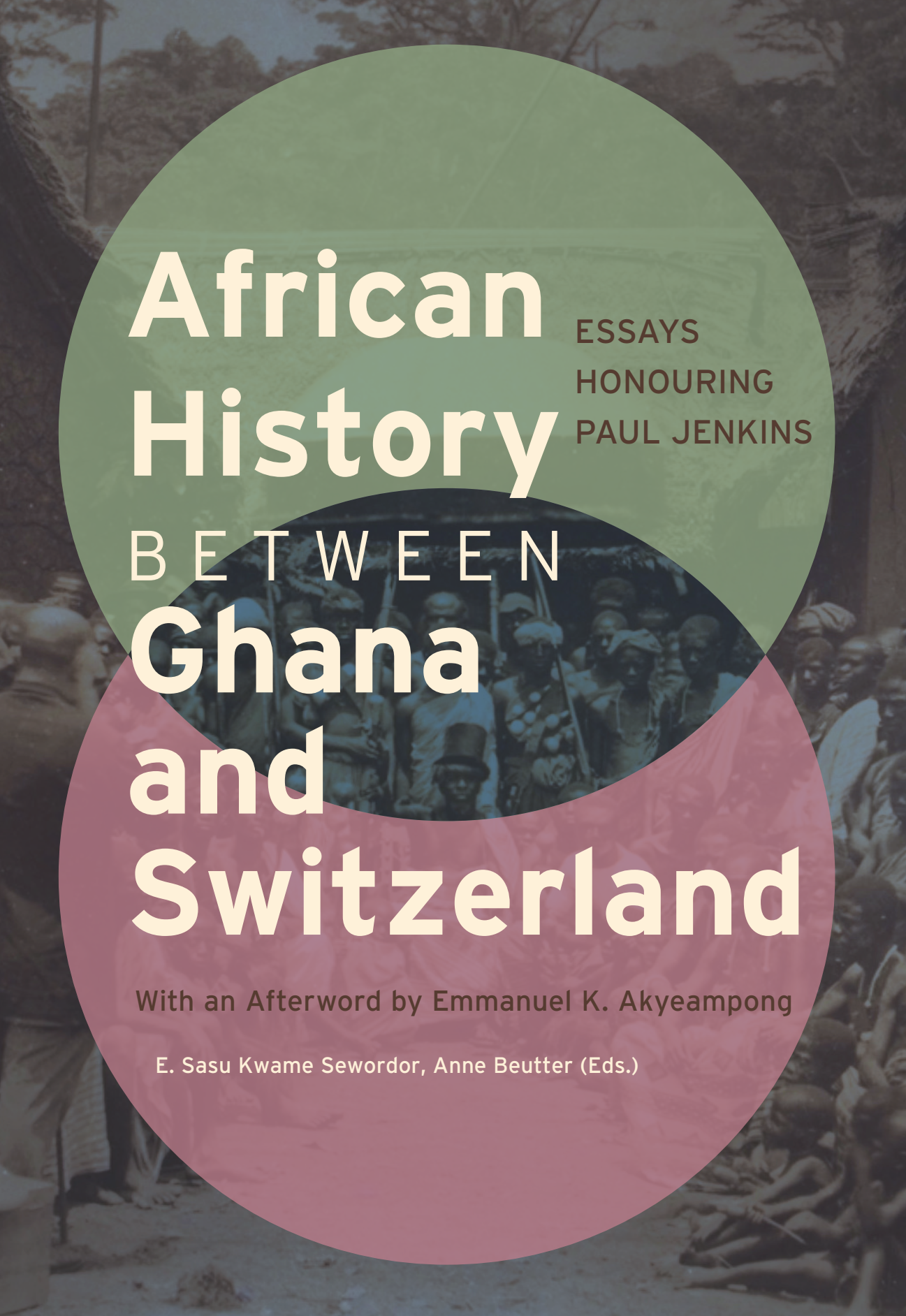

African History BETWEEN Ghana and Switzerland

ESSAYS HONOURING PAUL JENKINS

With an Afterword by Emmanuel K. Akyeampong

E. Sasu Kwame Sewordor, Anne Beutter (Eds.)

African History between Ghana and Switzerland

The open access publication of this book has been published with the support of the Centre for African Studies of the University of Basel, the Basel Mission, and the Basel Mission Archives/Mission 21.

University of Basel

Centre for African Studies

2024

Published by

Basler Afrika Bibliographien

Namibia Resource Centre & Southern Africa Library

Klosterberg 23

PO Box

4010 Basel

Switzerland

www.baslerafrika.ch

CARL SCHLETTWEIN STIFTUNG

The Basler Afrika Bibliographien is part of the Carl Schlettwein Foundation

Cover design: Candice Turvey

ISBN 978-3-906927-64-0

eISBN 978-3-906927-65-7

https://doi.org/10.53202/STEB1247

E. Sasu Kwame Sewordor & Anne Beutter (Eds.)

African History between Ghana and Switzerland

Essays Honouring Paul Jenkins

Basler Afrika Bibliographien 2024

Contents

Part III: Visualising Africa's Past Across Continents

Part IV: The Archive and Historical Knowledge Production About Africa

A Topical Guide to the Contributions

Perspective Beyond "Here" and "There"

Local and/or Marginalised Actors

Historiographical Blind-Spots and Construction Sites

Everyday- and Local History

Exploring Alternative Types of Sources

Accessibility of Sources

Abbreviations

ACIA	Carl Christian Reindorf Archives. Johannes Zimmermann Library at Akrofi-Christaller Institute, Akropong
ACS	American Colonization Society
BM	Basel Mission
BMA	Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21)
ELTV	Eternal Love Television
LBS	Liberia Broadcasting System
LRCN	Liberian Rural Communication Network
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
PANAFEST	Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PRAAD	Public Records and Archives Administration Department
WACA	West African Court of Appeal

Foreword: A Biographical Exploration

Jennifer Jenkins

I have been asked to contribute a personal foreword to this collection of essays, describing my husband's "academic pathway" from England to Ghana and then to Switzerland. It has been a difficult task. It is not easy to write about somebody with whom one's own life has been shared for more than 60 years. And the task was made much harder by the fact that the "Festschrift" was to be a surprise for Paul, and must be kept secret! Consequently, I have not been able to ask him questions about his life and his ideas or check details. And I am very concerned about the fact that though I knew many of Paul's friends and colleagues, I cannot possibly mention all those who were important to him or to both of us and enriched our lives and those of our children. Many of them will no doubt be mentioned later in this volume, but there will inevitably be many gaps. I will only have space to mention a few names. I can only apologise for this in advance and say that we have not forgotten them.

Paul was born in Sunderland in northern England in 1938. Later, his family moved to a seaside town in Devon, where his father was the minister of the local Baptist church. In the English educational system at that time, we had to choose three subjects in which to specialise. This decision—made when we were only about 16—already determined our path through higher education, and often our future careers. Paul's subjects included history, and he successfully competed for a place in Cambridge and was awarded a scholarship by Christ's College, which was a considerable achievement for a pupil of a small local school. He looked forward to university life—but, as a member of the last generation who were called to do "National Service" he first had to spend nearly two years "serving her Majesty". For some time, he was posted to a British base in Germany. At the time, Paul saw his army service as a largely frustrating interlude—he could not foresee how important it would be for his future as a historian.

In the early 1960s, I was studying biochemistry at Cambridge. Paul and I met in a society of Baptist students, and we were married in 1963. One of the many interests and ambitions that we shared was to spend some time working in the global South. This was a surprisingly common aim in our generation. In our circle of friends, many hoped to work in a "developing country", as many places in the South were described at that time. I can only speculate about the reasons for this. We did not think it would be hard to find jobs in Britain—but there was an attraction in the possibility of having an interesting job with, perhaps, more freedom of action and responsibility than we would have in a junior position at home. And

there were other, perhaps more important reasons. One was an element of "Wanderlust". We had already travelled quite widely as students, but mainly in Europe. Now we wanted to go to more distant places. We hoped to do a useful job—but above all, to learn more about the world. Our awareness of the inequality between rich and poor countries inspired our desire to contribute to the efforts being made to redress the balance. It was a period when many people believed in the "trickle-down effect"—the idea that economic development could result from educating leaders, whose skills would then be transmitted to a wider society.

Many of the countries where we hoped to work were one-time colonies. In view of the current discussions about "colonialism", it is perhaps interesting to look at how we perceived it in the period in which we were growing up. The members of our generation lived through a rather exceptional 20 years, which fewer and fewer people can remember personally. The period began with the Second World War—but that did not impinge very much on Paul's or my daily lives; none of our relatives were injured, and we did not live in places that were heavily bombed in Britain. Things like air-raid shelters, darkened streets, gas masks, and ration books were normal. The end of the war brought a return to a way of life we had only heard about; streetlamps were lit again—automatically, which impressed us! We could go into a shop and buy a bar of chocolate without a ration book, and the public libraries reopened.

We were children of the Welfare State, with a new National Health Service, free schools, and State scholarships to provide financial support for university education. We were also children of the British Empire. It had already become a Commonwealth of Nations, but the word "Empire" was still familiar—for example, on many coins that were still in circulation the monarchs were described as Emperor or Empress of India (abbreviated to "Ind. Imp."). In my primary school, we once celebrated something called "Empire Day"—but the memory that remains with me was that the speaker showed us pictures of fields full of pineapples instead of corn. Looking back, I think his aim was not to give us patriotic messages, but to broaden our minds and show us that the wider world was an exciting and interesting place. We did learn that many countries had historical connections with Britain, but I cannot remember much discussion about what colonialism meant. My secondary school was linked to an organisation called the "Council for Education in World Citizenship", and we learned about the UN, and how very important it was that it should survive. We were, of course, aware that the situation in the Commonwealth was changing; by the time we finished secondary school in the late 1950s, Ghana had become an independent nation and many other countries were about to follow. The general impression we were given was that this handing-over was positive and appropriate.

To return to our own story; when Paul and I graduated, we had to look for a job—or rather, two jobs in the same place, which made the search more complicated. The first place that looked hopeful was the expanding University of Ghana in Legon, where there was an opportunity for Paul in the Extramural Department, and for me in the newly established Department of Biochemistry. We knew very little about Ghana, except that it was the first West African country to have achieved independence. We read a book about life in Accra, with its colourful market, and it all looked very exciting. We set off with high hopes for an interesting future—and we were not disappointed!

We had to start work very soon. My job was relatively straightforward. Teaching science is much the same everywhere, and the students came from similar schools to the ones I knew. The University of Ghana was part of the system that ensured comparable standards in both new and long-established universities in Britain and the Commonwealth, by including external examiners for all important examinations, so we knew what level we should aim to reach. Paul, on the other hand, was rather startled to discover when he met the head of his department that instead of the external teaching he had expected to do, he was given the job of setting up an external degree centre, to offer courses to "mature students" who had a lot of experience, and were well-established in their professions, but had not had a chance to obtain the qualifications for university entrance. Paul was given to understand that President Nkrumah had a personal interest in the University providing this opportunity. He was told, "We have an office, and we have a file". It was a tough assignment to be carried out in a hurry, but Paul managed—though not without a certain amount of polite but persistent argument with the Ghanaian members of the University administration, who were convinced that the academic standards they had fought to maintain would be undermined by letting in students without the right papers—even if those students had quite senior jobs! He had to devise a way of finding out whether candidates would have a chance of succeeding in a university course; he asked them to write an essay, and to read and comment on a complex piece of prose. He also had to find members of the University staff who were willing to teach evening classes at the "External Degree Centre" in town.

The work was strenuous, but Paul loved having an office in the middle of Accra, even though the building it was in caused him a certain amount of worry, because it had a staircase that he considered really dangerous. It was in a very lively spot—close to the Makola market, the Presbyterian Church head office, and a mosque. The External Degree courses got off to a good start, and a short search on the Internet recently showed me that there is now a range of "distance learning" programmes, supported by digital systems we never dreamed of!

Once the External Degree Centre was functioning, Paul had the opportunity to move into the Department of History under Professor Albert Adu Boahen—who he always describes as the best boss he ever had! African history was taught by the African staff; a Dutch colleague taught the history of Europe, and Paul was asked to teach a course on the history of the USA and Russia. A course comparing the two countries that then dominated the world was an interesting idea—and even more so because it was said to have come from President Nkrumah himself. Nkrumah was forging a lot of links with Communist countries. Russia was working hard to gain influence—for example by offering scholarships to study popular subjects like medicine. There were some people from Eastern Europe on the University's staff. The hope was presumably that they would help to propagate socialist political ideas—but the plan was not entirely successful, because many of the people who came were not interested in Communist politics, but were simply pleased to be permitted to travel outside the borders of their own countries.

We enjoyed living in the international community in Legon and made a lot of friends. We got to know central Accra, and later, Paul joined an organisation founded by the Student Christian Movement called "Operation Help Nima" and was introduced to what was then an area of "informal housing". Our family grew, with two daughters, who were born in the hospital at Korle Bu. During the vacations, we were able to explore the country, and we even travelled to Togo and Benin. And we learned a lot about things we had not encountered before, like African arts and crafts, including music.

The background to our lives did, of course, include the political situation in Ghana. As foreigners, we did not feel entitled to be anything but observers on the sidelines. We avoided discussing politics, but we read the newspapers and were not unaware of the situation outside our "ivory tower". The University was a centre of opposition, and we very soon realised that for many of our Ghanaian colleagues, the maintenance of academic freedom was a burning issue—and in the country, in general, there was a lot of discontent about the way President Nkrumah was moving towards a one-party state, based on "African Socialism". Dissent was likely to result in being sent to "Preventive Detention" or, for foreigners, being deported from the country.

The nine years we lived in Ghana saw many political changes. We knew there was discontent with the government—but we were nevertheless startled when we turned on the radio, in February 1966, and heard there had been a coup staged by army and police men, who had taken over. Overall, we had the impression that people were pleased with the new situation and enjoyed being able to talk freely about politics. It was a very peaceful coup; we had friends who went out early to go shopping. They found it was unusually easy to find a parking space in the city—but only discovered why when they got back to Legon and were

greeted with "Didn't you know there's been a coup?". This is not the place to discuss in detail the other changes that happened before we left Ghana; an attempted military coup, Busia's elected government, and another military coup. These events did not affect daily life too much—partly because the staff of the Civil Service quietly went on working to keep things functioning. The worsening economic situation, with inflation and shortages in the markets and shops, affected most people much more.

Once Paul had settled down in the Department of History, he wanted to embark on a research project. He had been interested in Church history since his student days—and news about modern mission work in partnership with African churches was part of our background as practising Christians. By the 1960s, around half the people of Ghana described themselves as Christians, and there were large churches that had been thriving under local leadership for more than a century, having started with missionary activity in the 1820s. Paul was interested in talking to people in small churches outside the big cities, especially older people who could remember the foundation of their local churches, and he came to realise that much of the spread of the gospel had happened largely informally, from congregation to congregation (see **Afari** and **Kwakye** in this volume). He has happy memories of these visits to rural areas, but time was limited, since the work of teaching, advising, and examining students was always the first priority.

One of the missionary societies that had been very active in Ghana was the Basel Mission (now called Mission 21), which started work in Ghana in 1828, and founded a church that eventually became the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG). The Mission's activities extended far beyond Christian evangelism and establishing churches. Mission workers established schools and trained young men and women in technical and handwork skills. Mission trading posts supported farmers by buying palm oil at a fair price, and in return selling tools and other useful commodities (but no alcohol!). The development of cocoa farming must partly be attributed to the Mission's influence. And all this activity was exhaustively documented in the Mission archive in Basel. The reports and correspondence about Ghana went back as far as the 1820s and were very detailed because the Mission Board ruled with a firm hand and liked to know exactly what their employees were doing, and why. This required information about life in the places where their employees worked, often in remote areas. Expatriate and local staff in responsible positions, like pastors, had to send quarterly reports.

However, this valuable source for Ghana's history was only accessible to people who could read German. Hearing his colleagues talking about the archive in Basel, Paul made the surprising discovery that his frustrating period in the British Army could enable him to contribute to academic work on history. He had learned some German—and his unexciting office job had involved reading forms filled in by local people who used an old form of Ger-

man handwriting called "Sütterlin Schrift"—something that modern scholars must learn to read. At this time, Paul was about to have a sabbatical year (1969–70), and he decided to spend part of it in Basel, investigating the archive and making summary translations into English that would make the information in the Mission archive more widely available to other historians. He contacted the Basel Mission and was warmly invited to come to Switzerland, and even to bring his family. The collection of summaries he produced during this sabbatical leave is still available and in use—as some chapters in this volume demonstrate.

The visit to Basel did not only produce a collection of summaries for historians of Ghana; it proved to be a major turning point in our lives. We had always planned to leave Legon when there were Ghanaians who had finished their further studies and were ready to take over our work. We had assumed that our next step would be to find jobs in Britain, but to our surprise, we found ourselves moving to Switzerland! During our sabbatical, Paul learned that the Mission would like to appoint a professional historian as archivist. The job seemed to be tailor-made for him, and so we decided to spend a few years in Basel. The original contract was for two years but stretched into half a century—during which we have become citizens of Switzerland, where we expect to stay for the rest of our lives.

