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THE ORIGIN OF LITERARY THEATRE IN COLONIAL GHANA, 1920-1957*

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Introduction

We are gradually coming to a realisation in dramatic criticism in Africa that although there are about three related traditions of drama in most parts of the continent, they all seem to spring from a common root. The central position of indigenous drama to contemporary traditions of theatre, particularly in West, Central, East and South Africa, has now been recognised. The Concert Party tradition in West Africa, for example, essentially a product of urbanisation and westernisation processes, has drawn direct inspiration from African indigenous dramatic traditions to express and highlight contemporary problems and sensibility. This is true of the Ghanaian concert party tradition, the Nigerian Folk Opera, the Chikwakwa Theatre of Zambia and the Kenya Kamiriithu 'People's Theatre'.[1] In much the same way, the earlier impression of literary drama in Africa as an alien form, totally subservient to Western notions of drama and almost disloyal to Africa has now given way to assessments which have indicated that all along, Africa has been central to its ultimate vision and that it has in fact been supportive of the aspirations and longings of African people. In the post-Independence era, particularly after the sixties, literary drama in Africa has drawn its vision, themes and techniques from the continent's own longstanding creative traditions, struggles and experiences of the people.

Under colonial rule, the non-recognition of the centrality of indigenous African drama was inevitable. Doctrines of African inferiority and colonial assimilationist policies reinforced the cultural isolation of the African past while they encouraged a deliberate sense of repudiation of developed African heritages. Colonialism also attempted to consciously manipulate and shape the cultural consciousness of African people on Western lines through its educational agencies. The subject matter of this paper will deal with these developments in the context of colonial Ghana of the twenties.

Although the popular theatre in West Africa is a feature of colonialism, it seemed to have come into prominence outside its direct purview and control. In the Ghanaian context, Master Yalley's "concerts" of the twenties were performed for "very big people, lawyers and other professional men of social standing".[2] These were the select but very influential educated elite, the Merchant - Lawyer class, themselves colonial creatures in everything but colour, who were greatly enamoured of western entertainment forms. Equally important was the fact that Yalley's performances were also supportive of Empire Day Celebrations, during which time those who patronised Yalley's "concerts", both African and European, readily recognised the heavy influences of the American Vaudeville, the comic acts of Al Johnson and the film feats of Charlie Chaplin. Later, however, in the thirties, when Ishmael Johnson and his Two Bobs took over Yalley's tradition, they expanded its conception and redirected its appeal to a wider and a more proletarian audience. As the tradition became more established in confidence, it aligned itself in the forties with the CPP and the growing nationalism in the country. That was when the colonial government took interest in its activities while the Professional elite, through the press, did its best to ignore its existence.

A similar process took place in Nigeria. The early beginnings of the Yoruba folk opera under Hubert Ogunde quite clearly emphasised an affinity with Christian evangelisation and

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propaganda. When later this opera became completely secular and identified itself with Nigerian nationalism it came to loggerheads with the colonial authorities.[3] However, in contrast to the Ghanaian situation around the same time, the Nationalist Press in Nigeria displayed remarkable maturity and foresight in encouraging the flowering of the popular theatre and guiding its sense of commitment to African traditions.[4]

Thus, in both cases, there was a conspicuous lack of continuous support or patronage of the popular theatre at the official colonial level. They were left on their own to develop as best as they could in a situation which amounted to a total neglect and lack of official sponsorship. This is why the concert parties took to the road as "travelling theatres", creating and consorting with rural and urban audiences whose patronage alone was able to sustain them in both countries. In sharp contrast, the development of literary drama in most African countries during the colonial period enjoyed official support and patronage at various Governmental and institutional levels. In East Africa or example, the ideal of drama, "was that performed by the expatriate groups, the colonial officers, their wives". They formed amateur theatre groups and projected their performances as part of the annual drama festival held in East Africa "for which some English adjudicator would be flown in from England." Drama in East Africa was also supported by the educational system, whose teachers, like the white adjudicators, "would talk about diction, delivery, timing, pauses, clumsiness etc., so that most of the indigenous actors and actresses who braved the stage were forced into a prepared mould of "correct English" on the stage".[5] Under what has been described as the 'colonialism of apartheid', the Black African theatre in South Africa has continually experienced, in its assertion of an African consciousness, a conflict between imitation and originality in terms of Western models of theatre and African traditions of dramatic expression. The Black Consciousness Theatre of Pascal Gwala is a supreme example of this continual conflict, although in the main, it is committed to a theatre among Africans "on their own cultural terms" to express their liberation struggles.[6] In this context, official white patronage is only made available to Africans at an incalculable price to dignity, self-reliance and critical self-assessment. It is however clear in the South African situation that Apartheid has become crucial to the development of African theatre, just as colonialism was crucial to the growth of literary drama in the rest of Africa.

In the nineteen-thirties, the William-Ponty Teachers College in Dakar became the focus of theatre education and training for the former Francophone Africa, South of the Sahara. Under the protection of this leading academic institution, there was a gradual, but careful, nurturing of a tradition of theatre that reconciled Africa to Europe. In the process, it was ensured that French rules of drama were carefully enthroned in this tradition.[7] In the colonial period, it took a lot of courage for one of the leading exponents of this tradition, Keita Fodeba, to only just be able to free his theatre from it and give a 'more authentic' African direction to his productions in terms of themes and modes of presentation.[8] Equally significant in this respect is Joel A. Adedeji's well-written two-part account of the emergence of the Nigerian theatre from 1866-1945.[9] In that account, we are confronted with the overwhelming dominance and stature of the missionary churches in the development of the literary theatre in an African country during colonial times. In the midst of sporadic attempts to create a secular base for the Nigerian theatre, there was the paradox of leaders who took great interest in emphasising the role of the theatre "outside the church" while other leaders did everything possible to return the theatre to the church. The interminable struggles under these circumstances are concretely evoked. We are made aware of the inter-play of social forces - colonialism, education and religion - and their effects on indigenous African ideas and ways of life. But above all, from the restricted canvas of the Lagos Metropolis, where these historical encounters take place, we witness the engulfing vitality, energy and foresight of the early leadership of the Nigerian theatre and their commitment to an African-centred vision, qualities which have since become the hall-marks of the Nigerian theatre

in our own time. Adedeji's scholarly survey provides a refreshing insight into continuities in this energy and vitality in the Nigerian theatre.

Unfortunately, we have never had the benefit of such comprehensive documentation on the origins of literary theatre in Ghana during the colonial period. Research and publication on Ghanaian literary drama have almost always either concentrated exclusively on the Concert Party tradition or on the post-Independence works of Ghanaian playwrights. So far, the nearest to this exercise has been Charles Angmor's article on "Drama in Ghana"[10] which a critic has observed reads like "dramatic literature" and not a historical review of theatre experience in the country.[11] Besides, in his own words, he only attempts to provide a "brief background sketch" in order to point out areas in which "the Western tradition of theatrical drama and the Ghanaian indigenous tradition have contributed toward the evolution of our literary drama" in Ghana.[12] The focus of this paper is slightly different. It will examine in detail the systematic ways in which colonial institutions supported and controlled the development of literary theatre in Ghana and how the strategies adopted during that period have helped to create enduring psychological problems for the emergence of a true, African-centred vision of literary theatre in post-Independence Ghana.

