised just over sixty delegates, whose main activity was described as “tourist”; all the other people who appeared on the list, consisting of ca. 350 names, belonged to performing groups. In contrast to this very low figure, Sammy Annobil, then Executive Secretary of the festival, spoke of around 2,500 visitors to the CNC grounds every day.
20. *Agoro* means “play” in Akan-languages. The abbreviation NASA stands for Nostalgic Actors and Singers Alliance—a programmatic title, if one considers their particular understanding of homecoming as it was articulated during one of their performances: “[Let’s turn] to our culture, our hope for tomorrow. Please come back home, home to our culture!”
21. Searching the internet in May 2010, there was one news item that announced that PANAFEST would move to Nigeria for the 2011 edition (<http://nairabrain.com/2009/11/28/pan-african-historical-theatre-festival-panafest-moves-from-ghana-to-nigeria/>, accessed 05.10.2010). I was unable to confirm this information, and none of the tour operators who offered itineraries for PANAFEST 2011 had so far reacted by changing their programs.
22. I was told that competing interests among high-ranking officials within the Ministry of Tourism itself were impeding the success of the two events. Since 2001, Emancipation Day has been integrated into the PANAFEST itinerary.
23. On the processes of canonization motivating this choice of personalities, see p. 222.
24. Paul Gilroy (2000) has vehemently called into question this biocultural notion of race. Recently, the somatic conceptualization of heritage has

become most pronounced in the practice of Genetic Ancestry Testing among African Americans (see Nelson 2008; Schramm forthcoming).

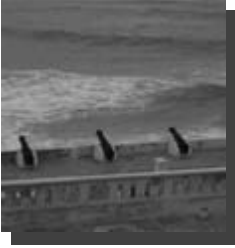
CHAPTER 9

1. This practice of “speaking for” the Other has also been vehemently criticized in discussions on White antiracism (see Bonnett 1999).
2. When asked to comment on the implications of the concept of “strategic use of essentialisms,” Spivak answered: “The only way to work with collective agency is to teach a persistent critique of collective agency at the same time. . . . It is the persistent critique of what one cannot not want” (1990: 93).
3. In his later work on cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2006, 2007), he takes this idea further in order to explore the tension between “universal concern and respect for legitimate difference” (2006: xv) that informs his ethics.
4. This emphasis on agency is questioned by Grant Farred, who views the application of essentialism as a sign for the *lack of agency*. According to him, “essentialism is often not so much a strategic ideological choice as the only possible response to a variety of repressions, violence, and disenfranchisements. It is about the absence of real political alternative” (2006: 241).
5. The dynamics of shifting alliances in a multicultural context has been analyzed by Gerd Baumann (1996). On the essentializing strategies of minorities, cf. also Lavie & Swedenburg (1996).
6. On the underlying processes of racial formation (in the United States), see Omi & Winant (1994 [1986]).
7. In November 2008 a new structure, the costly Golden Jubilee House, was inaugurated as a new presidential palace. At the time of writing (summer 2009), this building had not yet been occupied by the newly elected NDC-government.
8. When I visited the Du Bois Centre in May 2002, one of the employees told me that the program had virtually ceased and that the center had become a very quiet place. In 2007 the center was involved in the celebrations of Ghana’s 50th anniversary. Meanwhile, the online calendar that is published on the center’s website (www.webdubois-gh.org/) shows hardly any activity.
9. Since 2005 the center is directed by Anne Adams, a former professor at the Africana Studies and Research Center of Cornell University.
10. When I returned to Ghana in 2002, Debrah Kofie had left the country. After a short sojourn in Benin, she had returned to the United States.