When we arrived in Basel in 1972, the Mission "compound" provided accommodation for many members of the Mission staff. We were very fortunate to live there and be part of a community of people with a similar approach to life, many of whom had also spent time working in the South. We made many friends, who helped us all to find our feet in Switzerland, and patiently spoke to us in "high German" while we were struggling with the language. As a family, we not only had to learn German, but also to cope with a new school system and all the details of life in a new country. But we also learned about the positive sides of living in Basel, where the year is punctuated by interesting events like the "Herbstmesse" and, of course, "Fasnacht"—and the excellent public transport system offers freedom to move around and to explore the countryside. My job was first of all to look after the home and the family, which soon included our third daughter, born in Basel. However, I always hoped to return to professional work, and Paul encouraged me to find a part-time job so that I would not lose touch with science. Combining a job with home and family was complicated, and in those days rather unusual. At first, working outside the home was not profitable, as we had to pay for childcare—but the effort was worthwhile for me, especially as it fairly soon led me into the Swiss Tropical Institute (now Swiss TPH). I began with laboratory work, but like many English-speaking scientists, I moved more and more into scientific editing. This included working with students and colleagues to try and help them not only to write correct English but to express themselves clearly and convincingly, which was in some ways a welcome return to teaching. I even had opportunities to travel to several countries in Africa to conduct

writing workshops. Another job was editing the TPH's biennial report, which involved contact with colleagues and students who were working on a wide range of problems connected with tropical diseases, and with health services in countries with limited resources.

Paul, of course, had to start work in the archive and library as soon as he arrived. They were both well organised, the library needed to be modernised and made more relevant to current needs. They had been cared for by two elderly gentlemen who had connections with the Mission; Hans Huppenbauer, a retired pastor and ex-missionary, and Kurt Ninck, a relative of the Africa Secretary. They were happy to hand over the work to somebody younger.

Paul always believed in having an open and welcoming archive, and it soon became a very busy place. Students came to work on projects ranging from school tasks to doctoral dissertations. Established scholars came to do research in a wide variety of subjects, including history, anthropology, sociology, and theology. And there were other interested visitors. There were descendants of families connected with the Mission, who wanted to find out, "What exactly was great-grandpa doing in Ghana?" There were journalists and film producers who wanted background material. There were also visitors from overseas, including people from the Mission's partner churches, looking for records of their institutional history—and for facts that could help in disputes about matters like land ownership.

Besides helping visitors, Paul and his colleagues worked on improving the archive. One task was to prepare indexes of the holdings from particular countries. Specialists in Kannada and Chinese were invited to make catalogues of books in those languages, that had been produced by mission printers or translators in India and China. The volunteers included a lady in her 90s who had worked in Hong Kong, whose family said that working in Chinese again gave her a new lease of life! During Paul's time as archivist, more staff members were appointed, and the archive also gained an underground storage space, where the contents should be safe from hazards like fire and flood, which were always a potential risk in the old wood-framed Mission House building. As time went on, the archive grew and grew. There were documents from the Mission House, big collections from organisations, and a steady supply of small acquisitions, like letters and photographs that families had found when they tidied attics and cellars—things they did not want to keep, but felt they should not throw away. The main archive office was gradually silted up with piles and piles of paper. Indeed, some staff members and visitors might remember that Paul eventually moved his actual working place to a large round table in the corridor. But despite the apparent disorder, he had a remarkable ability to lay his hands rapidly on what was needed.

Some new items came to light in the corners of the Mission House itself. A very important and exciting discovery was that of a cupboard in the Mission House that contained old photographs and photograph albums. The old images intended for the Mission's publicity

work had ceased to be relevant, and had been stored away, together with a lot of photograph albums. The pictures were an exciting resource, and since they had hardly ever been exposed to daylight, they were in excellent condition. However, they needed specialised care to preserve them and make them available, and this needed money which could clearly not come from the donations for ordinary mission work. Paul succeeded in raising a fund for the "Photo Project" from various foundations, which paid for a new professional member of the archive staff, Barbara Frey-Näf. First, safety copies of the pictures were made on a special durable film. The next step was to make several thousand pictures publicly accessible. At that time computers were coming into general use, and there was a lot of interest in the use of digital devices to make pictures available—for example, for students of medicine. Various data carriers were used—but eventually, the Internet facilitated an online depository that enabled digital access to the picture collection stored in the Mission House. It has been expanded, for example with a large number of old maps, and has been included in a very comprehensive archive supported by the University of Los Angeles.

The research work on Africa that Paul published, collaborated in, or advised about, will be described later in this volume. But the work done in the archive was not only concerned with Africa, but also the many other places where the Basel Mission worked; including India, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and recently Latin America. Some of the earliest pastors trained in Basel went to German settlements in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus. There were also more general topics, like the sociology of organisations, and attitudes to women and their role in mission work, including girls' education. Not all the publications that came from the archive were aimed at an academic audience or written by academics. Paul was always prepared to encourage anybody who had a serious interest in a particular topic to work on it. There were several family histories, and a member of the archive staff, Waltraud Haas, wrote a pioneering book on the history of women working for the Basel Mission. A substantial body of letters from one of the printers of the Basel Mission Press in India, who produced a book called "Nature's Self-Printing", was transcribed by Dora Hörner, a retired member of the archive staff, who shared the printer's interest in botany.

The archive also provides a source for looking at the culture from which the missionaries came. The 19th-century pietist background from which the Basel missionaries came can seem very foreign to modern Europeans, even those active in the church. There is a tendency to forget in discussions of colonialism among missionaries that when they insisted on punctuality, obedience, and discipline among workers and schoolchildren, and punished those who failed to comply, they were behaving as they would have done at home in Europe. They were also convinced of their calling to reach a definite clear-cut gospel. In the 20th century, there were big changes. The Basel Mission as we knew it under the presidency of

Jacques Rossel, an enthusiastic supporter of ecumenism, had become an international network of churches and organisations in many countries in the North and South. Fewer and fewer Europeans were being sent overseas; they were called "Fraternal Workers" and were members of the staff of local churches and organisations.

An important feature of the Basel Mission in the past was that its workers, and also the Board members and senior staff in Basel, came from the very different political contexts of Switzerland and south Germany. Paul was very interested in what was happening in the Basel Mission in the period before and during the Second World War, and he actually embarked on a dissertation on the subject—but this came to a rather sudden halt when the University of Basel decided it was high time to provide courses on pre-colonial African history—and offered the archivist of the Basel Mission a part-time lectureship, with an arrangement that his University salary would be used by the Mission to finance an archive assistant to give him time to work on the teaching job. Paul was very excited about this opportunity. He divided his teaching into a lecture course and a workshop in the Basel Mission Archives, in which the students learned how to use the archive and read the old handwriting. Paul always tried to have a resource person who could broaden the experience; sometimes an African scholar, or an anthropologist. And the students were often surprised to find that in the headquarters of a missionary society they met a lot of interesting and open-minded people (as described in **Arlt**'s chapter in this volume). The reaction to the appearance of African history in the University timetable was positive; for the first lecture so many students came that Paul had to ask for a larger lecture room. The interest remained, and there is now the Centre for African Studies and a chair of African history.

The decision to add African history to the University curriculum can perhaps be seen as part of a general increase in interest in "colonialism". But when I look back at the attitude to colonialism when we first came to Switzerland—as the editors of this publication have requested—I do not remember being very much aware of any discourse on the subject at the time when we arrived in the early 1970s. I felt that if people considered the question at all, it was to feel relieved that they did not need to feel guilty about having had a colonial past. One cannot generalise about Swiss politics, but it became clear to us fairly soon that many people were preoccupied with their independence, and definitely did not want to be too much involved with countries beyond their own borders. Starting with the "Schwarzenbach Initiative" in 1970, a series of initiatives attempted to limit the number of immigrants. These were not always successful, because many people were aware that Switzerland's growing prosperity depended on the presence of foreign workers—but the results were often close. And it was not until 2002 that Switzerland became the 190th member of the United Nations—and it was a close vote, with a majority just under 55%.

When we first came to Switzerland, we found the rather isolationist politics quite a surprise. Our experience in Basel was quite different. It was a city where many people were interested in the world outside their own borders—and where we felt we were welcome. As far as I can remember, among the people we knew, the specific word "colonialism" was not much used—but there were many who had begun to look at their history more critically, and there was the same perception as in Britain that we Europeans owed a lot of our prosperity to the exploitation of people in poorer countries. There was a similar interest in trying to redress the balance—and a realisation that "aid" and development programmes from outside were not enough. Today, many NGOs use some of their resources for campaigning and spreading information in Switzerland. When we arrived in the early 1970s there were discussions about whether charitable organisations had a right to do this. When we arrived in Basel, we were impressed by a poster printed by the organisation "Brot für Alle", showing a man with a gun fighting in the Nigerian Civil War in Biafra—with the caption, "We cannot finance both life and death". The message was part of a campaign to prevent the sale of arms from Switzerland, and it resulted in a court case—which the NGO won.

The awareness of the unjust distribution of the world's resources—and the knowledge that Swiss banks and businesses, and our own lifestyle, played a role in causing and perpetuating inequality led to various activities in Switzerland. There was a very active anti-apartheid movement, whose members were involved in supporting victims of apartheid—and organised a boycott of Outspan oranges and Granny Smith apples, which arrived when the European oranges and apples were out of season. Another event around the same time was the development of the Fair Trade movement, importing and selling foodstuffs and handicraft products for which the producers had been paid an adequate wage. Several "World Shops", mainly run by volunteers, provided a market and helped to disseminate information about cultures in different countries in the South.

In Switzerland, the Basel Mission played a pioneering role in the origins of the Fair Trade movement, and Paul and I were involved as volunteers from an early stage. The main emphasis was on handicrafts though the Basel Mission had been selling curry powder from a project in India for many years. The first project involved was a handicraft centre in Cameroon, founded by the missionary Hans Knöpfli. He worked in a rural area where there were many traditional crafts, like carving, metal-casting, and basket weaving. But the skills were dying out, and young people were drifting away to jobs in the city. The Handicraft Centre offered apprenticeships to young people, and their products found a ready market in Switzerland. Articles from projects in other countries were soon added, and an enterprise called "The Kalebasse" (later "mercifair"), which had a retail shop and also sold goods to shops and markets all over Switzerland. Like most Fair Trade enterprises, the business relied heav-

ily on volunteers. I worked on a website and an Internet shop—both rather novel around 2000—and Paul helped with sales on various market stalls.

Our involvement with Fair Trade resulted in interesting encounters with projects overseas and lasted even beyond Paul's retirement as head of the Basel Mission Archives in 2003. Paul's retirement led to a change of direction—not into a placid old age, but into some years of intensive and interesting academic work. Paul's successor, Guy Thomas, was an expert on Africa, and would replace him in his teaching role. But the Mission was aware that there was a large amount of material from India that had been used, but had not attracted the same attention as the holdings from Africa, so Paul was given a small grant, and encouraged to work on India. He sometimes jokingly said he was given a continent as a retirement present! He began work on India by making an index, which showed that there were even more metres of shelves with material from India than from Africa. When it came to planning research projects, he was very sure that they should be in collaboration with Indian scholars and started to travel to India to get to know historians there. We went together to India (largely at our own expense) and enjoyed these visits. We met old friends from Basel and made new ones—especially in the Karnataka Theological College, whose history went back to the beginning of the Basel Mission's work in India. We produced translations into English of reports and letters, and took part in several conferences, research projects and publications that included work in Basel, but the idea of setting up a major collaborative research project did not come to fruition.

It was perhaps a blessing that Paul was not too heavily involved with India, because around 2016 he was offered the opportunity to write a history of one of the first Ghanaian pastors in the Basel Mission named Theophilus Opoku (see **Heuser** and **Arlt** in this volume). Paul had first encountered Opoku in his early days in Basel and was very impressed by his excellent reports. He even arranged for a friend to type them on our very first computer, so they were available digitally, and he was delighted when the Oxford University Press offered him the chance to write his dream book. He wanted the book to include detailed introductions and annotations, which would not only set Opoku's reports in the context of the Mission church, but also describe the cultural environment of Akuapem, the Ghanaian state where Opoku came from and worked. A friend of ours, the anthropologist Michelle Gilbert, who had worked for many decades in Akuapem, agreed to be his fellow author. I think the authors underestimated just how long compiling the book would take, and for how many years it would be a dominant feature in our lives. However, the period of uncertainty ended two days ago. Paul was presented with a copy of the book, neatly printed, and fixed between hard covers, with its multitude of footnotes all in place. It is interesting to speculate on the possible contribution of *The Reports of Theophilus Opoku: A 19th-Century Gold Coast Pastor*

to the discussion of colonialism. Opoku's reports are written from the point of view of a local citizen who experienced the gradual development of a colonial government—and was also in contact with non-British European missionaries who had their own standpoint on the changes taking place.

The first copy of the Opoku book, which is the culmination of many years of work, was put into Paul's hands on his 86th birthday, on 15 March 2024 (see Figure 12 in **Arlt**'s contribution to this volume). It was almost certainly a coincidence that it arrived from the Press on exactly that date—but it gives me a neat way of bringing this biographical essay full circle! It is not a closed circle, however. The question now is, "What next?" Recently, I read a series of comments from my contemporaries in Cambridge about growing older. Many of them stress that, "there are still things to be curious about". As a student, Paul said he did well in an essay examination because he could write about DNA, which he had learned about from me. Curiosity about many things has been an important feature of our life together and I hope it will remain so.

Editorial Introduction: Writing African History between Ghana and Switzerland

E. Sasu Kwame Sewordor, University of Basel &
Anne Beutter, University of Lucerne

African History between Ghana and Switzerland straddles geographies. While editing this volume, our foremost challenge was how to curate the perspectives presented therein, which cross spaces, identities, and backgrounds. Eventually, we chose a genealogical, biographical, and inductive approach. Genealogical in the sense that we started from the life and work of a scholar who was among the founding generation of what has become a vivid hub of research on Africa in Basel, and among the first generation of historians working in early independent Ghana. While starting as an outsider in both the Ghanaian and Swiss contexts, Paul Jenkins' biographical stations from the University of Ghana (Legon) to Basel and his contributions to African history are the pivot for this collection of essays. Yet, we allowed the authors the freedom to select both their topic and approach to engage with Paul's works, as a common denominator to see what topical logic would develop in and between the contributions. And we were not disappointed! The contributions are an inductive meshwork of recurring thematic and even programmatic threads generated in this volume.

Six themes or topics bind this Festschrift together. Firstly, *perspective*, both in the sources and in the research. Here the contributions go beyond the question of "positionality" and the distinction between "here" and "there". They account for biographical trajectories and the idea of complementarity of radically different experiences bound together in mission history as well as in African history. As such the agency and experience of *local actors* who have been underrepresented are centred on several contributions. This links to the question of *historiographical blind spots* imbued with power relations, which is addressed by the contributions connecting Paul Jenkins' coinage of "legends and silences". Addressing these silences and expanding the range of perspectives also necessitates taking into consideration new and *alternative types of sources*. Here the contributions build on Paul's preoccupation with visual sources by rethinking his ideas about the use of missionary photography and expanding it to cover audio-visual archives, while calling for explicit overlaps between them and oral histories/traditions or unconventional written sources. Another topic that runs through several of the contributions is the necessity to *make sources accessible* beyond the rhetoric of "open access". This theme foregrounds the explicit focus in several of the contri-

butions on *everyday history* and lived experiences, which remain to be thoroughly achieved partly due to an unequal distribution of historical records that enable critical academic research between the so-called global South and North. Addressing this problem, Paul has cautioned, is necessary for a truly global history built on the project of first writing local histories. This is the spirit in which we have constructed our Festschrift as an African history at the intersection of Ghana and Switzerland, which explores the potential of a global history that bridges that gap between under-researched African perspectives and mainstream transnational mission histories. As an alternative and counterpart to the biographical and genealogical logic of the table of contents of this Festschrift, this inductive thematic logic is captured in "A Topical Guide to the Contributions" in the front matter of this volume.

As such this volume is a collective endeavour that tries to enact collaboration creatively and academically in African history across geographies and disciplines. In this, we work against but also under the limitations of a global condition, that is still structured to foster unequal international academic partnerships and institutionalised mediums and repositories that reproduce places in the global North as privileged sites of knowledge production about Africa. The volume consciously retains the character of a Festschrift—not for the sake of celebrating a "great man", but taking his contributions as a connective tissue behind our collective ruminations on advances in history between Ghana and Switzerland.

This volume is a tribute to a prolific scholar and mentor while he lives, and an experiment that imbricates Ghanaian scholarship with African studies/history in Switzerland. Without question, Paul Jenkins has paid his dues to the development of African history since his days in early independent Ghana, and for the last five decades in Switzerland, through his scholarly publications, mentoring generations of Africanists, and his work as an archivist for the Basel Mission (BM). Paul symbolises a bridge between the Ghanaian and Swiss circles of academics interested in Africa (and to an extent, India).