The National Theatre Movement and the Colonial Heritage

In 1955, as part of a growing concern with the viability of Ghana's cultural heritage in the face of distressing social changes, a ten-man Government Committee of the Ministry of Education was appointed "to examine how best a national theatre movement could be developed". That same year, the Committee reported that in its opinion, "the people of this country (the Gold Coast) were too engrossed in other things to realise the threat to their traditional culture". It added that "although the main responsibility for reviving their dying culture lay with the people themselves, the Government must set the ball rolling". Subsequently, an Interim Committee for an Arts Council was set up and charged "to formulate and carry out a practical policy for a National Theatre Movement". Soon afterwards, an Arts Council of Ghana was formally constituted by an Act of Parliament in 1958.[13]

In effect, the National Theatre Movement, started in 1956, became a national cultural policy document to develop theatre in Ghana. Its aim was "to bring into existence a theatre that will derive its vitality and authenticity from roots firmly planted in the true traditions of the people".[14] It had the mandate to refashion indigenous Ghanaian traditions to suit our modern theatre through creative experimentation. Accordingly, it was urged that "traditional forms of drama should constitute the basis for a Ghana National Theatre".[15] All these aims and objectives seemed beyond reproach, except that there were also dire assumptions which were not readily apparent. The leaders of the theatre movement of the time assumed that literary theatre had been fairly well-established in the country and that the only thing it suffered from was a severe sense of alienation. Artists and audience stood in some urgent need of a new orientation - in terms of ideological allegiance and direction - towards a distinct African theatre that can both express and respond to the challenges of its cultural environment. In the view of the Movement, the most important way to achieve this end was to create more and more institutions and get them to operate within defined ideals and goals. It was felt that the development of theatre, and cultural activity in general, needed co-ordination and cohesion. Writers had to be organised and controlled. In short, there was the need for a "systematic promotion" of the arts in the country. Accordingly, a "period of institutional development" followed during which "culture assumed a new importance as an area of government action, and Departments or Ministries of Culture (or sometimes Culture and Youth, or Sports and Tourism) or Arts Councils were created to plan and implement cultural programmes on a nationwide basis".[16]

This approach to the arts in Ghana, for the period was also imbued with grand nationalist ideals and conceptions, did not sufficiently take into account the inherent complexity of the

colonial experience of drama in the country. Although the expression "colonial mentality" was bandied about as an unfortunate tag on those who refused to move with the times or change their allegiance and tastes for African things, no one quite anticipated the subtleties of neo-colonialism and its implications for education and cultural development. No one quite fully realised the depth of antipathy to African cultural activities created by a 'colonial mentality'. So, while there was a clear obsession with a healthy vision of theatre development, there were no corresponding concerns to develop effective strategies to neutralise the atrophies of the colonial past in terms of theatre education.

Shortcomings of the New Theatre Movement

Indeed, there was no way the New Theatre Movement could assume that a viable tradition of literary theatre really existed in the country which could be traced to the colonial experience. Certainly, as we shall soon see, the facts on the ground at the time of Independence did not support this incredible optimism. For by the end of the first decade of the New Theatre Movement it became clear that the enthusiasm, commitment and personal sacrifices which informed the pursuit of the ideals of the National Theatre Movement in Ghana did not match the expected results. Barely ten years after its inauguration, Mrs. Efua Sutherland, one of the Movement's founders had cause to worry. In a pamphlet on "The Second Phase: A Review of the National Theatre Movement in Ghana" issued in 1965, she lamented 'the slow down in output of creative material' as the 'most disquieting' factor which has characterised the end of the first phase. Equally disturbing to her was the fact that theatre performances have been largely concentrated in Accra, the Capital, and that there has been such little touring with performances outside Accra. The chance to create a wider audience by building up the collective 'responses, interests, and opinions of the general Ghanaian public' was still a dream. Finally, and to me the most crucial of her indictments, in spite of the establishment of a School of Music and Drama in the University of Ghana since 1962, there has been no planned move to promote a school drama programme that would permeate the educational system and make for continuity in the Movement's aspirations.[17]

Coincidentally, around the same time, another foundation member of the Movement, Professor J.H. Kwabena Nketia, a renowned Ghanaian cultural expert and the then Director of both the Institute of African Studies and the School of Music and Drama was also expressing similar misgivings about 'African cultural education in Ghana'. If the Ghanaian cultural heritage, he observed, has in fact been neglected, then one has to sympathise with "the dilemma of the person who has to plan education as well as the teacher who has to implement policy who lacks knowledge of the cultural background of the children".[18] In addition to these observations there were also a number of heated debates in cultural journals and magazines of the mid-sixties on 'the problem of language in the development of the African Theatre',[19] particularly in Ghana's experiment under the New Theatre Movement. These debates focussed attention on the vital issue of cross cultural communication in a linguistically pluralistic society and beyond that, how to create an integrated and homogeneous national theatre audience that would constitute its energising patrons.

It is important to observe that these critical appraisals of the New Theatre Movement from foremost theatre critics of the time who were also leaders of the Movement quite clearly revealed frank admissions of some significant lapses in the original conception of the Theatre Movement. Although these leaders were fully aware of the result and effects of the colonial experience on African people, and were quite clear of solutions to these, they did not, at least from hind sight now, sufficiently appreciate the complexity of the institutional, ideological and organisational structures which were required to sustain a completely new tradition of literary theatre for

Independent Ghana. The central focus of this paper will therefore examine the world of colonial drama and theatre in Ghana from 1920 - 1957 in an attempt to bring out the full system of ideas, institutions, facilities, patronage and strategies that the Colonial Government and its agencies deliberately employed to precipitate a different form of theatre in Ghana. It will examine how the idea of Western drama and theatre was in turn embraced by the indigenous educated elite and reinforced to lay such a foundation in the country.

Seminal Ideas of the Twenties

A fundamental idea that dominated colonial Ghana of the twenties was the importance of education as a key to **everything**. Under Governor Guggisberg (1919-27) the country experienced unprecedented strides in communication infrastructure - network of roads, railways and harbour - health facilities, and education. An Engineer by profession, the central slogan to Guggisberg's achievements was "Education: the keystone".[20] He came to Ghana already aware of the country's potentiality for economic and social progress; he was convinced of the potentialities of its people to achieve intellectual development comparable to that of the European if given the chance. Armed with these convictions, he was more than determined to "improve the material condition of the African, to educate him, and still keep him a time - server in the imperial cause".[21] As a creature of his time, he was certainly conditioned by the theory of separate development of the races, but somehow, in his liberal benevolence, he was determined to bridge the gap through education. Accordingly he endorsed the 1922 recommendation of the Phelps-Stokes Commission on Education in Africa that "education must conserve whatever was sound in the African's life and transmit the best that civilisation and Christianity had to offer".[22] Consequently, when Guggisberg founded Achimota School, he charged it to produce a type of student who was western in his intellectual and scientific attitude towards life but who also "remains African in sympathy and desire for preserving and developing what is deserving of respect in tribal life, custom, rule and law".[23] Arising out of this specific concern was the development of an 'African Cultural Curriculum' as an educational policy. This policy made sense in view of the growing reaction to the westernisation of the African as suggested in Kobina Sekyi's play, **The Blinkards** (1915) and the nationalist postures of J.E. Casely Hayford and J.W. de Graft Johnson.[24] These leaders of the National Congress of British West Africa had not only articulated the nationalist position of the relevance of African traditions to contemporary civilisation, but had also asserted the distinctiveness of the Negro race and "the desire to maintain the integrity and assert the equality of that race".[25] Hence, by the mid-twenties, the 'racial question' had become a focus of much nationalist agitation in Ghanaian politics, since it raised complex psychological problems for the African under colonial rule. When R.A. Lockhart, Headmaster of Mfantsipim College from 1925-36 arrived in Ghana he observed that there was much destructive criticism and frustration in the press which he traced to lack of confidence. He came to the conclusion that the Methodist Church, through its missions and educational institutions, should help the African to restore his sense of confidence in himself, hence his guiding motto was "Education for Confidence". That seemed to him "to be the most urgent need of the time".[26]