11. In the 2000s, the call for diasporan investment has mainly been directed at the *Ghanaian* diaspora abroad and their economic contribution in form of remittances.
12. Rev. Leon Sullivan (1922–2001) became famous for the Sullivan Principles, a code of conduct for companies operating in South Africa (and elsewhere) that called for antidiscriminatory and equal-opportunity standards of employment.
13. Even under Nkrumah the status of African Americans in Ghana was never guaranteed. Leslie Alexander Lacy (1970: 180–185) reports the case of Wendell Jean Pierre, a university teacher, who was deported for allegedly feeding the CIA with information. Those accusations were never proved.
14. Enstoolment refers to the installation or inthronization of southern Ghanaian royalty (wherein chiefs sit on stools).
15. The Tower of Return is a project that was conceived by Nana Kweku Agyire Gyepi III, a senior divisional chief in Cape Coast who had spent thirteen years in the United States. Nana Gyepi is also the collector of the so-called Stones of Tears, that is, the debris that was left over after the renovation of Cape Coast and Elmina Castles. He told me that the idea to maintain those stones was inspired by the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Tower of Return Foundation envisions a monument of great magnitude that will serve to pay a “serious last respect to all Africans that perished in the slave trade” (interview 05.23.2002). The tower should be 777 feet high. It would be accompanied by three pyramids: One of them would house a library for African books; the second one would become the “largest museum ever built by Africans which will collect all artifacts outside Africa to be returned and housed here” (*ibid.*); the third pyramid would serve as a conference center. In addition, there would be archives for keeping African family history, as well as an African exhibition center showing “all African-made products and African inventions” (*ibid.*). The tower would be located between Cape Coast and Elmina, thereby showing reverence for the historical significance of the two slave castles. Its estimated costs were given at \$70 million. So far, none of the plans has been realized.
16. The founder of Mission Afrikania, or the African Renaissance Mission, was Osofo Okomfo Kwabena Damoah, who had been a Roman Catholic priest before starting the Afrikania Enterprise. The late Osofo Ameve explained its founding objective as follows: “When the revolution was launched in Ghana in 1979, Dr. Damoah . . . was among the first people appointed to guide the revolution, and in 1982, December, he decided to launch the spiritual aspect of the revolution, which he called Afrikania.

Afrikaania is a very simple word. Damoah realized that there is a need to find a name for African traditional religion and cultural behaviour.” Afrikaania’s self-understanding is that of an umbrella organization for the various shrines and other indigenous religious institutions in Ghana, which are currently under threat, especially by the onslaught of Charismatic Christianity. Today, the Mission is headed by Osofo Obibini Nkonko (cf. de Witte 2004).

17. Branch owns and operates an Afrocentric cultural agency, the Afrikan Poetry Theatre, Inc. in the United States. This center offers regular tours to Africa, lectures, performances, and so on.
18. On the current web page there is no reference to the planned Wall; probably there were not enough purchases of legacy stones. There are photographs of people in front of their plots of land as well as elaborate building designs and mission statements; yet there is no evidence of a finished building. With the unexpected death of Nana Akpan, the Fihankrahene, in 2008, the future of the project remains uncertain.
19. This should not indicate that the confrontation with the Ghanaian reality always leads to disappointment or frustration, only that the official homecoming discourse fails to recognize the difficulties and ambiguities. For an insider perspective that takes account of these dynamics, see IMAHKÜS Okofo’s book *Coming Home Ain’t Easy but It Sure Is a Blessing* (1999).
20. In a recent article, Kwame Zulu Shabazz states that Nana Akpan was eventually designated as the first African-American member of the National House of Chiefs, but he does not specify his status (Benton & Shabazz 2009: 492).



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AM 59/162A

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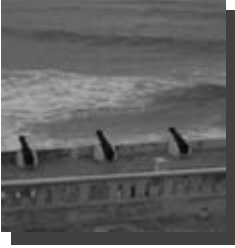
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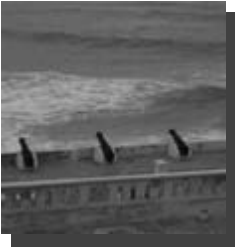
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African Americans and others in the African diaspora have increasingly "come home" to Africa to visit the sites at which their ancestors were enslaved and shipped. In this nuanced analysis of homecoming, Katharina Schramm analyzes how a shared rhetoric of the Pan-African family is produced among African hosts and Diasporan returnees and at the same time contested in practice. She examines the varying interpretations and appropriations of significant sites (slave forts), events (Emancipation Day) and discourses (repatriation) in Ghana to highlight these dynamics. From this, she develops her notions of diaspora, home, homecoming, memory and identity that reflect the complexity and multiple reverberations of these cultural encounters beyond the sphere of roots tourism.

Katharina Schramm is a lecturer in anthropology at the Martin-Luther-University, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany.

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