Though less known, Paul started his teaching service in Africa at the Department for Extramural Studies (now the School of Continuing and Distance Education) at the University of Ghana. His known work in the same institution was as a lecturer in the Department of History with leading historians like Professor Albert Adu Boahen who partly defined the decolonial tradition in African and Ghanaian history since the 1950s. Paul's scholarly experiences during his years in Ghana shaped his commitment to advancing knowledge production in and about Ghana/Africa. We strongly believe that the many fruits his lifelong professional labour has produced deserve more recognition than has hitherto been given. This conviction informs our motivation for compiling this volume, which partly maintains the celebratory character of a Festschrift but, importantly, opens critical dialogues that take Paul's intellectual concerns as a point of departure and push beyond them. The result is

cutting-edge historical research about Ghana specifically, and Africa overall. This volume engages current debates on decolonising African studies/history and the politics of knowledge production by staging a conversation that brings together scholars across the so-called global North and South divides.

This volume contains ten chapters, authored by eleven scholars, besides a foreword by Mrs. Jennifer Jenkins and an afterword by Professor Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong (Harvard University). Jennifer Jenkins opens the collection with a cursory biography of Paul's academic career which doubles as a critical introduction to his intellectual motivations. The choice of this foreword portrays that academics like Paul are part of an often overlooked or footnoted network of people who facilitate and contribute to their intellectual work not least by creating an environment of camaraderie, care, and support. The foreword is a critical biographical introduction as part of our attempt to create a "non-big-men-style Festschrift"—to tell Paul's story as a scholar whose biography is shared and was shaped between Ghana and Switzerland. Professor Akyeampong's assessment of this Festschrift provides a roundly thoughtful note for closing our project, while echoing his fortuitous hope that Paul and his intellectual legacy will "continue to be an inspiration to many more generations of African and Africanist scholars". We also hope that the new research that future generations may be inspired to conduct, especially advances themes that have only been limitedly discussed in this project. For instance, reflections on possible approaches to ensuring unfiltered open access to archival repositories both in Europe and Africa in the time of digital humanities and machine learning and setting agendas to countering old and new inequalities that come with these conditions of future global knowledge production.

In Part I, "A Historian Amongst Others in Legon", the contributors dovetail their own research interests with Paul's original concerns generated during his years at Legon until 1972, when he relocated to Basel Switzerland. **Cassandra Mark-Thiesen** (University of Bayreuth) takes the Historical Society of Ghana's launch of the *Ghana Notes and Queries* in 1960 as a point of departure. The journal was an invitation meant to encourage non-academic Africans to contribute "less scholarly", but by no means less important essays for publication. Mark-Thiesen shows that the introduction of *Ghana Notes and Queries* earmarked a significant shift to expand the basis of historical knowledge by incorporating the cultural experiences and lived realities of ordinary Africans—which they had compiled. The birth of the journal captures the spirit of what is nowadays described as decolonising African history/studies, as a departure from histories of Africa built exclusively on sources created by Europeans, their epistemologies, and intellectual traditions. Her essay takes inspiration from Jenkins' contribution to the "visual turn" to invite us to think about existing audio-visual digital media as sources for reconstructing Africa's pasts that unveil new voices.

If it took long for scholars to highlight the voices of Africans in historical accounts and sources about Africa, it took even longer for enslaved peoples to be heard in academic publications and Ghanaian society. Both in dominant academic works and society, silence about important histories greatly concerned Paul Jenkins. This unsettling feeling stimulated his desire to seek unofficial narratives about church history by going into local communities where his interviewees taught him to listen and learn. One of the topics that interested Paul Jenkins was the legacies of slavery, which, as **Kofi Baku** (University of Ghana) and **Nancy A. Andoh** (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) show is not a closed episode consigned to the past, but continues to shape the politics of belonging and inheritance in contemporary Ghana. They advocate for deliberate moves to disrupt ongoing discourses that are strategically selective, engineered to silence minority groups.

The 1960s and 1970s represented a turning point in the production of African history that prioritised African perspectives. Not only did Paul Jenkins live through the decades when the first generation of professional African historians emerged in Africa, but he shared in the advocacy that previously unrepresented African voices be foregrounded in the new scholarship. He fondly remembers working in the Department of History at Legon, under its first Black chair, Professor Albert Adu Boahen. Yet, Paul did not always agree with some strong convictions some Ghanaian historians held. "During the years before I went on sabbatical [in 1969-1970] I had become very dissatisfied with the way the history of missions and the churches was [*sic*] being discussed by lay scholars in Ghana" generally, and particularly how "on the Legon campus the missions were being criticised harshly" (Gilbert and Jenkins [eds.], 2024). Consequently, he compiled the "Abstracts from the Gold Coast Correspondence of the Basel Mission", a translation of German original documents into English, which he made "available for colleagues in Ghana and anyone else who wanted to use them" (ibid.). The impact of Paul's "Abstracts" spans generations of Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian historians. In the 1990s, his contemporary at Legon, Professor Robert Addo-Fening heavily relied on the "Abstracts" for his *magnum opus* titled *Akyem Abuakwa 1700–1943*. Also in this volume, **Frank Afari** (University of Education-Winneba) draws on the "Abstracts" to argue, following Paul's recurrent prompts, that not only are local histories crucial to scaffold a larger portrait of Africa's historical transformation but in doing so we must creatively incorporate those that centre African voices in addition to critically relying on European-authored sources. Afari does so through a multifaceted account of the complex strategies, hopes, and motivations held by different societal actors in pre- and early-colonial Akyem Abuakwa towards mission-style schooling.

Part II, "Nurturing Trans-Generational Scholarship from Basel", speaks to the period from 1972 onwards when Paul and his family relocated from Accra to Basel and takes as a

point of departure the academic networks he created through his work at the Basel Mission Archives (now Mission 21) and as an African history lecturer at the University of Basel from 1989. The contributors—his students and formal or informal mentees—show exactly how generative their academic exchanges with Paul have been for their own scholarly careers. And as they elaborate, these encounters are best understood as results of a broad vision to institutionalise African history/studies in Basel/Switzerland that now manifests in diverse formulations and forums. The three chapters illustrate how Paul's interventions as an archivist and teacher with a keen eye and broad vision have directed them to the sometimes less obvious but relevant entry points into the depths of the archival collection and contributed to their historiographic practice. **Veit Arlt** (University of Basel), Paul's former student, describes in detail his scholarly encounters with Paul as a young curious mind whom Paul encouraged/trained to become an academic specialist on the Basel Mission's activities in Kroboland, located in south-eastern Ghana. **Anne Beutter** (University of Lucerne) recalls how a miscellaneous note attributed to Paul ultimately led her to thread "patchy but interesting" pieces of archival materials collected in Basel and Ghana to unveil rich everyday and lived religious experiences, knowledge, and practice of African Christians. The rewards of this painstakingly systematic work, foreshadow what **Paul Grant** (University of Wisconsin-Madison) describes as the interplay among "long listening", creativity, and archival endurance. This attitude and practice he sees embodied and transmitted by Paul Jenkins takes traces in the archive to develop a vision of people "brimming with motivations and contradictions, dreams, and disappointments. Grant remembers how Paul's knowledge and critical feelings shaped crucial aspects of the former's work. While Part II muses on Paul's impact as a custodian of the archive more generally, Part III considers his contribution in the thematic field probably most prominent in his work—visual sources.

Part III, "Visualising Africa's Past Across Continents", focuses on Paul Jenkins' dedication to the critical study and use of photographs as historical sources and the alertness to non-western readings of these material remnants of Africa's past to resist biased interpretations. Specially dedicated to images from the Basel Mission Archives, the essays in this part raise methodological questions, discuss challenges, and offer ways of unpacking evidence. The contributors resuscitate many of Paul's reflections and the "visual turn" his works in this field altogether aspired to. They showcase how crucial aspects of Paul's contributions to the field have developed and document current developments that take inspiration and go beyond them. If Paul generally advocated that Africanists read photographs depicting Africa with attention to the local cultures in which they were embedded, this prescription to non-Africans is advanced in a contributing essay by an Africanist of African descent. In the first of the two essays in this part, **Anke Schürer-Ries** (University of Bayreuth) makes

sense of early photographs created by BM agent, Fritz Ramseyer, by reminding us of the necessity to ground our reading of missionary photographs in a careful consideration of the image's multiple social biographies. These occur all along from the negotiatory setting of the creation to the institutional career of the photograph as an artefact to multivalent situations of their interpretation. What Schürer-Ries problematises as "speculative interpretations" is at the heart of the second essay by **E. Sasu Kwame Sewordor** (University of Basel), which unsettles dualised interpretation of missionary photos depicting Africa/ns that take a western worldview as a starting point, and only considers "the other context" (i.e., Africa) when found to be insufficient or to avoid what the anthropologist of photography, Elizabeth Edwards (2004), has termed "a disturbing analytical compression". Sewordor thereby takes Paul's call for "there centricity" a step further, beyond binaries of here and there, in the positionality, the audience, and the biography of authors.

Part IV, "The Archive and Historical Knowledge Production about Africa", extends the previous one by shifting from the specific emphasis on historical photographs to reflect on *the* archive (broadly defined) and the politics of producing academic forms of knowledge. The two essays in this part ruminate on Paul Jenkins' intellectual legacy by thinking into the future and contemplating important questions about unequal "international" academic partnerships which often shape the production of knowledge about Africa; ways to de-centre Basel (or the global North) as a privileged site for producing knowledge about Africa; and confronting institutionalised mediums that reproduce colonial relations which continue to mediate the frames through which Africa's past is understood; as well as how current production of knowledge about Africa can be re-negotiated on reciprocal and equitable terms. **Andreas Heuser** (University of Basel) focuses on Paul Jenkins' forthcoming volume edited with anthropologist, Professor Michelle Gilbert, on a set of unprecedented 19th-century English-language reports written by Ghanaian BM-trained pastor Theophilus Opoku to powerfully discuss "there-centricity"; an analytical handle meant to depose the enduring privilege that the BM has long enjoyed in how its past is constructed and interpreted through official lenses. Building on this, **Abraham Nana Opare Kwakye** (University of Ghana) presents a fascinating story of Paolo Mohenu—an ex-priest of an African religious cult who converted to Christianity and became one of the BM's most influential evangelists and magnet for proselytising other Africans. As Heuser and Kwakye show, the impressive archival holdings of the BM retain its place, and that of the West broadly, as a crucial repository of documents from which Africa's past can be reconstructed, but also charges its keepers to reflect on how their privileged access can be leveraged for the benefit of their colleagues in Africa, who nonetheless must be imaginative in finding and critically using available local sources like material and oral history/tradition readily available to them.

Our editorial introduction will be incomplete without acknowledging the Basel Mission and the University of Basel's Centre for African Studies for their support, which has enabled us to publish this Festschrift open access. We also thank the Basel Mission Archives for permitting us to reproduce several images from their repositories without charge.

Part I

A Historian Amongst Others in Legon

1 Histories from the Eternal Love Television Archive (Liberia), 1980–1991[1]

Cassandra Mark-Thiesen, University of Bayreuth

Introduction

In 1960, historian Albert Adu Boahen, then secretary of the Historical Society of Ghana, announced the launching of a new journal "to meet a long-felt need for a less scholarly journal in which not only professional historians but laymen can publish short notes, oral traditions, descriptions and historical explanations of festivals, oaths and customs" (Boahen 1961). Whereas history-writing in a material sense had long been traced through literacy and the proliferation of books, the launch of *Ghana Notes and Queries* signalled the commitment of Ghanaian and Ghana-based historians and history practitioners to centre source material that more Africans had encountered, if not created. For a long time, African historians had made efforts to incorporate not just "unorthodox" source material, but also other forms of historical narration, into historiography. And by the 1960s, a growing number of historians of Africa were adding to this effort of further opening the discipline of history to local experiences and social circumstances, leaving in the dust a colonial historiography that heroised the exploits of Europeans in Africa. Such decisions, promising to further globalise historiography by tapping into Africa's multimodal means of cultural and historical expression, were drawn at several intellectual centres across the African continent in the first decades after independence. This chapter revisits discussions about the possibilities and challenges of opening African historiography to new source material and alternative narrations of the past when texts have long been considered the more objective of productions. It re-emphasises how other non-textual sources can provide access to underexplored corners of the African lifeworlds of the past. It pays particular attention to the renewal promised by the "visual turn", which has invited historians of Africa to engage in discourses about the representation of African imaginaries and aesthetics as captured in (audio)visual artefacts. With these interactions (as well as intermedialities) in mind, this chapter locates its contribution at the intersection of history, film studies, archives studies, and oral history.

[1] This chapter is the outcome of research conducted within the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bayreuth, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy–EXC 2052/1 – 390713894.

Geographically this chapter focuses on Liberia—a colony founded for deportees of African descent emancipated from slavery—and highlights its role as a beacon of Black sovereignty after 1847, its struggle to realise multicultural democracy, its armed conflicts (beginning in 1989), and its post-war context (since 2003).

Oral Testimonies and Other Artefacts

Joining the staff of the University of Ghana, Legon, just three years after the conference where Boahen made his announcement, in 1963, Paul Jenkins had certainly been attuned to debates surrounding disciplinary renewal and "unorthodox" sources. However, it was most likely during his next career as head of the archives of the Basel Mission (now Mission 21) starting in Switzerland in 1972 that a specific interest in visual media emerged. In his 2002 article, "Everyday life encapsulated? Two photographs concerning women and the Basel Mission in West Africa, c.1900", Jenkins suggested two "evident reasons" for the limited impact of visual sources on African historiography. He noted that (a) "photographic sources are not universally available in Africa"; and (b) they have not been associated with the same nationalist fervour as had oral traditions in the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, oral traditions remained unrivalled in this respect for quite some time. During the first two decades of independence, in particular, oral traditions became a popular primary source for historians pursuing an Africa-centred historiography. As Steven Feiermann noted, "unlike Latin America, where the colonial period had begun several centuries earlier" in Africa "oral traditions were still alive (in many cases are still alive) when the historians of the 1960s and 1970s went about their work" (1993: 183). "[T]heir use [was] fired by a patriotism for Africa", explained Jenkins, who had witnessed this fervour first-hand (2002: 45). And over time, the use of oral histories in the field has become largely normalised, although it has regularly met with some healthy and some stubborn resistance.

As early as the 1950s, members of the Ibadan School of History, including prominent research associates such as Kenneth Onwuka Dike and J. F. Ade Ajayi, had begun to motivate aspiring African historians to explore oral traditions. However, they were hardly absolutist in their approach. They simultaneously encouraged a new generation of scholars to analyse a range of other artefacts of the past, including archaeological evidence and early African texts written in Arabic scripts. This agenda was echoed in the invitation, in 1960, from the leaders of the Historical Society of Ghana to laymen to produce accounts of African history inclusive of interpretations of various rituals and performances. *Ghana Notes and Queries* ran successfully for over a decade, producing issues annually after publishing three separate issues in its first year of existence. Not surprisingly, it would take more time

for historians to begin to explore African cultural expressions using visual media such as photography and then film.

In Jenkins' 2002 article, he observed: "It could be argued that the incorporation of visual sources in our work on the African past should be having the same profound impact on what we write as the campaign to record and utilise oral sources a generation ago". But, he lamented, "this expected revolution is not yet happening" (2002: 45). Nevertheless, a "visual turn" in African historiography was discernible in the writings that appeared in the years that followed; for instance, in studies that analysed photography to identify cultural and contemporary choices in dress and fashion (Allman 2004; Renne 2004). Naturally, Jenkins' photographic analysis was part of this shift. And the "visual turn" challenged and changed the epistemological confines of the discipline in profound ways.

Historical photographs, in contrast to written or spoken sources, presented a particular challenge to historians because of their difficult truth-claiming ability, Jenkins explained. He alluded to the greater (perceived?) tangibility of textual evidence, whereas photographs, which often lacked any contextual information relating to their provenance (as discussed by **Schürer-Ries** in this volume), were "multivalent" and therefore immensely subjective. He understood this characteristic "inherent in the nature of photographs as sources" to be the main hindrance to their broad use by historians (Jenkins 2002: 45).

> In practice historical reflection using photographs turns out to be by no means simple. One may well find that each individual photograph relevant to a piece of work has to be subject to its own specific mini-investigation as one seeks to incorporate it in a particular historical analysis, so varied are photographs in their content and usability. Indeed, many of us have learned from teaching that historical photographs, when presented to a group for analysis, can turn out to be very multivalent–the reactions they provoke can prove to be very different from person to person (Jenkins 2002: 45).