As the idea of an African Cultural Curriculum became more entrenched as a policy, the Lawyer-Merchant class of Africans became decidedly opposed to it. As a social elite in the Ghanaian society, observed S.K.B. Asante, "these aspiring entrepreneurial groups had set "imitable standards and patterns" for the rest of the population, and in general had spearheaded the drive for modernity".[27] Their central ideology was the limitation of the European and the desire to make 'a conscious effort to live up to what they considered "civilised" standards'. Hence they and their forebears were very much fond of:

.... heavy woollen suits, tail coats and high collars and were as correctly dressed as Englishmen would be in England ... their madams spotted Victorian ward-robes complete with corsets and plumed hats. They organised local European- style cultural societies such as lodges, literary and debating clubs and held public lectures, and magic lantern shows - programmes similar to those of parish gatherings in England. There are accounts of Ladies' Clubs which imposed a fine on those of their members who spoke the local language or wore native dress in public.[28]

If Kobina Sekyi ridiculed them in his play, **The Blinkards**, the post-independence generation laughed at them as people with "colonial mentality". In the 1920's however, they constituted the most vocal African elite in the country. They controlled a vociferous press and their brand of nationalism only aspired towards a sharing of political power. They teamed up with the chiefs in the Legislative Council to oppose any pretensions towards the Africanisation of the educational curriculum. They held dearly to the idea of educational parity believing strongly that European-type education was desirable in order "to attain equality with, and even perhaps challenge, the Europeans".[29] There was therefore widespread suspicion among their ranks that 'special courses for Africans' or 'native content of education' constituted 'an attempt to keep them in a subordinate intellectual and social position indefinitely'. As a result everything was done to oppose the introduction of an African cultural curriculum.[30]

Education as an Ideological Battle Ground

In this way, education became a subject of intense ideological controversy. While the Merchant-Lawyer class shared the importance of education to the African and were perfectly happy to imitate the European through it, they consciously eschewed anything that would enjoin them to embrace a closer look at their own cultural traditions and use them to make original contributions to world civilisation. The paradox of being enamoured of European cultural traditions while ignoring their own native traditions greatly affected the way in which the educated, professional elite championed the cause of literary drama in the twenties. In addition to being victims of indirect rule - or separate development of the races - the elite also voluntarily imposed assimilationist tendencies on themselves. Consequently, the ideology of imitation and assimilation became one of the most outstanding ideas that shaped cultural intercourse. Hence an overwhelming allegiance to western European cultural norms and practices became the order of the day.

Colonial Cultural Institutions

Following the Phelps-Stokes Report in 1925, the Colonial Office in London formed a permanent Advisory Committee on Native Education in the Tropical Dependencies. The immediate outcome of this for the people of Ghana was that a new Educational Ordinance was passed shortly afterwards which "sought to multiply as rapidly as possible the number of schools classed as efficient" through the provision of government subvention or grants-in-aid.[31] Primary school education expanded from the Colony to Ashanti and Northern Ghana, and post-primary institutions such as secondary schools, Training Colleges and Seminaries also increased. Through these subventions, the Colonial Government firmly signalled its intention to actively participate in and control the expansion of educational facilities in the country. But this did not negate the fact that most of these educational institutions then in existence belonged to various church missions and organisations. It was they, rather than Government schools, which propagated what seemed to be an active policy of theatre promotion in the country as part of their programmes to win more converts. Through their schools and church institutions - chapel choirs, school choirs and Sunday school programmes - they had, in effect, succeeded in

establishing a tradition of religious plays. Between 1931 and 1932 alone, there was a proliferation of dramatic Cantata in Accra, Nsawam, Cape Coast and Sekondi. Groups such as the Wesley Choir, the massed Sunday School Choir of the Holy Trinity and St. Mary's Churches and others performed such plays as "The Rolling Seasons", "Nativity", "Esther the Beautiful" and "Bethlehem". According to a reviewer in **The Gold Coast Spectator**, there were more performances of Cantata in both the Western and Central provinces than there were in Accra.[32] By 1934, both Church Schools and Government Schools in the rapidly expanding elementary school system had also taken to secular plays such as **Macbeth** performed by the Asuboi Methodist School, a performance so lavishly praised by **The Gold Coast Spectator**.[33] In addition, these schools were officially encouraged to put on special plays for Empire Day celebrations. On one such occasion in 1935, the Bishop's School in Accra put on 'a patriotic pageant' entitled "The Armada" described later by **The Gold Coast Spectator** as being "exquisitely staged".[34]. Similar plays such as "Britannia's Court", designed to show the lands that formed the British Empire and their allegiance to the British Crown were also performed. In effect, the Colonial Government suddenly realised that although such performances were not obligatory, they could be used as one of the most effective means of inculcating loyalty to the British Empire among the youths of the Colony.

Some of these church missions also had a much more serious and systematic programme of promoting dramatic literature in their educational system. As early as 1923, for example, the Methodist Church had established a West African Literature Society Committee in London to supervise the publication and distribution of relevant books on literature and drama for West African Colonies.[35] A direct outcome of this was the institution of the Methodist Book Depot which became both a printing, publishing and distribution outfit. Accordingly, between 1925-37, no less than five distribution outlets were established in major urban centres such as Kumasi (1925), Sekondi (1926), Accra (1931), Swedru (1933) and Tarkwa (1937).[36] W.T. Balmer, a one time Secretary to this West African Literature Society in 1923, "planned and provided a series of books adapted to the life and thought of the country, which was published by the Methodist Book Depot under the general title of **Atlantis Readers**".[37]

The Integration of Policy and Private Initiatives

A corresponding formal policy on the promotion of theatre and literary drama was also rapidly emerging in some of the Secondary and Training College establishments. In some of these institutions, the Government's own interest in the matter soon became apparent. In 1938, for example, members of a Committee appointed by the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony 'to inspect the Prince of Wales College, Achimota' were impressed by the use of dramatic literature "as an exercise in vocabulary" while in another class they observed that "the study of passages of **Macbeth** formed a sad contrast to the spirited performance of a number of scenes of the play" which they had witnessed on the first night of their visit to the school. Accordingly, their final report recommended that "in the choice of books for reading - whether for examination or otherwise - it would be well to include some dialogues, one-act plays etc. for reading aloud".[38] In Mfantsipim, the European members of staff came together to institute the Annual Staff play initiated by Ian Roddick. When Joe de Graft, the noted Ghanaian playwright, returned to Mfantsipim in 1955 as Head of the English Department there, "he initiated and developed drama as a subject on the school's curriculum and also instituted the Mfantsipim Drama Laboratory".[39] He reinvigorated the Annual Staff productions in the school and, in his own words, such productions "became quite an exciting feature of the social life of Cape Coast".[40] The same development took place in Achimota School where the staff decided to present English plays "with a view to teaching the value of organisation as well as pointing the way to variety in plot, and improving their technique".[41] It soon became a formal school policy to organise college

plays to be coordinated by a dramatic committee of staff and students:

> *... These (plays) will be in English, and the proposal, an ambitious one, is to produce three plays a year, one a straight play, e.g. Shakespeare, one a musical comedy or similar entertainment, and one a religious play. House plays are to be in the vernacular, these being, if possible, written ones, but short, simple and easily produced ....*[42]

In much the same way, the Expatriate Staff at the University College of the Gold Coast in the late forties also came together and did a lot of "dramatic work with special reference to the Elizabethan dramatists" and this included "stage performances to which the public were admitted". Mr. Lerner and Mr. Storch, both of them staff members, were instrumental in starting the University College's Dramatic Society which became active in productions on the College campus and at the Community Centre in Accra.[43] These successes also encouraged the Department of Extra-Mural Studies of the University to introduce, in 1949, an Approach to Modern Literature syllabus. This incorporated a drama section with Dr. J.B. Danquah's **The Third Woman** as one of the texts of study. Another play, **Nyankonsem**, a Twi play based on Ghanaian folklore was also officially approved for use in schools by the Education Department.