Whether or not this is true of all photographic collections is not the concern of this chapter. Rather, while acknowledging the element of subjectivity inherent in all historical interpretations and the creation of source material, it asks to what extent consensual mean-making is enhanced when we bring audio-visual archives into the picture. As more scholars and institutions begin to assist in the preservation and analysis of media content from Africa, what are the implications of these emerging archives for the future of African historiography? The next section focuses on the recently digitised archival holdings of Eternal Love Television (ELTV), Liberia's only public television station, which was hosted by the Liberia Broadcasting System during the 1980s and into 1991. Thus, whereas Jenkins' article examined two photographs of women in nineteenth-century West Africa, this chapter centres on a unique archive of Black and African self-representation from the twentieth century and a feminist

archive making visible diverse forms of gender expression. At the centre of the analysis is the *Heritage* programme, created as a segment to project Liberian history and heritage.

Television as an African Primary Source

My preoccupation with audio-visual media intensified in 2018 when I was contacted by the then-director of the Liberia Broadcasting System, Ledgerhood Rennie. He had been working with a French NGO active in the field of cinema promotion in Africa, as well as a French artist, to locate funding to preserve roughly 1200 U-Matic tapes mainly from the 1980s. The tapes had been sitting in the network's basement for several decades, surviving two wars and humid climatic conditions typical to the West African coast. By 2022, most of the tapes had been digitised. But the state of the digital archive was hardly perfect. For instance, information about the sequencing of programmes was missing as were the titles of individual shows and the dates they were aired. Basic contextual information could only be retrieved with the help of local informants. The sound as well as the visual quality of some of the tapes was also far from pristine. And yet, I was excited by the potential of the material to revitalise Liberian historiography, which was still heavily centred around missionary and government papers. An entire study could be written on the collective trauma caused by the looting and damage of the Liberian national archive during the armed conflict that occurred between 1989–1997 and 1997–2003. These troubling events led to the resurfacing of old feelings in the life of the "second Black nation" that struggled to survive amidst European encroachment; feelings of inadequacy and imperfection next to more powerful states in the global community.

To provide some background, we must return to 1822 when Liberia was founded by the American Colonization Society (ACS). The diverse members of the ACS also imposed different meanings onto this new settlement. While some imagined Liberia as a new light of Christianity and "civilisation" on the dark continent, others saw it as an outpost for people of African origin living in the United States whose integration into American society was perceived as either undesirable or impossible. Enslaved Africans recaptured by the US Navy were also regularly taken to Liberia during this period. Liberia was gradually placed under the leadership of these people in 1847 when it started to be viewed as a land of true emancipation for Africans living in the Americas. By the 1860s, Caribbean migrants would join this budding society dispersed all along the coast and the St. Paul's River that struggled to gain its footing amidst European encroachment and battles with certain local rulers.

An archive such as ELTV's television archive does not claim to compensate for the loss or displacement of a large body of government records. But it does provide an opportunity of a creative nature moving forward. It can assist scholars in capturing, however indirectly,

historical depths that have not yet been sufficiently explored, if at all. Moreover, its value goes beyond enabling a new narrative of Liberia's past, as it has significant relevance for cultural practitioners as well. Having said that, is it a bit of a stretch to call the collected material an archive? For one thing, the tapes were not the result of a deliberate collecting effort. Rather, were it not for the outbreak of war in 1989, the U-Matic tapes would probably have been overwritten in order to produce new content for an insatiable medium. This content would never have left Liberia's shores. And yet, today they provide flashpoints of the everyday through a mix of scripted and unscripted content. And perhaps that is what makes them so important and exciting to explore.

The Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS), which hosted ELTV, was established in 1960, initially with radio broadcasting in mind. But by 1964 it began offering television to Monrovia and surrounding areas. In 1980, the post-coup Samuel Doe regime took over what had originally been a project initiated by President Tolbert with assistance from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to make television available to more Liberians via the Liberian Rural Communication Network (LRCN). Nevertheless, with the start of civil strife fuelled by covert foreign intervention, ELTV would end up being Liberia's only broadcast television station in perpetuity.[2]

Additional factors speak to the ELTV collection as a rare archive of Black and African self-representation. Scholars such as Clapperton Mavhunga and Jemery Prestholdt have enriched the global history of technology by showing how African peoples made domesticated imported technologies (Mavhunga 2014; Prestholdt 2008). Indeed, other scholars have argued that "the non-Western world increasingly adopted Western ideas, technologies and weapons in order to protect their autonomy and culture" (Iggers, Wang, and Mukherjee 2016: 10). It is significant that television content was made by Liberians for Liberians, whereas the photographs analysed by Jenkins were, conversely, created mostly by European missionaries and for a European public. The entertainment logic of television, as exhibited on the tapes, however, is underpinned with cultural references readable to local audiences first and foremost. As a result, today we can look at these digitised dance programmes, documentaries, educational content for children, sitcoms, talk shows, news segments, and commercials to pose crucial questions related to the projection of self and nation. Each programme opens possible inquiries into professional (work) life, cultural values, and aesthetics, as well as the history (of media) under African rule.

Though sponsored by the Liberian government, there is little evidence that ELTV was a vehicle of the state. At the same time, official tolerance of a critical press was only condoned

[2] Today, the Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS) hosts online television content.

for a very short time under the Doe administration which began in 1980. Doe had come into power as the first president of Liberia with indigenous parents on both sides of his family, whereas prestige had been associated with US or Southern or Caribbean heritage since the mid-nineteenth century. The attempted coup against Doe on 12 November 1985 only encouraged excesses in state intimidation of and violence against the media, including the murder of Charles Gbenyon, the then editor-in-chief of LBS. It will be a matter of minute study to determine the extent to which this turn of events impacted national television programming.

Heritage and the Everyday

One obvious arena to explore the earlier mentioned drive for national self-projection is television programming that was explicitly concerned with local history and culture. Iggers et al. assert that "both in the West and in the non-West, the media was used for the dissemination of historical materials–and with them the audiences–underwent changes, from the heavy reliance on the printed word in the nineteenth century, not only of scholarly but also of popular publications, including newspapers, illustrated journals, and historical fiction, to the twentieth century when they were supplemented first by film, then by radio, television and video, and most recently by the Internet" (Iggers, Wang, and Mukherjee 2016: 5). While the Liberian experience does not comfortably fit into this teleological trajectory, the *Heritage* programme on Liberian television, hosted by Doughba Caranda II and Hawa Andrews, both of whom are seen in Figure 1, served this purpose. *Heritage* incorporated displays of local dance troupes and musical performers, as well as discussions surrounding Liberian literature, filmmaking, and (public) history; all reformatted to suit this new medium. And to be communally consumed by a large part of Liberian society.

Take the example of customs such as that of the Old Man Bayka—or "Old Man Beggar"—a "dancing devil" that had emerged from traditional celebrations associated with the Poro society also familiar to Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast during the 19th century. By the 20th century, these figures appeared in overwhelmingly Christianised urban areas such as Liberia's capital city, Monrovia, during Christmas time. The Christmas Devil, as it came to be known, is an apt symbol of the country's fusion of ethnic cultures. With the launch of television, the spirit eventually appeared on screen across the country via *Heritage,* as shown in Figure 2. By the 1980s, the custom was so widespread that the performance was broadcast without any explanatory commentary, as becomes evident when watching the recording. Adding historical layers to this content, in "Queering the Archive", Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja discusses performance as "decolonial" or "disruptive" approach to historiogra-

phy and archival praxis (Mushaandja 2022). On one level, he explains the moment of the performance as encapsulating both memories from the past and political negotiations of the present. On another level, he describes performance as a means of writing oneself into history against the backdrop of the dehumanizing practices of the academy. Hence, such archival content, though not easily adapted into scholarship, promises varying degrees of historical depth and epistemic liberation. Finally, it is further noteworthy that by 1984, the year the episode was probably broadcast, the spirit now donned the colours of Liberia's national flag: red, blue, and white; indicating a trend towards emerging multicultural nationalism, unsurprisingly perhaps, despite lingering socioeconomic inequality.

Fig. 1: Stills from a recording of episode one of the Heritage programme. Source: ELTV Archive.

Fig. 2: Stills from the performance of the "Christmas Devil" by Club 84: Musical Youth Byepopoleboe. Source: ELTV Archive.

Caranda and Andrews, the moderators of the Heritage programme, wore clothing that was readable as purposely "panafrican", new and not linked to a single ethnic group. For example, Caranda's typical "uniform" for television was a dashiki as seen in Figures 1 and 4. But they came to the work via different avenues. Following an interview, I learned that he had been a cultural practitioner who entered television as another means of promoting Liberian music and culture, as well as an inclusive brand of national consciousness that began to spread on an official level as well during the era of decolonisation in Africa. Caranda had previously worked to promote various musical acts at clubs and bars around Liberia. He was later hired as a radio DJ for ELBC (LBS's radio station) and notably played the music

of local artists. Caranda's move to television marked just another dot along a longer trajectory of projecting a Liberian aesthetic past, present, and promoting its making. Andrews, in contrast, was trained in filmmaking. In an interview between Andrews and the researcher, Edidiong Ibanga, the former expressed a love for film that began in her early childhood on the outskirts of Monrovia:

> I was introduced to the movies in Firestone [Margibi County, Liberia]. ... I think it was every other Friday, the movie truck would come so you could see Marlene Dietrich in a movie, or it was a billboard movie. And I got fascinated with the movies ... we would start acting like the ladies in the movie.

She eventually moved to the United States where she graduated with a bachelor's in fine arts degree from the School of Visual Arts in New York City in 1985, before returning to Liberia where she was immediately hired by the LBS. Her dedication to what she referred to as "the whole traditional thing", African culture, was inspired by an acquaintance she made at Liberia's National Cultural Centre.

As the transcript of Doughba's interview with filmmaker Richard Sirleaf shows (Figure 3), they were not simply acquainted with many of their guests. They claimed them as friends. Since the early 1960s, Liberia's National Cultural Centre, a government-established village in Kendejah on the outskirts of Monrovia, had nurtured a community of dancers, singers, performers, and artisans of diverse ethnic backgrounds and attracted other Liberians interested in an African culture long overlooked on the national stage. The purpose of the village was to preserve and, to some extent, amalgamate the unique cultures of Liberia's sixteen ethnic (indigenous and "diasporic") social groups by bringing together and training children and youths in these local arts. In addition to touring the rural areas with these slightly revised cultural constellations, the Cultural Troupe became a mainstay of Liberian political delegations by the 1970s. "This gave real momentum to the promotion of culture in Liberia and many cultural organisations sprang up including the Blamadon Theatre Workshop, Dehkontee Artists Theatre, Womtee Dramatic Group, Tro-Tro Artists, Malawala Balawala and Kama Soko among others" (Diakhate et al.: 169). In an interview with Caranda in August 2023, he portrayed himself as having consciously pushed a cultural renaissance agenda, giving weight to local culture(s) on the local stage and spotlighting local artists at a moment when disco and hip-hop were gaining increasing global attention. In line with that goal, the moderators of Heritage embodied a new sense of beauty, fashion, and "modernity". As a man and a woman, they are positioned on screen as almost equals for Liberians to see, as it could be argued that Andrews is seated in a manner that makes it impossible for her to fully capture the lens of the camera. Both continue to be prominent figures in Liberian culture and media to this day.

One issue I really must address, the question that is the question that is causing me much stress? (song in background)

0:29

Doughba: Good evening, viewers. It's good to be with you on the Heritage program.

0:45

This time it's Heritage: Artist Rendevous. That is the meeting place of artists.

0:51

On this segment of the program, we bring on prominent or visiting artists.

0:58

And, yes, indeed. This is what we have here with us today, a very prominent artist.

1:06

He's not only a friend. He's like a brother, we grew up together.

1:13

And he's very talented. We'd like to share his creativity ... with you all on the program.

1:17

And I'm talking about a visiting artist back home, Brother Richard Sirleaf.

1:24

Thank you so much. We're going to be looking at several aspects of Richard, his art form, his plans,

1:30

his prospects, and also his entire experiences away and in Liberia. In the mid-sixties

1:42

he was very important in the music scene, in the social arena in Liberia.

1:53

I don't want to say too much. I just want to put the whole picture up before. Richard, who is Richard Sirleaf?

Fig. 3: Transcript from the interview with Richard Sirleaf on the Heritage programme. Source: ELTV Archive.

Fig. 4: Still of Doughba Caranda II on an episode of the Heritage programme. Source: ELTV Archive.

Audio adds an entirely new dimension to an analysis of visual media. It contributes new avenues of meaning-making that could be explored on their own, separately from the moving images. While the power and affective aspects of the music used in broadcasts, as hinted at in the transcript in Figure 3, may attract the attention of some scholars, others may be drawn to entirely different elements of audio. For example, it is interesting that in contrast to news anchors who adopted a "news voice" or a tone of presentation speech reminiscent of the generic newsreader on the BBC, Andrews and Caranda remained firm and forceful in their use of Liberian English as a creole product of hundreds of years of trade and exchange on the West African coast that predated 1822, and the arrival of the ACS. In addition, as far as a historian may care, audio content carries the advantage that it can be folded back into the textual, imbuing it with a greater sense of objectivity once again. In this manner, *colloqua* or Liberian English, once transcribed (and perhaps once certain phrases are culturally translated) can easily be incorporated into scholarly analysis. But does that mean that historians will interpret these words in the same way? What does it mean when affective meaning is rendered a distraction? Film historian, Robert A. Rosenstone, has noted that despite all of the exhilaration linked with an academic historian becoming involved with the world of moving pictures, namely "the power of the visual media; the opportunity to emerge from the lonely depths of the library to join with other human beings in a common enterprise; the delicious thought of a potentially large audience for the fruits of one's research, analysis, and writing" (Rosenstone 1988: 1173), this remains an ambivalent experience. He explains that the attraction to "working in words" is ultimately just too great:

> No matter how serious or honest the filmmakers, and no matter how deeply committed they are to rendering the subject faithfully, the history that finally appears on the screen can never fully satisfy the historian as historian (although it may satisfy the historian as filmgoer). Inevitably, something happens on the way from the page to the screen that changes the meaning of the past as it is understood by those of us who work in words (Rosenstone 1988: 1173).

While he is referring to a largely bygone moment in the history of television-making, his words still ring true in the present, where historians, especially those working with audio-visual material, are encouraged to publish historical content online, whether as maps, 3D visualisations or audio-visual content, for wider public consumption. Ultimately, his claim must again be understood in the context of the greater objectivity we historians ascribe to texts. Not least because we can often quickly identify where these texts are coming from. Alas, provenance research remains challenging in the case of transcripts from the ELTV collection.

Despite the accessibility of historical television, despite the plurality of senses and perspectives involved in experiencing it, given what we see, hear, and feel as a result, is there a

greater pull to reduce it to an element more detached from the full and complicated range of our human emotions and life? Is this why historians will never be fully satisfied with reality as projected or captured on film, and confront it with concerns of being too subjective? Far from the national archives with their focus on leaders and politics, television's interest is in the everyday (e.g. news), marginalised people (including women, children, the poor, etc.), culture, and entertainment. This is where the television can intervene, but serious challenges remain.

Conclusion

Disciplinary renewal in the field of history and its sub-discipline of African history requires us both to imagine a future and to acknowledge the repetition of interventions from the past. This chapter has looked at how African historians have (repeatedly) approached the challenge and possibilities of integrating new (African-made) sources and alternative and marginalised narratives of the past. A key point of this exercise is to question some of the historian's typical biases in favour of or against certain forms of media, including their implications for the epistemological boundaries of the discipline. With its focus on the visual archive, the chapter builds on Jenkins' engagement with the aforementioned challenge in his 2002 article. The difficulty of analysis he describes is not only circumstantial but related to the state of a particular archive and its associated provenance research, as well as to the specific criteria of the discipline. As he reminds us, historians have struggled to locate a comforting element of "objectivity" in such visual records. At the same time, it is undeniable that audio-visual sources can provide access to under-explored corners of African and human existence. So where is the balance?

What do these tensions mean for the ELTV archive? What will be lost when these recordings are put into words? How will Liberian and African historiography benefit, nonetheless? Today, the ELTV archive provides unparalleled records of pre-war Liberia. Its cultural proclivities and general aesthetic preferences are represented through a mosaic of elements related to local arts, dances, soap operas, commercials, and the news. This material is an extension of local orality, custom, and other forms of cultural and historical expression. At the same time, nothing the LBS produced for television was meant to be consumed in the future, as a kind of mnemonic device for reconstructing the formation of a new national consciousness. Television is/was unmistakably a product of the now. This temporal location and fixity make it particularly intriguing to the historian. Or so it should be. Thus, while I do not agree with Jenkins that the discussion about the relative power of different archival materials to encapsulate daily life is "artificial", I do agree that "in African history

we are thirsty for sources, must take what we can get–and not least exploit the 'stereo' view which the presence of more than one category of source offers us" (Jenkins 2002: 59), as also echoed in **Beutter's** contribution to this volume. Time, awareness, and innovation will be needed to convincingly curate the significant human histories embedded in these shiny and vast recordings of the ELTV.

Bibliography

Andrews, Hawa. Interview. Conducted by Edidiong Ibanga. 5 September 2023.

Allman, Jean Marie. *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Boahen, A. A. "Minutes of the Tenth Annual General Meeting of the Historical Society of Ghana Held at the Queen's Hall, Kumasi College of Technology, on Friday, 16 December 1960 at 8 p.m.". *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 5(1) (1961): 70–71.

Caranda II, Doughba. Interview. Conducted by Cassandra Mark-Thiesen. 17 August 2023.

Diakhate, Ousmane, Ndumbe Eyoh, Hansel and Rubin Don. "Liberia". In *World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Africa*, edited by Ousmane Diakhate, Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh, Don Rubin, 2001.

Feierman, Steven. "African Histories and the Dissolution of World History". In *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities*, edited by Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O'Barr, 167–212. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Iggers, Georg, Q. Edward Wang, and Supriya Mukherjee. *A Global History of Modern Historiography*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Jenkins, Paul. "Everyday Life Encapsulated? Two Photographs Concerning Women and the Basel Mission in West Africa, c.1900". *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15(1) (2002): 45–60.

Mavhunga, Clapperton Chakanetsa. *Transient Workspaces: Technologies of Everyday Innovation in Zimbabwe*. 1st ed. Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2014.

Mushaandja, Nashilongweshipwe. "Queering the Archive: African Praxis in Performative Writing". In *Writing Namibia: Coming of Age*, edited by Sarala Krishnamurthy, Nelson Mlambo and Helen Vale, 121–142. Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2022.

Prestholdt, Jeremy. *Domesticating the World: African Consumerism and the Genealogies of Globalization*. vol. 6. California: University of California Press, 2008.

Renne, Elisha P. "From Khaki to Agbada: Dress and Political Transition in Nigeria". In *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, edited by Jean Marie Allman, 125–143. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Rosenstone, Robert A. "History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film." *The American Historical Review* 93(5) (1988): 1173–1185.

2 History, Memory, and the Legacies of Slavery in Ghana

Kofi Baku, University of Ghana, Legon &
Nancy A. Andoh, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Introduction

On 11 April 1995, the Chief Justice and the most senior judges of the Supreme Court of Ghana delivered a landmark judgement in the case of Brobbey and others v. Kwaku (Ghana Law Reports 1995/6: 125–145). The court held that despite the ordinance abolishing slavery in colonial Ghana in 1874 and the freedom it guaranteed their descendants, Asante custom did not permit a person of slave ancestry to ascend to the office of a chief. Strangely, the Supreme Court also opined that the prohibition was not repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience. Sixty-five years prior, in 1930, the West African Court of Appeal (WACA), a higher court than Gold Coast's Supreme Court, decided differently on a similar case. In the 1930 matter, WACA frowned on Asante's custom that deprived people of slave ancestry of inheriting property, contending that such a position was "repugnant to justice, equity and good conscience".[3] Apart from contradicting WACA's judgment, a 1995 trial also privileged customary law over Ghana's 1992 Constitution.

Between the hearing of the two cases, the judicial committees of Traditional, Regional and National Houses of Chiefs and the courts in Ghana became fertile grounds for disputed succession to chiefly office. For long, chieftaincy disputes, property claims, and consanguinity enable the voices of descendants of slaves to be heard. These contestations are invariably about eligibility for traditional political office, which in turn, is about membership of families, clans, or lineages that are acknowledged as successors to vacant chiefly positions. Thus, when descendants of slaves sue in a court of law for access to family property, they are firstly, seeking to affirm the ordinances that emancipated their ancestors and granted them freedom and the accompanying rights.[4] Secondly, they are challenging the use of customary law that denies them the rights conferred by activating the ordinances that freed their ancestors. Consequently, the descendants of slaves find themselves in a paradox: On the one hand, customary law including the Asante edict forbids explicit talk about a person's slave

[3] West African Court of Appeal, "In re Kweku Damptey, Deceased, Kwaku Kodieh versus Nana Kwami Affram", vol. 1 (1930): 12.

[4] Abolition of Slave Dealing Ordinance (1874); Emancipation of Persons Holden in Slavery (1874); and Reaffirmation of the Abolition of Slavery Ordinance (1930).

past and thus provides a cover to deny such a person the full rights of a free-born as public conversation about servile ancestry remains taboo. On the other hand, the courts of Ghana have similarly remained ambivalent on the real and appropriate traditional, political, social, and economic status of people of slave ancestry.

The decision in Brobbey v. Kwaku was inconsistent with chapters 5 and 6 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution, which grants all Ghanaians fundamental rights and freedoms. Articles 34 to 41 of the 1992 Constitution enjoin all persons and state institutions to ensure the protection and preservation of such liberties (1992 Constitution: 12–42). Article 35(5) prescribes that the state should "actively promote the integration of the peoples of Ghana and prohibit discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of place of origin, [and] *circumstance of birth* ..." (1992 Constitution: 35 [authors' italics]). If an existing law contradicts a provision of the Constitution, the latter nullifies the former, to the extent of its contradiction. This paper argues that though Asante customary law disqualifies a person of slave ancestry from ascending to high political office contradicts Ghana's 1992 Constitution, the disharmony between national and traditional laws has continuously enabled litigants to evoke a person's servile past to discredit their claims to traditional political office. Moreover, Ghanaian courts are yet to afford protection against discrimination for persons of slave ancestry. Hence, persons of slave ancestry continue to suffer incomplete emancipation. To be clear, it is not our argument that state laws disadvantage persons of slave ancestry in national life; persons of slave ancestry, without question, can compete in all national political offices.

This paper interrogates family politics and chieftaincy disputes in Akan societies in southern Ghana and shows that the constituent societies of Ghana have not fully confronted their pasts concerning slavery and the Atlantic slave trade. In particular, we contribute to the scholarly debate about the systematic marginalisation in our modern age and argue that (a) the legacies of slavery are still evident in Ghana; (b) the courts of Ghana have, historically, not interpreted Ghana's constitution sufficiently to give descendants of slaves protection against discrimination, and; (c) that Ghana has not sufficiently committed to the implementation of the conventions of the United Nations Universal Declarations on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights that it has ratified. These arguments inform the structure of our paper, which first outlines our court case study to historically foreground slavery and then interrogates the culture of silence surrounding this uncomfortable past in Ghana. Next, we reflect on how the silence may be reversed by reviewing the politicised persistence of slave heritage against sections of Ghana's constitutions and close with the provocative question regarding how to overcome this quagmire.

Brobbey and Other v. Kwaku: An Invitation to Reckon with the Silences of Slavery in Ghana

The facts of this case were simple but convoluted. Briefly, the position of Asante *Mamponghene* (chief of Asante Mampong) became vacant in the early 1980s and, Mr. Francis Kwasi Cartey, a very distinguished member of the Mampong royal family was enstooled. As the second in pecking order in the Asante confederacy, the *Mamponghene* occupies the silver stool. He is second only to the *Asantehene*, the supreme chief of Asante and the occupant of *sika dwa* or the golden stool.

A section of the Mampong royal family, led by Nana Kwaku, opposed the enstoolment of Mr. Cartey because the new *Mamponghene* was unqualified and a progeny of an ex-slave of the Mampong royal family. The malcontents claimed that Mr. Cartey's great-grandmother, called Niana, was an ex-slave of ethnic-Grunsi origin from northern Ghana. Nana Appia Agyei, a royal of Mampong, bought enslaved Niana as a servant for his Akan freeborn wife, Nyarkoa Akosua who was a descendant of a Mampong royal called Afi. Later, Nana Appia Agyei had children with both Nyarkoa Akosua and Niana. Both parties to the dispute admitted that there was intermarriage between the descendants of Afi and Niana and the two lines of royal lineage had always regarded themselves as Mampong royals. The familial bonds enabled through intermarriages between freeborn and their enslaved "kinfolks" did not cease after emancipation because ex-slaves and descendants continued to live in their homes and under the patronage of their ex-owner(s). Over time, ex-slaves were integrated into the families of their owners as free persons (Miers and Kopytoff 1977; Perbi 2004).

The dispute began in judicial committees of the Asanteman Council, the Ashanti Region House of Chiefs, and the National House of Chiefs, and finished in the Supreme Court, where the plaintiffs won the case. The judgment rehearsed a declaration a foremost Ghanaian lawyer, John Mensah Sarbah, made more than a century ago that "emancipation is useless if you take the benefit of it. The grandchild of an emancipated slave would still be a slave, if he does not sever the connection" (Sarbah [1897] 1968: 124). Sarbah recognised that emancipation, as law alone, was not enough to break the servile position of freed people after abolition. According to Kwabena Nketia, "the shackles of slavery can be broken but not its stigma or its intangible aspects which survive, for example, in the memory of those who make consanguinity the right to the assumption of chiefship" (Perbi 2004: ix). Finally, it contradicted the generally accepted academic view, held for nearly half a century that slavery in Africa was benign, integrative, and assimilative.

Ghana, like societies all over the world, faces the difficult choice as to the aspects of their entanglement with the Atlantic slave trade they should remember or conveniently forget. Many Ghanaian societies are ambivalent on issues of slavery and its legacies; there are

silences and no talk rules about slavery. Primarily, Asante customary law, with its posturing as a *de jure* of national customary regulations encapsulates this ambivalence by proscribing open references to the social origins of a person especially when it overlaps with a slave narrative. However, open references are made to the servile origins of persons of slave ancestry without inhibition during family and chieftaincy disputes. The selective conditions for recalling or forgetting slave ancestry create limited narratives that privilege top-down perspectives mimicking what Paul Jenkins has described as "legends and silences" in the context of Basel Mission history (2015). Indeed, as **Afari** shows in this volume, the Basel Mission's reckoning with the abolition of slavery in Ghana before 1874 was fraught with tensions, disagreements, and inconsistencies. A significant part of what we know about the non-official historiography about slavery that prioritises the voices of ordinary people connected to the Basel Mission builds on the collection of translated materials from the Mission's archive in Switzerland. Yet, sustained research about the nexus between slavery, its legacies, and the politics of memory remains to be done—a task that can potentially use linguistic sources to carefully explore a bottom-up approach to slave history by effectively unpacking evidence from spoken testimonies recorded in court trials related to the dispossessive politics of servile ancestry.

Ghana's participation in slavery and the trans-Saharan and Atlantic slave trades shaped political, social, and economic development in the pre- and post-colonial eras. The evolution and development of the first major states of Ghana, both north and south of the Volta River, depended largely on slavery and the slave trades (Goody 1966; Rodney 1971; Maier 1987; Maier 1990; Wilks 1994; Klein 1994; Darkwah 1999; Perbi 2004). Many Akan states take pride in their successes at state-building on slavery and the slave trades. Consequently, Akan oral literature is replete with celebratory proverbs of the assimilative and integrative aspects of slavery. Yet, these proverbs reveal the undisguised admission that the assimilation and integration of slaves was not always complete (Perbi 2004: xi). Unsurprisingly, Fortes and Dieterlen have noted perceptively that "accessory lineages of slave or stranger origin never acquire the right of direct access to the shrine of the founding ancestor of the host lineage" (Fortes and Dieterlen 1969). And recently Kwabena Nketia bluntly stated that "although one may enjoy the privilege of royal association, one must not assume that this could be converted into the status of royalty" (Perbi 2004: xi).

Therefore, much of contemporary Ghana's social, political, and economic relations cannot be understood without reference to slavery and slave trades in the pre-colonial era. The disputed succession to the Asante Mampong stool is illustrative. Regrettably, it is not the only disputed chiefly office. Also, family property or social recognition and dignity by persons of slave ancestry are disputed (Perbi 2017; Penningroth 2007; Donkoh 2007). For instance,

in October 2011 the Accra High Court upheld the claim of Ernest Richter that the descendants of the slaves of his great ancestor, Henrich Richter (the family's patriarch) were not members of the Richter family and were, therefore, not entitled to the family's properties.

Though slavery was common in pre-colonial and colonial Ghana and its legacies persist in contemporary Ghana as the Richter case shows, Ghanaians largely remain silent about their agency in slavery and the slave trades (Hartman 2007; Hosley 2008). As Anquandah (2007) and Karen (2009) have shown, there are many reasons why ordinary Ghanaians and academics treat issues of slavery with circumspection. Some of the reasons are that descendants of perpetrators and victims of slavery and the slave trades are sometimes neighbours (loosely defined), who know each other and interact on different levels. Furthermore, there is the problem of finding verifiable evidence on which academic historical reconstruction could be based, and the related fact that the first generation of Ghanaian academic historians and anthropologists were preoccupied with studying Africa's political (state formation) histories, and so did not pay much attention to slavery and the slave trades (Mustapha and Goody 1965). Ghanaian academics are, however, increasingly relying on oral literature of Ghanaian societies to reconstruct the histories of slavery and the slave trades. To this extent, it is, therefore, relatively easy, and reasonable to determine who the perpetrators of slavery were, who their descendants are and who the victims of slavery were and who their descendants are (Der 1998; Howell 1998; Perbi 2004; Howell 2007; Opoku-Agyeman 2007). With few exceptions, there is no voluntary public admission for the crime of slave dealing or being a descendant of a slave. These are subjects that are virtually unspoken about, or when done in proverbial language. The lack of written documentation has enabled many societies in Ghana to re-image themselves and to determine the aspects of their pasts to collectively remember and/or choose to forget. But as the Richter case again reminds us, to forget is a convenient collective choice that lasts only until the chieftaincy claim of a person "known" to descend from a lineage of slavery is contested.

Slavery and Constitutions of Ghana

Besides the independence constitution enacted in 1957, Ghana has promulgated four others: in 1960, 1969, 1979, and 1992. The 1957 and 1960 constitutions respectively mirrored the country's transition from British colonial rule and republican status. They followed British templates and thus were not elaborately formulated to reflect Ghana's realities and needs. However, Article 40 of the 1957 Constitution, made "customary law" a source of law in Ghana (Constitution 1957). This provision has been reproduced with minor modifications in all the subsequent constitutions (Constitution 1992: 10). Taken together, we make three

important observations about the constitutional (legal) history of Ghana. Firstly, Ghana has incorporated international law conceived of as conventions, agreements, treaties, etc., that it has ratified into its constitutions. They can, therefore, be adjudicated by the courts of the country. Secondly, the customary law of the different societies of Ghanaians is good law, for so long as the law does not offend good conscience and is not repugnant to natural justice and equity. Stated differently, customary law is good law if it conduces to good governance and does not infringe on the human rights of Ghanaians. Finally, the sources of law of Ghana, that is statutory parliamentary, common, and customary laws are good law only where they do not conflict with constitutional provisions.

The political experiences of Ghana in the early years of the country's independence focused the attention of the subsequent constitutions of 1969 and 1979 on first-generation political and economic rights of Ghanaians without addressing the rights of socially disadvantaged groups (Constitution 1969: article 27; Constitution 1979: article 31). The 1992 Constitution, however, made some marginal progress on previous constitutions by prohibiting discrimination against persons on the grounds of social status and circumstance of birth (see articles 17 and 35(5)). If the constitutional provision prohibits discrimination against a Ghanaian based on the circumstance of birth, why did the Supreme Court not rely on it to strike down the Asante customary law that prohibits a person of slave ancestry from ascending to chiefly office?

Our first response, learning from Martin Chanock, is that legal practitioners of the Anglo-Saxon common law tradition "are not attuned to the idea of historical change" (1985: 3), largely because of their fixation with precedent. Secondly, and because of the foregoing, there is the rigid adherence of lawyers and judges in Ghana to the rules of the court. In keeping with established practice in the courts, (inherited from the Anglo-Saxon common law tradition), matters that are not pleaded by parties to a dispute cannot be adjudicated upon by judges. In the case of Brobbey v. Kwaku, the legal point of discrimination contrary to the provisions of the 1992 Constitution was not specifically pleaded; the legal or constitutional point was, therefore, not before the Supreme Court. Hence, it did not consider or adjudicate on that specific matter.

How Might the Silenced Memory of Slave Histories in Ghana Be Broken?

Ghanaians are now breaking their silence on slavery and the slave trades and, a combination of factors account for this. Firstly, there were two important initiatives by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) which began in 1979 when it pronounced the European fortifications in Ghana as World Heritage Sites; they,

therefore, became sites that represented history that should be protected and preserved. UNESCO also funded the slave routes project which supported research and documentation of slave routes in Ghana and West Africa because of which sites of slavery have become better known.[5] The UNESCO initiatives were a happy conjoint of circumstances for Ghana which wanted to satisfy the interests of heritage tourism and Black diasporians who desired to pursue their ancestral roots in Africa. Secondly, Blacks in the diaspora in the West who continue to suffer from racial, political, social, and economic discrimination have forced the issue of slavery and the slave trades into western public consciousness in such ways that open discussions of slavery and the slave trades and their legacies could no longer be avoided (Oostindie 2007). Thirdly, Ghana decided to fortify its relationship with the Black diasporan cultural and economic world, originally built shortly after Ghana's independence when many prominent Afro-Americans relocated to Ghana. In 1986, 1992, and 1998 Ghana established respectively the houses of Dr William E.B. DuBois and George Padmore, two distinguished Pan-Africanists, as national monuments, the biennial Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST), and the Emancipation Day. PANAFEST is a festival of all Africans and peoples of African descent dedicated to the ideals of Pan-Africanism and Emancipation Day that commemorates the abolition of slavery in former British colonies.