It is important to underscore the significance of the coordinated nature of these voluntary contributions to the development of literary theatre in Colonial Ghana by the Expatriate Staff of educational institutions from the elementary school level to the university. Appearing apparently as well-meaning initiatives of private individuals, they soon became coordinated initiatives with well-conceived motives to promote the superiority of English culture through literary theatre on a scale large enough to be effective but quiet enough to remain unobtrusive and subterranean. In the end, before anybody was aware, they had become institutionalised as formal policy initiatives within the educational system.

European Model Clubs

This phenomenon also became true of the numerous European clubs which sprang up throughout the country during the thirties. In all the urban and commercial centres of the country where there was a sizeable number of European personnel, these clubs were established. In Accra alone, there were Lady Slaters Club, Roger Club, Ladies Musical Society, the Astorias and Tommy's European Club. Besides, in all the mining centres in the country, there were "European Staff Clubs" which ran side by side with "African Staff Miners Clubs".[44] The initial idea of these clubs was to create a social setting where variety entertainment would be provided for Colonial Administrators and European Staff of Companies. This was to relieve them of tropical boredom and make it possible for them to retain some semblance of their own sense of civilised cultivation of English Culture. However, in no time, these 'entertainment clubs' were soon transformed into centres of European cultural excellence and cultivation, and were held up as worthy examples of emulation by the African elite. On May 6th 1932, for example, the Roger Club advertised a "Grand Masked Ball" which promised "to be a unique affair as it will be the first of its kind in the Colony".[45] Sometimes, special prizes were awarded in the Fancy Dress Competition - one for the best original fancy dress and the other for the best home made dress. At a variety entertainment at the Astorias around the same time, His Excellency, the Governor "highly commended the artists and remarked that the show was one of the best amateur performances that he has been privileged to witness so far, on the Coast".[46] In March 1932, a Girl Guides entertainment was honoured with the presence of Lady Slater, wife of the Governor, at which "Sleeping Beauty" was performed. According to reports of the occasion, although an Ananse Play was also on the programme, it was "Sleeping Beauty" which "obtained a hearty

applause from an audience who showed great appreciation of the performance of the young Girl Guides and their leaders, all of whom turned out smartly".[47] Similarly, the all-white Ladies Club - Lady Slater's Club - was once privileged with a lecture by a Dr. Selwyn Clarke. He dilated on his experiences in the far East, China, Japan and Malay States, and to share the exclusivity of the occasion "were African Lady visitors such as Mrs. Glover-Addo, Mrs. Kojo Thompson, Mrs. Nanka Bruce and Mrs. Buckman".[48]

Clearly these European clubs were quite conscious of their role as 'model clubs' in the colonial situation. They provided leadership and guidance as to taste in European wear, ball-room dancing, theatre production, music appreciation and "civilised" social interaction between the races. The psychological advantage of white colonial officers officially **patronising** African entertainment ventures was also greatly exploited. In particular, variety entertainment (as they preferred to call such occasions) became a means of bringing Africans and Europeans together, with the latter showering approval where expected standards had been met. Under the 'distinguished patronage' or 'chairmanship' of His Excellency the Governor or the Acting Governor and their ladyships several plays and concerts were performed by various African social and literary clubs. In 1931, for example, the Accra Wesley Choir gave a religious Cantata entitled "The Rolling Season" at the Wesley Chapel under the distinguished chairmanship of the Hon. G.A.S. Northcote, the Colonial Secretary. According to Musing Light reviewing the play for **The Gold Coast Spectator**, "the chapel was filled to its utmost capacity" and the attendance was like "the four and twenty elders clothed in white raiment having on their heads crowns of gold". The pianist for the occasion, Mr. E.E. Bannerman, an African who also produced the play, was praised as "a positive genius".[49] Similarly, His Excellency, the Governor and Lady Slater were the distinguished patrons of the play, "The Memorable Trials of Bardel against Pickwick" performed by Achimota School in 1931.[50] Then in 1932, at the Agona Swedru, an "excellent concert" was performed by the Swedru Twelve Apostles and in the audience were three Europeans and Mr. G.M.E. Pankson, the Assistant District Commissioner of the area. **The Times of West Africa** recorded that the play received "high praise from several quarters" and it was hoped that "the encouragement received will help them to climb higher and improve their fine technique already developed".[51]

When by the mid-forties Ghanaian nationalism was on the ascendancy and political matters had dominated all other matters in the colony, the British Council was established to undertake and continue the role of imperial cultural dissemination and enlightenment. Through the patronage, encouragement and propagation of English theatre and drama, particularly by means of its Branches throughout select urban centres in the country, the British Council came to play the combined roles of theatre development and indoctrination. It became the official policy formulator of the Colonial Government on cultural matters. It provided financial and material support for school productions and occasionally, it sponsored plays for selected audiences - privileged African teachers, children of chiefs, rich traders, civil servants and professional men, a sprinkling of brilliant pupils, white missionaries and colonial officials. In order to remind colonial subjects of British cultivation in terms of theatre and culture in their true forms, the British Council sponsored groups of British actors and performers to undertake tours of colonies. Local artistic groups which attain acceptable standards were officially sponsored to perform at the British Council. These performances, including occasionally the free donation of literature books, were closely related to school examination syllabuses. Thus, from 1943, the British Council gradually came to replace both formal and informal colonial policy initiatives and institutions that were consciously used as part of the network of colonial indoctrination of British theatre and culture in Colonial Ghana.

Colonial Africans and Literary Theatre

The policy of implanting literary theatre in Colonial Ghana was targeted at educated Africans. It sought to create a target audience whose allegiance and loyalty to British models of theatre could not be questioned. As indicated above, this policy used every conceivable means available including formal educational institutions, patronage, leadership and guidance devices in theatre production and erected them as standard models in the minds of educated Africans. The birth of the British Council in the early 40's was in response to the need for a formal institution to regulate cultural matters, but it was also a formal recognition of the change of the times, a tacit admission of new concerns and new ideas that had come to shape the relationship of Africans and Europeans in political and cultural matters for the future.

It was not by accident that for a decade throughout the 1930's the dissemination of literary theatre in Ghana reached its highest point. It was wholeheartedly embraced by the educated elite with a vigour and intensity unsurpassed since then. This was possible because the colonial government had created the necessary condition for this sudden flowering and growth of the arts. It had created a psychological situation based on the appearance of affluence and well-being which caught the imagination of the African population. Governor Guggisberg's assumption of office in Ghana from 1919 coincided with a boom in cocoa production and a "rapid increase in agricultural wealth and trade that made it possible for Guggisberg to embark on his Ten-Year Development Plan in which Takoradi Harbour, the railways and Achimota College featured prominently".[52] Overnight, there was a tremendous revolution in agriculture, in communications, in education and health facilities which greatly impressed the African population and made it easier, psychologically, to accept and identify with things European as the standard of civilised life. These changes and developments took place throughout the nineteen-twenties, so that by the beginning of the thirties, three classes of Africans had emerged bearing varying degrees of allegiance and gullibility in relation to the colonial situation. The Lawyer-Merchant class, who regarded themselves as the 'natural heirs' to British rule; an influential, tiny, minority from their ranks whose incipient nationalism also had cultural aspirations, crying like a lone voice in the wilderness for Africans to return to their cultural traditions and not be uncritical slaves to everything European. This minority group consisted of stalwarts such as Kobina Sekyi, J.B. Danquah (both of them notable playwrights), Casely Hayford of **Ethiopia Unbound** fame and Ephraim Amu, the ardent musician-nationalist whose recourse to the African cultural heritage to assert African Personality has since become a legacy in Ghanaian cultural history. This group, often vaguely identified as part of the "intelligentsia" saw themselves "as the advance guard in the awakening of racial consciousness in Africa, and as a distinct group within the British Empire".[53] In short, "they looked upon themselves as the champions of the African cause".[54] Then there was this third group of educated Africans, 'The ordinary salariat: the clerks of government offices, commercial houses, and school teachers'.[55] This was by far the largest of the groups and the most amorphous. They were the product of accelerated educational programmes of the twenties and were therefore essentially, creatures of colonial urbanisation; their life styles and allegiances were unfixed. They were anxious for self-improvement, but were uncertain of their directions in life, and hence willing tools for any leadership. In brief, they constituted a volatile population of educated Africans who were ready to be led and guided.[56]