The two festivals are to serve as bridges across the Atlantic to entice Blacks in the diaspora to maintain regular contact with Ghana. Initially, festivals were celebrated mainly in the Cape Coast and Elmina castles; now they are a weeklong celebration covering many sites of slavery and the slave trades in Ghana. In 2019, to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of the landing of African slaves in the United States, Ghana instituted the "Year of Return" and subsequently, "Beyond the Return" to encourage Africans in the diaspora to visit Ghana (Pierre 2013). These developments have fuelled the production of academic research and publication on slavery and the slave trades in Ghana by Ghanaian scholars and academics based in Ghana from 1996 and, refreshingly, the first publications focused on slavery and the slave trades in hitherto neglected societies in discourse on slavery. Beginning in 2000, Manu Herbstein (2000), Yaa Gyasi (2017), and Ayesha Harruna Attah (2018) relying on archival documents and oral tradition began to publish historical novels on the internal organisation of the Atlantic slave trade in Ghana.

[5] A representative sample includes the complex Sankana caves and surrounding rocky terrain, in which the Dagaare hid themselves from slave raiders and observed their movements; the over sixty slave markets including those at Kasana, Bole, Yendi, Wa, Saakpuli, and Salaga, where slaves were openly sold and bought; the Kara slave defense wall in Gwollu constructed by the Sisala as protection against rapacious slave raiders and, Assin Manso *donko nsuo* (slave river) where slaves had their last bath on their way to the European fortifications on the coast.

Slavery has been the rule rather than the unfortunate exception in world history; every human society has practiced slavery in one form or another. It is why slavery is immemorial and pervasive. In 1998, the French Assemblee Nationale, declared the Atlantic slave trade a crime against humanity. The Dutch government followed the lead of the French a year later and expressed remorse for the involvement of the Netherlands in the Atlantic slave trade. In 2001, the Dutch government erected a national monument to commemorate the slave trade in Amsterdam, the inauguration of which was attended by the prime minister and members of the royal family including the queen. Finally, on 2 July 2023, the king of the Netherlands, Willem-Alexander, speaking at the commemoration of the anniversary of his country's abolishing of the slave trade, openly apologized for the country's role in the Atlantic slave trade.[6] Even though neither the French nor the Dutch have said anything about reparations or atonement, they deserve commendation for taking the first important step in acknowledging their involvement in the odious trade (Oostindie 2007). Globally, only a few countries previously involved in slavery have admitted guilt. It is, therefore, not surprising that it has taken Europeans so long to begin to show remorse.

Might Ghana emulate the voluntary confession of the French and the Dutch and, now boldly take the first step to eradicate all vestiges of slavery and activate its constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination and prejudice based on circumstance of birth? Might Ghanaian lawyers litigate the status of descendants of slaves in the light of the provisions of the 1992 Constitution and international and regional human rights instruments to which Ghana has subscribed? Might judges in Ghana invoke international and regional human rights instruments in their decisions?

There are many worthy examples for Ghana to follow and they may just be the beginning. Four examples would suffice for now. The Netherlands has established a national research and educational institute (NiNsee) for the study of the Atlantic slave trade (Oostindie 2007: 258). A serious academic and research institute to study the institution of slavery and the slave trades in Ghana, transparently and honestly would have many benefits and serve Ghana well. Even though the current narrative of ancestral victimhood provides a comforting myth for millions and rewriting it would remove that comfort, Mr. Cartey's failed attempt to ascend to the Mampong stool is a good reason for revisiting the past. Ghanaian societies must admit their historical involvement in various slave trades and the fact that many traditional, political, social, and economic institutions that guide national life are still marked by slavery. Secondly, Ghanaians who are denied the benefits of consanguinity and who are marginalised in chieftaincy and society at large will never reap the benefits of emancipa-

[6] *Daily Graphic*, 3 July 2023.

tion if Ghanaians continue to selectively use slave ancestry as a basis to dismiss the political claims of citizens who are directly linked to this past. Thirdly, critical studies of slavery and the slave trades in Ghana would reveal the extent of the practice, comfort the victims and those who still suffer from it that their voices have been or can be heard, and assure the perpetrators that society can peacefully transition into an equitable era without a lid on a disturbingly unacceptable past. Fourthly, it would also enable current perpetrators of the legacies of the enslavement era to rethink and retool their political, social, and economic institutions and afford genuine emancipation and empowerment. Finally, the output of an academic and research institute would hopefully feed into school and university curricula and, therefore, enhance the frontiers of breaking the silence over the past.

Furthermore, Ghana can build on its example of the recent past. In 1985, for instance, the Government of Ghana passed the Intestate Succession Law to override the Akan customary law practice in which the estate of a deceased Akan male who died intestate passed to his matrilineal family to the exclusion or neglect of his nuclear family.[7] The injustice in the operation of some nuptial customary laws and the untold hardships that it inflicted on Akan nuclear families were known for generations. Under the 1985 Intestate Succession Law, nearly all the estate of an Akan male who died without a will was given to his nuclear family. Similarly, a national law could be enacted to protect persons who face servile-related discrimination under customary law.

To use the German term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or "overcoming the past" Ghana must face its troubled past involvement in slave dealing and deal with its traditional political, social, and economic institutions which sustain social inequality and injustice. This way, the histories of Ghana's traditional, political, social, and economic institutions would be based as much as possible on researched knowledge of what transpired in the past. Knowledge from this research will enable questioning contemporary injustices, intolerance, atrocities, cruelties, racism, discrimination, and xenophobia that are rooted in selective recall of slave ancestry.

In this paper, we have drawn attention to the problems associated with Ghana's treatment of persons of slave ancestry. We are aware that some of our suggestions are uncomfortable and would perhaps meet opposition among Ghanaians. Nonetheless, we believe that unravelling these thorny questions is of historiographical importance because they must guide our academic and ethical responsibilities as historians. Building from the knowledge that we produce from a new kind of *activist-scholarship* that interrogates the social impact of slavery in Ghana, we must remain in conversation with other professionals of law including lawyers, judges, and public intellectuals.

---

[7] PNDC Law 185.

Bibliography

Anquandah, J. "Researching the Historic Slave Trade in Ghana: An Overview". In *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Landmarks, Legacies and Expectations*, edited by J.K. Anquandah, Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang and Michel R. Doortmont, 23–53. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007.

Bayo Hosley. *Routes of Remembrance, Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Chanock, Martin. *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Darkwah, K. "Antecedents of Asante Culture". *Transactions of the History of Ghana* New Series, 3 (1999): 57–79.

Der, Benedict. *The Slave Trade in Northern Ghana.* Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1998.

Donkoh, W.J. "Legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in Ghana: Definitions, Understanding and Perceptions". In *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, edited by Anquandah, Opoku-Agyemang and Doortmont, 305–325. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007.

Fortes, M. and Dieterlen, G. *African Systems of Thought.* London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Ghana Council for Law Reporting. *Ghana Law Reports.* Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1995.

Goody, J. "The Akan and the North". *Ghana Notes and Queries* 9 (1966): 18–24.

Gyasi, Yaa. *Homegoing*. New York: Vintage Books, 2017.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Lose Your Mother, A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007.

Harruna, Attah Ayesha. *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*. New York: Other Press, 2018.

Herstein, Manu. *Ama, A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. London: E-reads, 2000.

Howell, Allison M. "'Showers of Arrows': The Reactions and Resistance of the Kasena to Slave Raids in the 18th and 19th Centuries". In *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, edited by Anquandah, Opoku-Agyemang and Doortmont, 189–209. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007.

Howell, Allison M. *The Slave Trade and Reconciliation: A Northern Ghana Perspective*. Accra: BCA and SIM Ghana, 1998.

Jenkins, Paul. "Legends and Silences: The Public Image of Basel Mission History". In *Mission Possible? The Basel Mission Collection Reflecting Cultural Encounters*, edited by Anna Schmid and Kathrin Fischer, 51–60. Basel: Museum der Kulturen Basel, 2015.

Karen, Ella. "The Atlantic Slave Trade in Ghanaian Academic Historiography: History, Memory and Power". *William and Mary Quarterly* 66(4) (2009): 975–1000.

Klein, A.N. "Slavery and Akan Origins". *Ethnohistory* 41(4) (1994): 627–656.

Maier, D.J.E. "Asante War Aims in the 1869 Invasion of Ewe". In *The Golden Stool: Studies of Asante Center and Periphery*, edited by E. Schildkrout, 232–244. New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1987.

Maier, D.J.E. "Military Acquisition of Slaves in Asante". In *West African Economic and Social History: Studies in Memory of Marion Johnson*, edited by D. Henige and T.C. McCaskie, 119–132. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1990.

Miers, Suzanne and Igor Kopytoff. *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977.

Mustapha, T.M. and J. Goody. "Wenchi and its Inhabitants". *Research Review* 1 (1965): 156-169.

Oostindie, G. "The Slippery Paths of Commemoration and Heritage Tourism: The Netherlands, Ghana and the Rediscovery of the Atlantic Slavery". In *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, edited by Anquandah, Opoku-Agyemang and Doortmont, 252–276. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007.

Opoku-Agyeman, Naana Jane. "The Living Experience of Slave Trade in Sankana and Gwollu: Implications for Tourism". In *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, edited by Anquandah, Opoku-Agyemang and Doortmont, 210–223. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007.

Perbi, A.A. "The Legacy of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana". In *Slavery and its Legacies in Ghana and the Diaspora*, edited by Rebecca Shumway and Trevor R. Getz, 202–218. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

Perbi, A.A. *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Century*. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004.

Penningroth, D.C. "The Claims of Slaves and Ex-slaves to Family Property: A Transatlantic Comparison". *American Historical Review* (2007): 1039–1069.

Pierre, Jemima. *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Poku, K. "Traditional Roles and People of Slave Origin in Modern Ashanti: A Few Impressions". *Ghana Journal of Sociology* 5(1) (1969): 34–38.

Republic of Ghana. *The Constitution of Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1992.

Republic of Ghana. *Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1979*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1979.

Republic of Ghana. *Constitution of Republic of Ghana, 1969*. Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1969.

Republic of Ghana. *Constitution of Ghana, 1957*. Accra: Assembly Press, 1957.

Rodney, W. "Gold and Slaves on the Gold Coast". *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 10(1969): 13–28.

Sarbah, J.M. *Fanti Customary Laws*. London: Frank Cass, [1897] 1968.

Wilks, I. "Slavery and Akan Origins? A Reply". *Ethnohistory* 41(4) (1994): 656–665.

3 Basel Mission *Salems*, Schools, and Conflicts in Two African Towns, 1830s–1874

Frank Afari, University of Education, Winneba

Introduction

The historiography of the Basel Mission's (hereafter, BM) nearly two centuries of evangelical and educational endeavours in Ghana acknowledges the perennial conflicts between the BM and its host indigenous communities (Agbeti 1986; Smith 1966; Debrunner 1967; Agyemang 2006; Kwamena-Poh 2011). However, with few exceptions (see Jenkins 1972; Addo-Fening 1982; Middleton 1983), the extant literature lacks studies depicting these conflicts in specific local contexts, particularly in pre-colonial towns and villages where the Mission settled. This chapter uses Gyadam and Kyebi, both Akyem Abuakwa[8] towns (the latter being the capital), as micro-historical case studies to illustrate what Paul Jenkins has termed as "the fundamental everyday conflict which formed itself around every new Christian community in the interior" of precolonial Ghana in the 19th century (Jenkins 1972: 247–278). The history of the BM's relationship with precolonial Akyem Abuakwa was a chequered one, marked by periods of harmony alternating with periods of conflict. Gyadam and Kyebi represent a confluence of themes that have become staples in church-state conflicts—the introduction of western-style schooling, the establishment of Christian quarters (*Salems*) and the boarding school system, stand-offs with traditional priests, and the enrolment of slaves and pawns in school. This chapter argues that the Gyadam and Kyebi cases amply illustrate the harmonies and conflicts that characterised relations between the BM and its indigenous hosts during the pre-colonial period.

This chapter draws on Jenkins' "Abstracts from the Gold Coast Correspondence of the Basel Mission" (hereafter, "Abstracts"), a compilation of translated correspondence from the BM Archives in Switzerland, accessed at the Zimmermann Library of the Akrofi-Christaller

[8] Modern Akyem comprises three sub-divisions, namely Akyem Abuakwa, Akyem Kotoku, and Akyem Bosome. The largest sub-division is Akyem Abuakwa, which accounts for around two-thirds of modern Akyem territory and encompasses much of the western half of Ghana's Eastern Region. It is bordered to the north and north-west by Kwahu, and to the east and southeast by Krobo, New Dwaben, and Akuapem. Akyem Abuakwa is flanked on the south by Agona and on the west by Akyem Kotoku. Akyem Abuakwa stretches from Jejeti and Kankang in the north to Adeiso in the south-west, straddling the Nsawam-Nkawkaw railway, with most of the state lying west of it (Ofosu-Mensah 2015: 2).

Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture (ACI) at Akropong in Akuapem, Ghana. Jenkins' "Abstracts" contains letters and reports written by mainly European missionaries, pastors, and catechists stationed on the Gold Coast (or colonial Ghana) between 1852 and 1898. While they are invaluable as a source for understanding the responses of Akyem Abuakwa monarchs, slaves, pupils, and ordinary indigenes to the BM's educational efforts, these writings are inflected with their writers' presuppositions about their precolonial African hosts. This situation is further exacerbated by a dearth of writings produced by Africans who encountered or interacted with the Mission.

To redress this paucity, this chapter couples a reading of the "Abstracts" with illuminating secondary sources that have foregrounded African agency in precolonial educational efforts in Akyem Abuakwa. Thereby, it will acknowledge the agency of monarchs, ordinary citizens, pupils, slaveholders, and slaves who responded in diverse ways to the educational efforts of missionaries, while attempting to tease out their motivations. This approach follows historian Frederick Cooper's urging to pay close attention to the precise ways in which Africans "engaged, contested, deflected, and appropriated" (Cooper 1994) power within the colonial encounter or acted "on their own" (Guha and Spivak 1988) in response to its imperatives. This chapter is intended as a modest addition to works analysing the BM's conflicts and triumphs within specific towns as **Kwakye does in this volume**. The period covered in this essay is between the late 1830s, when the mission arrived in Akyem Abuakwa, until Britain colonised the Gold Coast in 1874.

Salems, Separation, and Conflict

The BM's method of proselytisation in Africa must be understood in the context of its social origins as well as its religious ethos. Though the BM was headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, in the 19th century, a good number of its missionaries posted from Europe to Africa were recruited from the Pietist communes of Württemberg in southwestern Germany (Jenkins 1980). Their evangelistic philosophy was anchored in Pietism, a movement that considered faith and daily life as inextricably linked. Besides, they aimed not only to alter religious beliefs but social practices as well (Sill 2010: 75). Their Puritanism, which separated them from surrounding communities, influenced their work abroad (Jenkins 1980: 426). Hence, they organised their settlements in Africa as close-knit communities patterned after the Pietist villages in Württemberg.

Following the example of Württemberg, the BM established communes called *Salems* or exclusive settlements for "nurturing" African Christian converts in their newfound faith. Osu (a suburb of Accra), and Akropong (capital of the Akwapim state) are two of the BM's

earliest stations on the Gold Coast where model *Salems* were first established. The *Salems* became a widespread settlement model where Christian adherents lived "rigorous, disciplined lives under strict church supervision" (Sewordor 2022: 198). Indeed, the *Salems* were envisioned to be "places where a Christian pattern of morality could be built up" (Jenkins 1980: 430). Residents were expected to conduct themselves as exemplars of the Mission's piety and Christian discipline. A typical *Salem* settlement had a Mission House (or Manse), a church, a boarding school with an adjoining playground, the homes that constituted the "Christen Dorf", (or "Christian village"), surrounded by farms and gardens that cordoned off the entire settlement as a distinct enclave (Ferrell 2013: 81). These "model" Christian quarters sheltered pupils and converts who had been separated from their homes and integrated into the daily social, educational and congregational activities of the Mission. Nowadays, mention of the *Salems* in Ghana conjures memories of separatist enclaves distinct from their host indigenous communities. However, the earliest *Salems*, as Ulrike Sill has shown, were never planned to function as independent Christian communes detached from their host communities (Sill 2010: 195). Despite current public perceptions of the historical *Salem* as a "tangible 'icon' of separation" (Grant 2020: 171), not all Christians lived in the *Salem*, and neither did a *Salem* constitute fixed, non-negotiable, boundaries that wholly excluded non-Christians (Sewordor 2022). But it is also worth noting that the *Salems* became, as Lacy Ferrell has argued, spaces where the missionaries "carefully constructed an expression of their own influence" (2013: 81). However, this influence did not imply the establishment of an *imperium in imperio,* nor did the Mission qualify to be described as religious separatists in the true sense.

In 1839 the pioneer BM evangelist, Andreas Riis, visited Kyebi to explore the possibility of extending the Mission's evangelistic outreaches there. Though the outcome of Riis' visit remains unclear, concerted efforts to establish a mission station in Akyem began in 1851 with the visit of Simon Süss, one of the missionaries who was based in their earlier station at Akropong. Süss scouted Akyem Abuakwa to survey the possibilities of extending the Mission's activities there. He arrived first at Gyadam, an Akyem Abuakwa town inhabited predominantly by some refugees of Akyem Kotoku origin (Kwamena-Poh 2011: 112). Kofi Agyeman, chief of Gyadam, received Süss and expressed interest in having him set up a missionary station in his town. According to the BM reports, "a long conversation followed in the evening" of Süss' arrival and by the time of his departure Agyeman "had promised to send two boys to the school in Akropong within two weeks."[9] From Gyadam, Süss proceeded to Kyebi,[10] where he

[9] Süss to Basel, in "Abstracts from the Gold Coast Correspondence of the Basel Mission", 3 February 1852, 3.

[10] In most of the missionary and colonial records "Kyebi" is spelt as "Kibi".

was welcomed with "pomp" amidst the sounds of "horns blowing and drums" by Atta Panin, the incumbent *Ɔkyenhene* (paramount chief)[11] of Akyem Abuakwa.[12] Atta Panin engaged Süss in discussions about setting up a missionary base in his state, and was no less eager to press home his demands for the education of his sons. Courting the two chiefs' support, as Süss had done, reflected a tendency by the missionaries to rely on the goodwill and consent of chiefs. These preliminary interactions earmarked the earliest cooperation between the Mission and the Akyem Abuakwa state.

The reasons for the two monarchs' desire to put their sons and subjects under the tutelage of European missionary schoolteachers are uncertain, however, we may trace Atta Panin's interest back to his boyhood experience with western-style schooling in 1823, on the eve of the Battle of Nsamankow in 1824, fought between the Asante and the British with their coastal allies including the Akyem (Abaka and Kwarteng 2021). In the prelude to that battle, his mother, Queenmother Dokuaa, surrendered him and his twin brother, Atta Obuom, to the Gã chiefs as "hostages" as a pledge of her commitment to the British-led anti-Asante alliance. The twins were enrolled in a Wesleyan School for a brief period, giving them a taste of western-style schooling. That formative stint must have partly become the wellspring of Atta Panin's interest in western-style schooling as *Ɔkyenhene*. An additional motivation may be deduced from the fact that in the 19th century, Akyem Abuakwa was a respected trading partner of Europeans, noted for its supply of gold and slaves to the Danes at Christiansborg (Addo-Fening 1997: 35). Atta Panin and Agyeman must have considered the literacy of their heirs and subjects as critical to the long-term sustainability of Euro-Abuakwa relations and the future of this commercial partnership.

In September 1853, the BM eventually set up its first missionary station at Gyadam (Addo-Fening 2008: 83) based apparently on the somewhat friendly disposition of Agyeman. There, Süss held church services, engaged in farming tobacco, and purchased land from Agyeman.[13] He farmed the land and erected a house on it, which had multiple functions as a residence, church, and school.[14] These teaching sessions birthed a school, signifying the first seed of western-style schooling in Akyem Abuakwa. The records give no clue as to what type of school it was, how it was run, or what its initial enrolment was even though the nationalist scholar and prominent indigene of Kyebi J.B. Danquah described it as "a senior school for boys" (Danquah 1928: 21). By 1854, a nascent *Salem* had sprung up in Gyadam, with Süss' school attracting attention for its promise of literacy training to children and converts.

---

11 The term *Ɔkyenhene* (or Okyenhene) is the titular designation of the paramount chief or king of Akyem Abuakwa.

12 Süss to Basel, in "Abstracts", 3 February 1852, 3.

13 Protocol of a general conference at Osu, in "Abstracts", 13–16 June 1854, 24.

14 Süss to Basel, in "Abstracts", 27 Nov. 1854, 24-25.

Süss' success attracted an influx of missionaries from Akropong and these include David Baum, Abraham Hönger, Johannes Kromer, Johannes Haas, and Christian Asante.[15] Asante was the only African among this early cohort of European missionaries who settled at Gyadam. Trained at the Mission's Catechetical Institute at Akropong, Asante was posted to Gyadam to become a teacher-catechist[16] of the local congregation—a move that may have been deliberately intended to serve as an example and a promise of what an African indigene acquainted with western-style schooling could become. Described by his colleague David Eisenschmid as "a man who loves his pupils" and "works to increase his knowledge", Asante became a useful conduit for imparting literacy and religious knowledge at Gyadam.[17] He reportedly organised night classes to teach adult African Christian converts of the BM to read and write. By October 1859, eight young men were attending Asante's classes, whom he taught to read and study the bible.[18]

Despite these strides, Kromer reported that the interest of both royalty and subjects in the school soon began to dwindle, citing Agyeman's "prohibition on children going to the school".[19] Haas similarly reported that Agyeman disliked the practice of parents giving their children to the missionaries to be brought up in the station.[20] In yet another report, Haas stated that "the elders and the king have been sending their children to school spasmodically".[21] The troubling concern to both royalty and subjects was that the Mission had initiated the practice of separating children from the "pagan" influences of their parents and raising them within the *Salem*.

Some parents who enroled their children allowed them to stay with the missionaries in the *Salem*, which irritated some Gyadam residents, including Agyeman. Agyeman's and some of his subjects' distaste for the separation of children from their homes may be due to three plausible reasons. First, the practice alienated children from their communal and cultural settings, denying them proper nurture in their own culture. Secondly, Gyadam, like all other indigenous African communities, thrived on and derived strength from a sense of communal bonding and greater security found in numbers. The Mission's habit of

---

15 Other missionaries entered and exited Akyem Abuakwa at various times and they include Andreas Riis, David Eisenschmid, Joseph Mohr, Johann G. Widmann, Johann C. Dieterle, Marquart, Timothy Mullings, Elias Schrenk, Philip Heinrich Bohner, Charles Strömberg, Lodholtz, Johann Gottlieb Christaller, Johann A. Mader, and Karl Buck.

16 Here I use "teacher-catechist" to denote "the autochthonous personnel of the Basel Mission who led the local congregations" (See Beutter 2015: 114).

17 Eisenschmid's report on the school for 1864, in "Abstracts", 27 Dec. 1864, 516.

18 Haas' third quarterly report for 1859, in "Abstracts", 29 Oct. 1859, 43.

19 Kromer's third quarterly report for 1859, in "Abstracts", 29 Oct. 1859, 43.

20 Haas' third quarterly, in "Abstracts", 29 Oct. 1859, 43.

21 Haas to Basel, in "Abstracts", 1 Dec. 1859, 42.

"uprooting" pupils and converts from their families undermined Akan social cohesion and concept of community. On the other hand, pupils and converts must have yielded to being "uprooted" for the prospects of receiving western-style schooling which they saw as a tool to negotiate their interactions with the missionaries. Thirdly, Agyeman may have perceived the Mission's growing influence as amounting to the creation of an alternative and rival authority that threatened to usurp his control over the lives of his subjects. He was keen on promoting literacy among his subjects. However, he found the Mission's proselytising strategy of separation divisive and worth resisting. His initial fascination with the possibilities presented by schooling, combined with his later concern about the divisive effects of schooling, reflected a troubling ambivalence. We are, however, denied the chance to see the climax of his resistance because, in 1860, a war broke out between Gyadam and Kyebi over territorial disputes. The war destroyed Gyadam, disrupted the burgeoning schooling efforts, and as Addo-Fening has shown, it "made the position of the Basel Mission in the town untenable" (Addo-Fening 1997: 56). Consequently, the Mission took temporary refuge at Kukurantumi, hoping to resume its evangelisation after the war.

A year after the war, in 1861, the missionaries resumed their evangelistic activities by establishing their headquarters at Kyebi. There they met Atta Obuom as the new *Ɔkyenhene* (his predecessor Atta Panin having died shortly before the war). Obuom sold a piece of land to the Mission, on which it built a *Salem* including a boarding school. The school, however, became a point of attraction to both royalty and subjects and, over time, a source of provocation to some residents of Kyebi. For instance, Obuom gave his son Apeanyo to be educated by the Mission and in 1862, he mobilised 15 boys for enrolment. His reign saw a rise in the number of enthusiastic supporters of mission-style education from different classes of Akyem society, including the towns of Kukurantumi and Asiakwa. Yet tensions soon began to rise, according to Stromberg, as some elderly members of the town expressed worry that by separating pupils from their homes, the "Europeans will take their children from them for good".[22] For farmer parents, allowing children to enrol in school—which partly entailed living in the *Salem*— amounted to a loss of extra labour derived from children as farm hands. The Mission, therefore, grappled with a growing popular perception that its settlement and *modus operandi* risked "withdrawing people from their normal allegiance."[23] Despite these public fears, the school continued to run under what Stromberg described as the "favourable" patronage of Obuom.[24]

---

22 Stromberg's Report for the Kibbi station in the year 1862, in "Abstracts", 24 Jan. 1863, 507.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.

Fig. 5: BMA QD-32.008.0260. "Kyebi, seen from the south". c. 1885–1911. Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

Obuom's goodwill could not salvage the school from traditional priests who saw it as a vehicle for indoctrination aimed at undermining the state's traditional religion. The school and the *Salem* symbolised the Mission's rejection of their host African community as so-called "pagans", laying the groundwork for a clash with the custodians of the state's traditional religion. The Mission desired that its pupils and converts would zealously embrace Christianity and reject their traditional beliefs as "heathen", evoking protests from traditional priests. For instance, the traditional priests of Tafo and Kukurantumi vehemently opposed an elder from Tafo who planned to enrol all his children in the school.[25] These protests were also bolstered by opposition from former slave owners who decried the Mission's efforts to convert their ex-slaves in order to grow its Christian adherents.

Slaves, Pawns, Houseboys, and Schooling

In the 1860s, the BM's leadership seriously discussed slaveholding, following an awareness that some African members of the entire Christian missionary communities on the Gold Coast possessed slaves (Haenger 2000: xiii). Beforehand, two anti-slavery legislations

[25] Section II of Kromer's report, in "Abstracts", 30 June 1865, 519.

existed, signifying a growing global discontent with slavery. The first, passed in 1807, prohibited the Atlantic slave trade, and was followed by the Act of 1834 that prohibited slavery throughout the British Empire (Perbi 2007: 152–153). After the passing of Emancipation Act of 1874, which abolished slavery on the Gold Coast, the Mission drew strength from it to fuel its anti-slavery campaigns and increase enrolment in its schools.

The practice of slaveholding conflicted with the Mission's ethos because, as Miller (2003: 15) argues, the Mission's initial claim to legitimacy in West Africa was founded on an avowal to establish and maintain a Pietist Christian presence and to offer testimony against the evils of the European transatlantic slave trade and its attendant economic exploitation. To discourage slaveholding, the Mission issued a directive to form a Slave Emancipation Commission in the 1860s to report on the conditions of slaves and slave owners on the Gold Coast, and to secure liberty for the slaves.[26] That directive further gave rise to efforts to convert liberated slaves to Christianity, and enrol them in the Mission's boarding school such that by 1865, the Kyebi school had enroled several ex-slaves to the provocation of some former slavers. For example, Kwasi Amoako, *Gyaasehene*[27] of Kyebi who was "one of the greatest slave owners of the state" (Addo-Fening 1997: 13) vehemently opposed the enrolment of his pawn, Jonathan Asumany, on suspicion that the boy would be baptised and thereafter become the Mission's property. The missionaries tried to reassure Amoako that the school would not dispossess him of his slaves.[28] Another ex-slave called Nathaniel Kodjo Amaku found his way into the school as a convert.[29] Some of these young people sought to fortify their newly found freedom from enslavement by further enroling in the boarding school system for specialised technical training.

The fervour for schooling caught on with numerous young people such that by 1866, the Kyebi township was brimming with enthusiastic young boys marching in droves to beg for admission into the boarding school to receive education. Eisenschmid reported that there was "pressure to be taken on as house servants with time to go to school by both boys and girls in Kibi".[30] He recounted the case of Yaw Koi from Boadua who "came quite off his own bat asking for admittance into the Boarding School".[31] Others included Bosompem, son of an elderly catechumen, Immanuel Adom, a schoolboy from Kukurantumi, Stephen Saki, a former houseboy of Christaller and later Eisenschmid, Alex Doto from Asiakwa, and

---

26 Ibid.
27 This title denotes the head of the royal household of Kyebi.
28 Eisenschmid to Basel, in "Abstracts", 31 Dec. 1865, 518.
29 Eisenschmid's report for the third quarter 1866, in "Abstracts", 29 Sep. 1866, 529.
30 Eisenschmid's report for the year 1866, in "Abstracts", 8 Jan. 1867, 526.
31 Ibid.

Konamoa of Apapam who came with his friend pressing for admission into the school.[32] In neighbouring Kukurantumi, all the schoolboys or "scholars", as the missionaries called them, were house servants of Kromer.

The BM records, bereft of the voices of these enrolment seekers, are correspondingly silent on their motivations. However, the Mission's curriculum and the allure it held for liberated slaves and houseboys seeking avenues for economic and social self-empowerment may offer us a window into their motivations. Mader's report on an inspection of the Kyebi School in 1869 observed that the curriculum of instruction run by the school included biblical history, biblical geography, reading, religious knowledge, natural history, arithmetic, the learning of texts, and singing.[33] Promising graduates continued their education at the Seminary at Akropong. Those who were talented in practical work learnt carpentry or went to Osu to take up an apprenticeship in locksmithing. One of such boys, Samuel Amoa, became a carpenter.[34] We can reasonably deduce that the enrolment seekers, notably the ex-slaves, targeted this specialised training for their own upward mobility. Whatever diverse motivations inspired the surge in enrolment seekers, it is certain, as argued by Ferrell, that "schools represented sites of opportunity" such that Africans engaging with the mission strategically used "new tools such as literacy to refigure their social and political identities". "Even among very young children", argues Ferrell, "the status of "schoolboy" or "schoolgirl" affected social status" (2013: 22).

Ɔkyenhene Obuom died in 1867, and his nephew Kwasi Panin succeeded him under the stool name Amoako Atta I from 1867 to 1887. Under his tenure, the period of cooperation between church and state was replaced by hostility. *Ɔkyenhene* Amoako Atta I himself had attended the Kyebi School and was known to have had "some knowledge of biblical history" with a special fascination for the story of Joseph.[35] Under his influence and that of his elders the boarding school "increased by 7 boarding-boys at the end of the year".[36] In 1873, Haas testified that the "*Okyenhene* is favourable to boys' staying in the school", and that "this, and the missionaries' own steadfastness, helps them to succeed in retaining some of the boys whom the families try to take away from the school".[37] Despite these accolades, Amoako Atta I was hostile towards the school beginning in 1868, when the Mission, having achieved limited success in its conversion efforts, attempted to convert his palace functionaries, particularly his slaves. Amoako Atta I resisted the conversion of his palace functionaries to

32 Ibid.
33 Minutes of a conference about the Kibi school, in "Abstracts", 18 Jan. 1870, 552.
34 Kromer's report for the first quarter of 1869, in "Abstracts", 15 Mar. 1869, 544.
35 Eisenschmid's report for the year 1867, in "Abstracts", 7 Jan. 1868, 531.
36 Ibid, 532.
37 Haas' report on the school for the third quarter of 1873, in "Abstracts", 3 Oct. 1873, 578.

Christianity, causing a series of confrontations with the Mission. Furthermore, the school occasionally suffered the brunt of his wrath such that Lodholtz reported in 1871 that the *Ɔkyenhene's* "anger has put the very existence of the school in doubt".[38] Surprisingly, the anti-Christian sentiments generated by Amoako Atta's dispute with the BM did not stifle the enthusiasm of enrolment-seeking youths.

Mader observed in 1873 that two schoolboys were expelled from the Kyebi school for drunkenness. One of them came with his parents pleading for re-admission. When given the option of expulsion or flogging as a punishment, the boy chose the latter.[39] His rejection of expulsion suggests a discomfort with being excluded from the haven that the school provided despite the austerity of its Pietist Christian ethos. Despite the deplorable severity associated with it, the Mission considered a regulated use of corporal punishment as a tool for teachers and catechists to instil discipline and values in children; nonetheless, the Mission did not condone unrestrained use of it (Ferrell 2013: 92–93). Teachers occasionally struggled to strike an appropriate balance between acceptable levels of discipline and the abuse of the practice. For example, Riis once inflicted a humiliating corporal punishment on an errant young man to the horror of the local Christian community (Miller 2003: 134). The foregoing episodes attest to the notoriety of Mission schools as sites where corporal punishment partly originated, and later became a widespread practice in Ghanaian formal schooling.