The Ordinary Salariat

In a sense, the 'ordinary salariat' was the most exciting African class of the time. They embodied the nascent spirit of the Ghana to be. This group was both daring, creative and full of initiative. Possessing neither firm roots in English cultural traditions nor a complete allegiance to their native African heritage, the only cultural models available to them for emulation were

the cultural activities of the Merchant-Lawyer class and those of the Colonial Administrative officers. In this regard, they were prepared to learn, to emulate and above all, to venture. In the 30's, they also founded social clubs, organised amateur dramatic societies, started ball-room orchestras, and pursued vigorous programmes of entertainment to raise funds for a variety of purposes including especially the promotion of theatre arts buildings in the country. One of them was Mr. J.T.N. Yankah, Headmaster of Bishop's School in the thirties. He had founded the Assisted School Teacher's Union in 1931 later changed to The Gold Coast Teachers Union in 1937.[57] In addition to being a Headmaster and a Trade Unionist - fighting relentlessly against the colonial government for better conditions of service for teachers of mission schools - Mr. Yankah was also "a producer and musician" who was famous for his "production of dramatic Cantatas".[58] As the music teacher of his school, he "won the Ocansey's shield in the Accra Schools Festival twice in succession".[59] Mention may also be made of Mr. Augustus Williams who was referred to as "Williams of Palladium Fame" because he was noted as an "actor, tap dancer, guitarist and singer of comic songs".[60]

From platforms such as the Palladium, School Assembly Halls and the premises of churches, it appears that several plays were produced by these leaders. It appears too that a lot of energy was expended by them. Among the plays in 1930 alone, were "Esther, the Beautiful Queen", "Britannia's Court", "The Last Laugh" and "Eliza comes to Stay".[61] In 1931, "The Memorable Trials of Bardel against Pickwick", "The Rolling Season", "At Last I am Happy" (praised as the most delightful musical play by an African), Sophocle's "Antigone" and J.M. Winterbottom's original play, "The Savage Chief" were recorded.[62] In 1932 "Ghost of Count and Sambo Lucky Number", a play entitled "Life", "Everyman", "Trial of Bardel against Pickwick", Britannia's Court", "The Last Laugh", "Esther the Beautiful Queen", and "Princess Rosetta" (a musical play).[63] In 1933 only one Greek play[64] was recorded, while in 1934 the following plays were performed: "The Dover Road", "The Next Room", "Macbeth", "The King of Sherwood" (a comic opera), "The Armada", "Joseph and his Brethren", "Alladin and the Magic Lamp" etc.[65]

It is evident that most of the plays were musicals - opera, Vaudeville and Cantata. There were also a number of 'straight plays' including Shakespearean ones. Unfortunately, the majority of them did not bear any direct relevance to life in Colonial Ghana, except in so far as these evoked loyalty to the British crown and sought to entrench belief in the Bible. This kind of relevance did not appear to match the intensity of commitment and dedication of the leaders of these social clubs. In fact, their creative energies seemed misplaced and misused, both in the service of their country and in the enlightenment of its citizens; they did not seize the opportunity to contribute to the building up of a 'national consciousness' for the nationalist struggle only a decade away. They also failed to build up an integrated, loyal audience for their performances. A critic in **The Gold Coast Spectator** observed in 1935 that the audience itself was not well educated enough to really understand the cantatas.[66] When "Twelfth Night" was performed by Accra High in December 1931, a critic mentioned that "what the school received from the audience did not meet expenses which were incurred in producing the play".[67] In 1932, a correspondent similarly deplored the fact that "there are still no big audiences even for musical performances much less for dramatic ones".[68] By 1933, operas were still unpopular with the Gold Coast audience, because they were generally regarded as plays with queer music.[69] Thus while the plays were performed with relentless dedication and commitment, they did not register any appreciable impact on their intended audience. Unlike Hubert Ogunde who started from the same restricted background of church cantatas and moved his genius through a positive assertion of independence from colonial cultural trappings,[70] the Yankahs and the Williams of Ghana used their creative energies in the service of church theatre alone. They failed to respond to the yearnings of their

generation for a new order of things, for an inspiration towards a Ghanaian sense of contemporary theatre which was their lot to develop or at least lay a solid foundation.

The Lawyer-Merchant Class

In the thirties, the Lawyer-Merchant class also stood up to be counted as promoters of "civilised theatre" and true literary learning. After all they were the African class exclusively endowed with wealth, learning and knowledge of contemporary civilisation to provide the requisite leadership in these matters. Besides, they were politically ambitious and anxious to prove to the white man that whatever the white man can do, they can equal it two-fold. Their primary concern was to 'lift up' their degraded race and much maligned brethren of colour to equality of achievement and partnership with the white man. To them, therefore, the ideology of imitation and voluntary assimilation was as natural as our present-day commitment to the O.A.U. and the creation of a New World Economic Order.

So, guided by this enlightenment, they set up social and literary clubs in Sekondi-Takoradi, Tarkwa, Cape Coast, Accra, Koforidua and Nsawam - where most of them were concentrated - and established a proliferation of indigenous-owned newspapers.[71] It was through these means that they sought to establish their equality and wrestle political power from the British in Colonial Ghana.

To all intents and purposes, their clubs were exclusive. Just like European clubs, participation in their activities was strictly by invitation and/or membership. Some of their programmes included "High Class Concerts" of pianoforte recitals of Beethoven, Mozart, Schuman with a sprinkling of Negro spirituals and compositions on "Jungle Impressions".[72] There were the frequent academic lectures. For example, the impressive lectures at the Osu Reformers Club on "Personality as an Ideal" by Mr. Obuadabang-Labi, Barrister at Law,[73] Archie Casely-Hayford's lecture at the Sekondi Optimism Club on "Financial Success through Creative Thought", "The Ultimate Cause of Energy" by Mr. Sam of the Agriculture Department and Dr. Ribeiro's on "Tuberculosis" - all on the same bill.[74] On Nee Kojo Ababio's premises in Accra, the Young Peoples Literary Club invited Mr. W.E. Ward of Achimota School to talk on "The Functions of a Historian" with Mr. E.O. Asafu-Adjaye, B.A., LL.B. in the chair.[75] And the Kumasi Eureka Club had its share of academic lectures.

Occasionally, of course, these clubs would entertain a dramatic cantata such as "Belshazzar's Feast" performed by the Choir of the English Church Mission at the Optimism Club, Sekondi,[76] or straight plays such as "An Accomplished Lover", a fine comedy in One Act, written by an European.[77] Such literary performances may be preceded by charming musical sketches and beautiful songs, but their main encouragement of good theatre laid in literary readings of Shakespearean plays, rather like the performance of chamber music in the private chambers of African Viennese Nobles. The Sekondi Optimists Literary Club Fixture for the month of May, 1932, as recorded in **The Times of West Africa** went like this:

May 2nd : 3rd Reading of Midsummer Nights Dream Act III Scene I and II by R.A. Ashitey.

May 23rd : 4th Reading, Midsummer Nights Dream by J.G. Anquandah.

June 13th : 5th Reading, Midsummer Nights Dream by E.M.M. Sowah.

June 30th : Summary of Midsummer Nights Dream by J. Okai Kotey.[78]

It appeared though that the main aim for setting up these exclusive social and literary clubs, quite apart from the trappings of theatre performances, piano recitals and public lectures, was to promote "Variety Entertainment" and ball-room dance. This was the time when the Accra Orchestra, the Nanshamap orchestra, the Sugar Babies, the Cape Coast Orchestra and the Police Band reigned supreme at all the various variety entertainments of these elite clubs. At these

'Balls' there were Fun Fairs, Fancy Dress Dances, Grand Gala Carnivals, and Grand Masked Balls.**The Times of West Africa** observed in April 1932 that "a wave of amusements seems to be surging through the country at the moment, and this wave first started to gather momentum from the metropolis and is now spreading out to the Province".[79] At these sessions, there was absolute concentration on conviviality, and an incredible obsession with foreign dance forms such as waltz, foxtrot, two-steps, Quadrilles and Bouton.

Newspapers and Literary Theatre

However, by far the most important instrument of the seriousness of the Merchant-Lawyer class towards the promotion of literary theatre in Colonial Ghana was through their newspapers. Quite a number of newspapers were started in the late twenties but as far as drama promotion was concerned only a few of the papers became the sole means of reaching out to the public in an attempt to share certain concerns about theatre development in the country. Consequently, although **The Vox Populi** for example, was started as early as 1927 and **The Gold Coast Leader** in 1928, nothing about drama was written in these years. Similarly, while the publication of **Gold Coast Independent** started in 1929, we do not get any information on drama until 1934 when it started a column entitled "stage, song and show". The most consistent sources of information on drama in colonial Ghana between 1929-36 were provided by **The Gold Coast Spectator**. Dr. J.B. Danquah's paper, **The Times of West Africa** took active interest in play productions from outside Accra and in particular, the Western Province of Cape Coast and Sekondi-Takoradi for a brief period from 1931-1932. In December 1938, **The Gold Coast Spectator**, a weekly paper, was replaced by **The Spectator Daily**. Unfortunately, the column created in **The Gold Coast Spectator** on music and drama never appeared in **The Spectator Daily**, although it continued to advertise plays. From 1939 to 1950 there was a gradual decline in drama productions. Available records from 1942-1950 indicate that between 1944 and 1947, there were only a few concert shows, operatta and cantatas by schools and choral societies.[80] However, from 1942 to 1950 performances on the stage were shifted to Discovian Jokers, Axim Trio, all of which were Concert Parties.[81] This period also coincided, as we shall see, with the time when a few plays were actually being written by Ghanaians for the stage. Nevertheless there was no doubt of the domination of the theatre by concert parties. This latter development constituted a complete departure from the naked imitation of Western plays of the thirties. **The Ghana Daily Express, Evening News**, and **Ashanti Pioneer** provided evidence of this in their reports of play productions in the mid-forties and early fifties, and, in addition they revealed the remarkable "new African temper" that had come to dominate the Ghanaian stage.

As we have noted, the papers of the thirties belonged to the Merchant-Lawyer class. Their newspapers distinctly expressed their ideas, temper and perspectives on drama as they understood it. The vigour and intensity with which they persecuted their ideas on drama in these newspapers have never been equalled by any other newspaper in Ghana's history till this day. **The Gold Coast Spectator** and **The Times of West Africa** were both outstanding in this. They advertised plays in advance, reviewed them (before and after), encouraged and criticised producers and actors, and sought to educate the Ghanaian public on acceptable standards of play writing, play production and audience reception and patronage. They allowed debates and encouraged the expression of different ideas on drama. However, underneath this apparent 'tolerance' in the expression of different views was the relentless, almost messianic, pursuit of inculcating in the Ghanaian public the virtues of western drama. It was assumed that the active involvement of the 'ordinary salariat' in drama productions at the time was being done in some kind of theatre wilderness and ignorance. They and their audiences had to be guided and 'protected' from propagating wrong ideas and false standards.

To this end, a special column was created in The Gold Coast Spectator for Music and the Stage. From 1929-1933, it was manned by a columnist, "Musing Light" (mark the name) who described himself as "out Music and Dramatic Critic". Then from 1934-38 another music and drama critic took over and styled himself "Impresario". Educative articles and reviews of plays by Musing Light give some indication as to the nature of the 'respectable standards' of drama that were desired for the country. There were numerous articles on "How to Stage a Play"[84] all stipulating standards and practices that were far from being African-centered. In advocating for a "Future Gold Coast Music and Drama" School in 1932, Musing Light asserted for example:

> *When we want to build a national music and drama of our own, we must study those of other countries. Whenever desirable, we may import distinguished foreign artists. Their presence and performances seem to change the aspect of music (and drama) somehow.*[85]

In that same article, Musing Light was equally concerned about Gentlemen and Ladies who "must have an ear for music - good classical music - and the best way to get acquainted with this class of music is by a gramaphone record".86 It was not by accident that an utterly grateful correspondent, Mr. E.W. Note Dowuona, a Stage Manager of the Reformers Club, Christiansborg, expressed his appreciation to Musing Light in the following terms:

> Musing Light. I feel I must need write to thank you for your instructional articles.
>
> From these articles I learnt the histories and principles of Music and Drama, and thus learning whets my appetite for more and better music and stage-craft. *I can hardly read your articles without travelling in my memory for miles and miles over hills and dales, land and sea to Greece and thence to Ancient Greece, the mother of music, and on my homeward journey branch Italy and Russia* (Italics mine). A better information than this we can hardly get, and readily, too!
>
> Indeed, you are playing your part as an ideal and selfless citizen, and you have my word of appreciation, and cheer and encouragement.[87]

The standards of Greece, England and Italy were even more blatantly evident in the review articles of Musing Light. In 1931, a performance of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" at the Palladium by Accra High School was described as an important contribution towards the growth of Drama in the country. The review was prefaced with an eulogy of Shakespeare as "a formidable-friend; at least, so he is to most of us, but when produced with Elizabethan air and grace (as the Accra High School did), he is not without his charm:

> *... The great trouble taken to provide Elizabethan costume, which did much in creating the appropriate atmosphere, is worth congratulating in the superlative degree. Each character of the play seemed to be the ghost of a sixteenth century person materialised in a Negro skin...*"[88]

Similarly the Empire Day School play of May 1932 entitled "Brittania and Her People" staged by the Presbyterian School did not go without its own lessons:

> *... You ought to see Nelson in his 19th Century Costume with epaulets and sword complete. It was a truly patriotic play, with which His Excellency was highly satisfied.*[89]

Then when the St. Nicholas' Grammar School, Cape Coast, advertised its intention to produce Sophocles "Antigone" in September 1933, Musing Light described the announcement as "a milestone in the advancement of culture":

> *... The Greeks were great players and were very fond of the drama. The school's production is important, because it gives us an opportunity - I believe for the first time - to see a Greek play.*
>
> *The production adds to the cultural advancement of the country, and sets up a milestone. It will go down to history, and my annual review will emphasise it.*[90]

In 1934 when 'Impressario' took over as the columnist on 'Music and the stage' he continued with the same attitude and the same exhortations to emulate and cherish western standards of drama as part of a new tradition of literary drama in colonial Ghana. In his time, Shakespearean plays, sacred cantatas and Gilbert and Sullivan's Operas continued to be fashionable and Impressario did not overlook the slightest opportunity to impress the appropriate lessons on his readers to upgrade their native tastes of the dramatic arts.

The Nationalist Minority

If Kobina Sekyi's 1915 **Blinkards** had almost been forgotten by the mid-thirties, Emphraim Amu served notice of a new era in 1934 with his collection of "Twenty-five Songs". It contained "Gold Coast folk-songs" arranged by him. This collection was hailed on account of "the African spirit which permeates the entire compositions".[91] Similarly, the tradition of Negroes being considered "excellent comedians, supreme singers and dancers, but bad actors" was attacked in a leading article: "Is the Negro an Actor?" written by G.W. Gabriel and reproduced in **The Gold Coast Spectator** of 1934. The point intended for the Colonial African audience of the time was not only the catalogue of Negro achievements on Broadway and other entertainment venues in the U.S., but the fact that "these Negroes act it from the heart, from the depths of their selves, and vastly well. It is they who turn it into such an effective, fiery, real piece".[92] This was followed in 1936 by Joe Wellington-Anderson's piece on the use of drama for the cultural upliftment of the African race. He referred to an earlier address at the Bishop's Girls School by Mrs. Selwyn-Clarke, who,

> *... spoke stimulatingly on the "African's own special habit" which we must be proud of, and avoid wasting energy in copying the European.*
>
> *This convinces me that plays about Africa, if properly written to have bearing on our habits and customs would be an interesting piece of work, for the average stay-at-home English man and for the cultural uplift of the race.*
>
> *It would also afford us the chance of keeping soul and body together, for after all African industry, African brains and African capital are the only means to conquer African difficulties.*[93]

This vision of theatre increasingly came to dominate the writings - academic, creative and journalistic - of the forties. Whatever was produced by Ghanaians expressed a decisive concern to spell things out in Ghanaian contexts. Although in the area of creative writing much that was written, mostly by whites, dealt with their experiences in Africa and their studies of things African, some Ghanaians themselves also moved away from play productions to written works of drama. Significantly, disparate though the authors of these works appeared to be, their plays dealt with local histories, customs and traditions of the Ghanaian people. J.B. Danquah's **Third Woman, and Nyankonsem**, a Twi play based on Ghanaian folklore, and Osei Tutu a play in both Twi and English on the legendary king who founded the Ashanti nation. There was in 1943 F.K. Fiawoo's **5th Landing Stage** and a powerful, anti-colonial novel, **Eighteen Pence**, the first by a Ghanaian, R.E. Obeng. Between 1944 and 1948, J.B. Blay produced four novels, which included **Emelia's Promise** and **After the Wedding**, works which

concentrated on the plight of the new generation of urban Ghanaians of the forties.[94] And, in 1949, Michael Dei-Anang chronicled the origins of how Cocoa came to Ghana in his historical play, **Cocoa Comes to Mampong.**

These African-centred efforts were complemented on the ground by the activities of the concert parties. This tradition, started by Master Yalley and established by the Two Bobs - Ishmael Johnson, Charles B. Hutton and J.B. Ansah - in the 30's had by the end of the forties given birth to quite a number of concert parties and ace guitarists among whom were Axim Trio, Kakaiku, Appiah Agyekum and Kwa Mensah.[95] These concert parties forged an alliance with Ghanaian nationalism and consolidated a theatre tradition that was principally Ghanaian in orientation. They brought into fruition a sharp departure from the slavish imitation of European theatre models first initiated by the amateur dramatic performances of the educated elite. To a large extent, this development also influenced in the fifties a related trend whereby even foreign plays were adapted to suit Ghanaian conditions and sensibility. According to the **Ghana Daily Express** of 1951 for example, Achimota School performed "The Tempest". The play had an African setting, the cast wore African dress, the background music included African drums. Similarly the cantata, "The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem" of Jesus also had an African touch: African dances, costume and drums. The following year, in 1952, "The Boy Kumasenu" a film produced by the Gold Coast Film Production Unit came out. It was about a boy who was tempted to leave his village for the city, falls into bad company, and through trials and tribulations, both from friends and the law, eventually reforms to a virtuous life.

The result of a combination of all these developments was the fact that in the course of the fifties, there was a visible, sharp reversal in attitudes towards European cultural models. This, of course, fitted in well with the strong upsurge of nationalism in the country. The newspapers and journals of the period were all full of political battles, debates, discussions and criticisms and there was next to nothing on the coverage of theatrical and creative activities. One got the impression that nobody had time for such matters when there were pressing political issues to be dealt with. This was exactly what the Ministry of Education Committee on a National Theatre Movement for Independent Ghana meant when it stated in its Report in 1955 that in its opinion the people of the Gold Coast were too engrossed in other things to realise the threat to their traditional culture.

Conclusion

It is clear from the survey we have so far attempted that the colonial government had a conscious policy towards the promotion of literary drama in colonial Ghana. Although this policy was not explicitly stated in clear terms, it was nevertheless formulated through a network of formal and informal institutions which largely embraced what appeared to be "private initiatives" of Europeans and Africans. People working through formal institutions - educational, religious and political - used the prestige of their positions to encourage, promote and in most cases actively assist in the development of literary drama. The active involvement of the colonial government itself, through a system of direct and indirect patronage of the arts, helped to consolidate this process. This was further reinforced by the African educated elite who were placed in a psychological situation where their allegiance and total commitment to western forms of literary theatre became a matter of ideological necessity. The process whereby the most influential sections of the African elite, with wealth and in control of organs of active propaganda, namely, newspapers, social and literary clubs, voluntarily, and without coercion, surrendered their sensibility and allegiance to an alien tradition of drama and then proceeded to impose it on the rest of the country is the most devastating legacy bequeathed to an African-centred theatre in Ghana. The insensitivity and vigour of all these processes put together

in one brief decade of colonial domination also constitute a legacy that the National Theatre Movement took for granted. The brevity of the time lapse was misleading, but even more so were its sustained and carefully planned strategies of implementation and 'indoctrination'. During the Second World War, one thing that Hitler Germany admired of the British was the latter's ability to organise and mobilise. In the colonial situation in Ghana, the British Colonial Government proved this truism over and over again in its **organised** policy of cultural dissemination.

So severe was this short process of indoctrination and so effective were its strategies that although the leaders of the National Theatre Movement correctly diagnosed the situation as a psycho-ideological one, they could neither negate its effects on the citizen nor sufficiently neutralise its achievements. Merely creating new and more institutions of culture, including a corps of elite writers and artists with their own specialised journals and magazines (that essentially entered into dialogue with an outside audience) without taking effective steps to integrate them into the educational system from primary school to the university level was one of the fundamental mistakes of the New Theatre Movement in Ghana. Besides, one must not lose sight of the fact that some of the leaders of the Movement such as Efua Sutherland and Joe de Graft were themselves products of such colonial literary tradition, and in some of their works - Sutherland's **Edufa** (1962) and De Graft's **Sons and Daughters** (1964), **Mambo** (1978) - they reveal a 'psychic' ambivalence towards African traditions. Of all Ghanaian playwrights, perhaps Joe de Graft was the most guilty of this phenomenon throughout his drama career.[96]

Charles Angmor has contended that Ghanaian Playwrights such as Kobina Sekyi, J.B. Danquah and F.K. Fiawoo who wrote between 1915-1940 conceived their plays "more out of the yearning for a literature than out of a concern for genuine theatre".[97] Superficially true as this may sound, these writers were living witnesses to the vigorous colonial attempts to promote theatre and they were quite clear in their minds about the need to contribute to a negation of its psychological effects. Hence, it is their commitment to African traditions and perspectives which makes them fathers of a new literary theatre in Ghana. It is their pioneering attitude rather than their achievements in the theatre which foreshadowed the spirit of the New Theatre Movement in post-colonial Ghana. Without giving respectability to this spirit in their plays - whether they were meant to be read or produced - the clamour for cultural nationalism (and therefore for a New Theatre Movement with nationalist orientations) could not have materialised.

For a true assessment and judgement of the period we have just reviewed and its lasting legacies as far as African theatre is concerned, I have decided to leave the last word to Ime Ikiddeh, who in 1975, wrote:

> *... By literary tradition, we take the benefit of Shakespeare for granted, yet in several ways Shakespeare has come to constitute a real danger both to students and writers of drama in this part of the world... The danger of Shakespeare in Africa is part of a larger disease that has affected our cultural universe since our contact with West. Its roots lie in colonial education and propaganda, and its manifestation is the distortion of our native sensibilities and values including our very image of ourselves. Given the historical circumstances, this distortion was inevitable, but it was not inevitable that the damage sustained in our confrontation with Europe would be so deep and so overwhelming that we would neither recover from it nor be conscious enough of the need for recovery.*[98]

Postcript

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24. See J.W. de Graft Johnson: **Towards Nationhood in West Africa** (London, 1928) p.127 and Chapter XV-XVIII; also J.E. Casely-Hayford's: **Gold Coast Native Institutions** (London, 1903) p.39 and p.253-254.
25. S.K.B. Asante: **Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941** (London: Longman, 1977) p.17.
26. F.L. Bartels, **Roots of Ghana Methodism**, p.199.
27. S.K.B. Asante, **Pan-African Protest**. p.27.
28. Robert K.A. Gardiner, "The Role of Educated Persons in Ghana Society" in **Proceedings of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences** Vol.VIII, 1970, p.7.
29. C.K. Graham, **History of Education in Ghana**, p.182.
30. Philip Foster, **Education and Social Change in Ghana**, p.167.
31. C.K. Graham, p. 156-157.
32. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, December 31st 1932, p. 8033.
33. The Gold Coast Spectator, June 30th 1934.
34. This play was first advertised in **The Gold Coast Independent** issue of 19th May 1935 and reviewed in **The Gold Coast Spectator**, June 2nd 1935.
35. F.L. Bartels, **Roots of Ghana Methodism**, p.197.
36. F.L. Bartels, p.197.
37. F.L. Bartels, p.196.
38. "Report of the Committee Appointed in 1938 by the Governor of the Gold Coast Colony to Inspect the Prince of Wales' College, Achimota: (Accra: Government Printer, 1939) quoted in Francis Agbodeka: **Achimota in the National Setting - A Unique Educational Experiment in West Africa** (Accra: Afram Publications [Ghana Limited] 1977) p.86.
39. K.E. Agovi, "Joe de Graft, 1924-1978" forthcoming in **African and Caribbean Volume of the Dictionary of Literary Biography** Eds: Bernth Lindfors and Reinhard Sanders.
40. Bernth Lindfors, "Interview with Joe de Graft" in **Mazungumzo** No.41, 1980, p.13-28.
41. **Achimota Review**, 1927 - 1937, p.67.
42. Achimota Review, 1927 - 1937, p.67.

43. See **The University College of the Gold Coast 1948-1952: Report by the Principal** (Edingburgh: Thomas Nelson, 1953) p.12 and **The University College of the Gold Cost: Annual Report by the Principal**, 1952-53 (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson) P.10.
44. This was certainly the case in Tarkwa, Aboso, Nsuta and Bankyim Mines in the early fifties where the author grew up. Efua Sutherland mentions the interesting story of how The Two Bobs got their other name "CAROLINA GIRL" at the "all-European Club at Abosso Mines". See Efua Sutherland's **The Story of Bob Jonson** p.15.
45. Advert in **The Times of West Africa**, April 26th 1932, p.2.
46. **The Times of West Africa**, June 10, 1932, p.1.
47. **The Times of West Africa**, March 21-22, 1932, p.1.
48. **The Times of West Africa**, June 10, 1932, p.1.
49. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, 3rd October 1931 and **Vox Populi**, 3rd October 1931.
50. **The Gold Coast Spectaror**, October 3rd 1931.
51. **The Times of West Africa**, February 4th, 1932 p.8.
52. F. Agbodeka, **Sir Gordon Guggisberg's Contribution**. p.55.
53. S.K.B. Asante, **Pan-African Protest**. p.19.
54. S.K.B. Asante, p.20.
55. Kwa O. Hagan, "The Literary and Social Clubs of the Past: Their Role in National Awakening in Ghana" in **Okyeame** Vol.4, No.2, June 1969 p.81-82.
56. This is the powerful impression one gets in Bennibengor Blay's fiction of the period, principally **Coconut Boy** (Tema: West African Publications Company, 1970) and **Emelias Promise**, 1944 and **After the Wedding**, 1945. I attempt an analysis of this generational phenomenon in my article, "A Dual Sensibility: The Short Story in Ghana, 1944-80" in **Literature and Black Aesthetics: Calabar Studies in African Literature** No.5 (Ibadan: Heineman, 1990) pp.247-271.
57. T.A. Osae: **The GNAT: 50 Years of Action** (Accra: Ghana National Association of Teachers, 1981) p.9-11.
58. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, June 11th 1932 in a feature on "A Short Sketch of the Producer".
59. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, June 11th 1932.
60. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, June 25th 1932.
61. Information gathered from the 1930 issues of **The Gold Coast Spectator**.
62. Information from 1931 issues of both **Vox Populi** and **The Gold Coast Spectator**.
63. Information from 1932 issues of **The Times of West Africa** and the **The Gold Coast Spectaror**.
64. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, January 13th, 1934.
65. In 1934, eighteen play productions were recorded by **The Gold Coast Spectator** of that year.
66. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, February 9th, 1935.
67. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, December 12th 1931.
68. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, July 23rd 1932, p.991.
69. This view was generally reflected in reviews which appeared in certain issues of **The Gold Coast Spectator** for 1933.
70. See Ebun Clark, **Hubert Ogunde**, 1980 and J.A. Adedeji's two articles on "The Church and the Emergence of the Nigerian Theatre", 1974 already referred to.
71. For detailed analysis see K.A.B. Jones-Quartey: **History, Politics and Early Press in Ghana: The Fictions and the Facts** (Accra: Afram Publications Ltd., 1975).

72. **The Times of West Africa**, April 30, 1932.
73. Reprinted in **The Times of West Africa**, June 10, 1932, p.1.
74. **The Times of West Africa**, March 21-22nd, 1932, p.1.
75. **The Times of West Africa**, March 29th-30th 1932, p.2.
76. Reported in **The Times of West Africa**, October 28th, 1932, p.4.
77. This play was staged at the Bishop's School by permission of Felix MacClennon Limited, London, who were the owners of the copyright. Reviewed in **The Times of West Africa**, October 28th, 1932, p.2.
78. **The Times of West Africa** advert. of April 26th, 1932, p.1.
79. **The Times of West Africa**, April 26th 1932, p.1.
80. Information gathered from **The African Morning Post** (1942), **The Gold Coast Observer** (1944, 1947, 1949); **The Daily Echo** (1947-8); and **The African National Times** (1950).
81. See Efua Sutherland, **The Story of Bob Johnson**, p.19-25.
82. **The Gold Coast Spectaror**, November 7th, 1931.
83. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, August 27th, 1932 p.2057.
84. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, July 23rd, 1932 p.991.
85. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, p.991.
86. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, p.991.
87. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, October 9, 1932.
88. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, December 12, 1931, p.2727.
89. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, May 28, 1932, p.715.
90. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, August 19, 1933, p.1123.
91. Reviewed by Impresario in **The Gold Coast Spectaror**, January 13, 1934.
92. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, June 16, 1934.
93. **The Gold Coast Spectator**, April 9, 1936, p.629.
94. K.E. Agovi, "Dual Sensibility: The Short Story in Ghana, 1944-80" in **Literature and Black Aesthetics: Calabar studies in African Literature** No.5 (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd., 1990). p.247-271.
95. Efua Sutherland, **The Story of Bob Johnson** p.25.
96. K.E. Agovi, "Joe de Graft".
97. Charles Angmor, "Drama in Ghana" in **Theatre in Africa**. p.59.
98. Ime Ikiddeh, "The Tragic Influence of Shakespeare and the Greeks", a Conference paper prepared in University of Ife, Nigeria in March 1975, 15pp.

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