Other cases suggest that some youth's drive for enrolment sometimes outweighed parental objections. For instance, Haas who became headmaster of the Kyebi boarding school reported "a definite movement among potential pupils to find their own way to school and set aside the hindrances imposed by the elders".[40] Some boys fled from Apapam, Adadientam, Abomosu, and Kwaben (all Abuakwa towns) to the Mission station at Kyebi without the permission of their parents.[41] The missionaries, too, subtly exploited the situation to retain the boys. Whenever their reluctant parents attempted to reclaim them, the missionaries conditioned their release on parents' reimbursement of the feeding costs incurred, which frequently discouraged the parents.[42] As Haas put it, the missionaries took advantage of the "boys' determination to stay" to keep them.[43] The "rebellious" evasion of parental consent by enrolment-seeking youths coupled with the hurdles imposed upon parents by an abetting Mission, must have exacerbated the simmering church-state tensions.

---

38 Jahresbericht for 1871 (Lodholtz's writing), in "Abstracts", 11 Jan. 1872, 565.
39 Haas' report for the first quarter of 1873, in "Abstracts", 7 Apr. 1873, 575.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.

Amoako Atta I's rulership coincided with the promulgation of the 1874 Emancipation Act, which produced what Peter Haenger has termed as "waves of migrating slaves who wished to be emancipated" (2000: 12). The Mission's anti-slavery efforts added to those of the colonial government, by encouraging liberated or runaway slaves to settle in *Salems* or enrol in BM schools. As David Asante, a notable pastor and anti-slaver, described, the Emancipation as "the key moment of change for the school"[44] as it bolstered school enrolment and pupils' attendance, even though it came at a cost to many slave owners. Many of the youth of Akyem, particularly the slaves among them, seized upon the Emancipation to seek enrolment in the Kyebi boarding school, which became "a real haven for once slave youths", to use the words of Asante. The school additionally served as a refuge protecting ex-slaves from their resilient masters. Many Akyem slave owners found the liberation of slaves an incalculable loss and a disincentive to industry, and therefore resisted it. This contrasted with the experiences of former slaves who saw emancipation and the opportunity for education as a leveller. Enrolment eroded the distinction between royalty and subject, between the privileged and the lowly as captured in Asante's observation that "it is interesting to see the ex-slave sitting next to the boy from the royal family, and hear the former say to the latter, 'Go and fetch water, we are all alike now'".[45] This reported incident of a freed slave asserting his newly acquired feeling of shared equality could be interpreted as a vital indicator of the value of restored dignity (but not without its limits or contestations as **Baku and Andoh** show in this volume).

Conclusion

This essay takes seriously a call Jenkins made in his "Foreword" to a special issue on inter-war Akyem Abuakwa, co-published by the Historical Society of Ghana and *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* in 1975. Jenkins (1975) insisted that "detailed local studies must be undertaken before the modern historical evolution of Ghana—or indeed of any part of Africa—can be properly understood". Since Jenkins' call, much has changed in the Ghanaian historiographical tradition with the emergence of many local histories, especially of traditional states, sharing a thematic similarity on political, economic, or social history with no serious consideration for micro-historical case studies illustrating an intersection of some of these themes (Adjaye 2008: 12). Decades later, in the "Afterword" to another relevant volume in 2003, Jenkins backed up his call with an urging for a "sustained and

[44] Asante to Basel Frauen Verein (A report on the Kibi boarding school in the third quarter of 1876), in "Abstracts", 18 Oct. 1876, 591.

[45] Ibid.

ever deepening attention" (see in Miller 2003: 222) to the social histories that explore, from ground-up perspectives, the relationship between two different sets of grassroots from two different continents—the BM's agents and *Handelsbrüder* or employees from Europe and African converts, children, and slaves. This chapter, drawing on the "Abstracts", has attempted to satisfy these calls, even if partially, by constructing a micro-history of the BM's conflicts and harmonies with its local hosts in 19th-century Gyadam and Kyebi. Cognizant, however, that mostly European BM agents originally wrote the materials that became the "Abstracts", a fuller response to Jenkins' call in 1975 would require not only the careful extraction of African voices from sources created by Europeans in Africa, but also local indigenous sources. This position makes it an urgent task to combine a critical use of oral traditions (see also **Kwakye** and **Baku and Andoh** in this volume) and spatial analysis of *Salems* to understand the multidimensional layers of encounters between European Basel missionaries and their African hosts in (pre-)colonial Ghana.

Bibliography

Abaka, Edmund and K. Osei Kwarteng (eds.). *The Asante World*. New York: Routledge, 2021.

Addo-Fening, Robert. "Church and State: A Historical Review of Interaction Between the Presbyterian Church and Traditional Authority". An unpublished lecture delivered at the Institute of African Studies (1982): 1–34.

Addo-Fening, Robert. *Akyem Abuakwa 1700-1943: From Ofori Panin to Sir Ofori Atta*. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 1997.

Addo-Fening, Robert. "The Basel Mission and Social Change in 19th Century Akyem Abuakwa Society". *Universitas* 11(1) (2008): 83–92.

Adjaye, Joseph K. "Perspectives on Fifty Years of Ghanaian Historiography". *History in Africa* 35(2008): 1–24.

Agbeti, John K. *West African Church History: Christian Missions and Church Foundations: 1482–1919*. Leiden: Brill, 1986.

Agyemang, Fred M. *Our Presbyterian Heritage*. Accra-North: Pedigree Publications, 2006.

Beutter, Anne. "Church Discipline Chronicled–A New Source for Basel Mission Historiography". *History in Africa* 42 (2015): 109–138.

Cooper, Frederick. "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History". *The American Historical Review* 99(5) (1994): 1516–1545.

Danquah, J.B. *The Akim Abuakwa Handbook*. London: Forster Groom & Co. Ltd., 1928.

Debrunner, Hans W. *A History of Christianity in Ghana*. Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967.

Ferrell, Lacy S. "Fighting for the Future: A History of Education in Colonial Ghana, c. 1900-1940". PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2013.

Grant, Paul Glen. *Healing and Power in Ghana*: *Early Indigenous Expressions of Christianity*. Texas: Baylor University Press, 2020.

Guha, Ranajit and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds.). *Selected Subaltern Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Haenger, Peter. *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast*: *Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage in West Africa*. Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2000.

Jenkins, Paul. "Villagers as Missionaries: Württemberg Pietism as a 19th Century Missionary Movement". *Missiology: An International Review* 8(4) (1980): 425–432.

Jenkins, Paul. "A Conflict of Faiths at Kukurantumi". *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 13(2) (1972): 245–256.

Jenkins, Paul. "Foreword." In a special issue of *Mitteilungen der Basler Afrika Bibliographien* 12 (1975).

John, Middleton. "One Hundred and Fifty Years of Christianity in a Ghanaian Town". *Africa* 53(3) (1983): 2–19.

Kwamena-Poh, M. A. *Vision & Achievement: 1828–1978: A Hundred and Fifty Years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana*. Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2011.

Miller, Jon. *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control: Organizational Contradictions in the Basel Mission on the Gold Coast, 1828–1917*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Ofosu-Mensah, Emmanuel Ababio. "Mining and Conflict in the Akyem Abuakwa Kingdom in the Eastern Region of Ghana, 1919–1938". *The Extractive Industries and Society* 2(3) (2015): 480–490.

Perbi, Akosua Adoma. *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana*: *From the 15th to the 19th Century*. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2007.

Sewordor, E. Sasu Kwame. "The Urban Culture of the 'Model' Christian Settlement at Abokobi, Ghana, 1854–1929". *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 81(2) (2022): 197–212.

Sill, Ulrike. *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood*: *The Basel Mission in Pre- and Early Colonial Ghana*. Boston: Brill, 2010.

Smith, Noel. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835–1960: A Younger Church in a Changing Society*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1966.

Part II

Nurturing Trans-Generational Scholarship From Basel

4 "Patchy but Interesting": Or a Note on the Reward of Digging Deep for Ghanaian Everyday History and Lived Religion

Anne Beutter, University of Lucerne

"Patchy but Interesting": A Promising Comment

As an intern in the Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21) in 2010, well after Paul's retirement, I got to know Paul Jenkins by the accounts of his former and my then colleagues—and through the traces he had left in the infrastructure of the archive, most notably the finding aids. Thus, even if I am rather on the "periphery" of Paul's students there is a way in which words of his were at the core of my own academic trajectory—or at least, words that I attributed to him. What I am referring to here is an uncommon remark in the BM Ghana finding aid. It read: "patchy but interesting" and had been added to the entry regarding a miscellaneous document, a chronicle from the outstation Nkoranza written by Ghanaian lay preachers (catechists) that, although completed only in the 1920s and thus outside of the normal time frame of the Ghana collection in Basel, had ended up in the BM's archive. By what means remains unclear.

"Patchy but interesting"—sounded very promising to me. And the promise was fulfilled: I ended up writing my master's thesis based on this document (Beutter 2015b). And since the BM's rigorous documenting system was rather not inclined to produce outliers,[1] I figured that where there is one there must be—or must have been—many. This reasoning resulted in inquiries that led me to the Carl Christian Reindorf Archives and Special Collection Unit, the newly opened archival section at the library of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute in Akropong, Ghana, in 2016 for my PhD project. There I did indeed find what may be seen as the tip of an iceberg of documents that have been written by Ghanaian church staff on the station and outstation level and/or documenting the day-to-day business, activities, and deliberations at the grassroots level of the church since at least the early twentieth century.[2]

---

1 BMA Q-9.11,27, Verordnungen für die Basler Missionsstationen VII: Korrespondenz-Ordnung 1842–1865.

2 The finding aids are now digitally available and accessible via https://www.aci.edu.gh/library/carl-christian-reindorf-archives-and-special-collection. The documents discussed are in series F General Administrative Records. In total I listed 170 archival pieces; including 89 heavily damaged objects that were stored separately and are not listed in the published finding aids, but that would be most relevant for the discussion at hand.

Many of these documents must have been lost to time, others have remained in the local congregations or are kept by families of (former) church staff and members.

It was in my endeavour to contextualise the collection that had just been transferred to the archive and was made accessible in 2016, that I finally met Paul Jenkins in person. Basically, as one of my interlocutors to find out more about the history and provenances of the archival records at Akropong (Beutter 2023: 117–120). Following my trajectory from the comment I attributed to Paul on a "patchy but interesting" chronicle that had washed up in Basel, to reasoning about the specifics of an institutionalised set of recordings of local organisational activities, this essay will sketch just how interesting sources of this type are as a record for research on West African *Alltagsgeschichte* (everyday history) (Eckert and Jones 2002; Jenkins 2019). The contribution will make clear why, from a lived religion (Knibbe and Kupari 2020) and vernacular religion (Primiano 1995) point of view, the apparent "patchiness" is an integral and informative feature of these sources, rather than an obstacle.

The Outstation as an Important Locus of Church Life

A closer inspection of the little booklet from Nokoransa (today Brong-Ahafo Region in Ghana) revealed that it had been written over a period of ten years by four consecutive catechists: Godfrid Nyantaki who had to leave the post when suddenly befallen with illness, William P. Opare, a cocoa farmer from Aburi and Kintampo and graduate of BM secondary school who at first highly motivated gradually grew disillusioned with the work, S. Amiesch Atta who disappeared after one year, and Henry Dokyi with his wife and unborn child. These lay preachers were tasked with building up this then northernmost outstation[3] of the Ashanti mission field from 1911 onwards including running a small school (Beutter 2015a: 113–116).

Like in many others, the life of this outstation consisted mainly of the activities of the catechist, the pupils, and later baptismal candidates and church members. The day-to-day life of the Mission took place in the school and in a myriad of decentralised activities that connected the outstation with the surrounding settlements. The catechist undertook preach-

[3] The main difference between stations and outstations (Aussenstationen) is that on the latter there was no ordained personnel stationed permanently and consequently communion is celebrated less frequently. Instead, out-stations were led by trained lay preachers of the BM (catechists) and serviced by itinerant pastors coming to outstations periodically to perform sacraments and other duties that could only be dealt with by these ordained superiors. Often, but not always, outstations were younger stations with smaller congregations, only little church-related infrastructure and very small so as not to separate Christian quarters (so-called Salems).

ing tours with his pupils or conducted services and baptismal instructions in the towns, villages, and hamlets where members lived while they, in turn, would come to Nkoransa for holidays and the "visitation" when one of the itinerant pastors or missionaries would visit the station to hold communion, baptisms and check on the situation.[4]

The outstation was the place, where the church had its most direct contact with the greatest number of adherents and potential adherents. This is where, for most members, life in the church happened.[5] This decentralised realm of local everyday activity was almost exclusively run by African agents of the church.

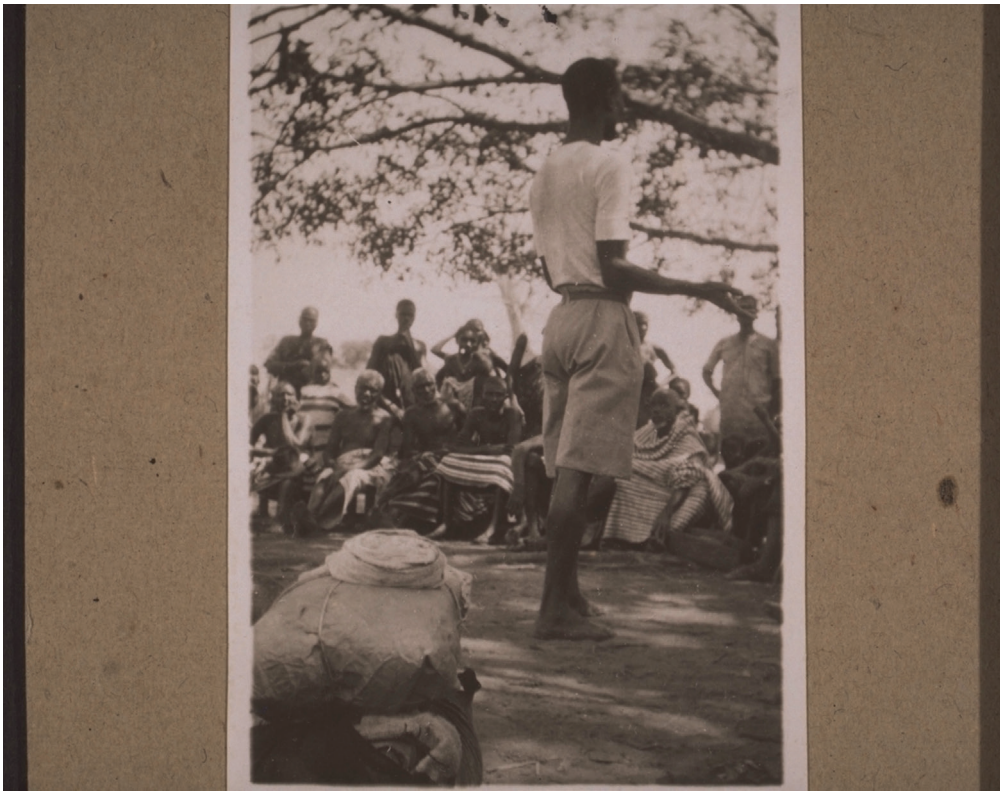

Fig. 6: BMA D-30.64.078. An African agent preaching. The bundle in the foreground might be interpreted as the luggage of an itinerant catechist. Original title: "Schwarzer Christ bei der Heidenpredigt. (Togo) 1928". Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

4 BMA D-5.9,1, Basel Mission [Out-]Station Nkoransa, chronicle, 1911–1920 (Hereafter: Nkoransa chronicle 1911-1920): 10, 13, 16, 40.

5 For instance, in 1912 three quarters of the members under the station Kumasi belonged to an outstation congregation such as the one in Nkoransa (BMA Y.2 1912, Siebenundneunzigster Jahresbericht der Evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft zu Basel auf den 1. Juli 1912: 124).

The sources these African agents produced give insights into the exigencies of everyday life and interactions in the local, also non-Christian communities that were the lived reality of most church members and at the same time were (for better or worse) outside the direct and quotidian purview of both European missionaries and itinerant Ghanaian pastors, who visited the respective places only sporadically every few months—if ever.[6] My insistence to prioritise the outstation chronicle of Nokoransa as crucial sources for reconstructing church histories not only makes a case for seeing the church's past on the local level, but it also has spatial implications: Church histories as lived or vernacular religion unfolded in these decentralised everyday spaces, and records created in and from these spaces by Africans ought to be taken seriously.

Records of lived religion and *Alltagsgeschichte*: Style and purpose

Comparing the accounts written by the Nkoransa catechists with their Kumasi-based[7] European superiors' reports brings the perspective and the writings of the Ghanaian actors into focus. On the one hand, there are locally-produced chronicles, announcement books, (out-)station diaries, minutes of the session of church elders *et cetera* that were used in the congregation. Normally they were written by the Ghanaian staff or church elders on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis, directly or shortly after the occurrences and decisions they report on. The language varies between English and different local languages such as Twi and Gã. Depending on the languages spoken by the authors, the congregation, and the visiting superiors; entries at times switch back and forth between languages within one document. Many texts written in English—as the dominant lingua franca—contain phrases in local languages when the exact terms were crucial, or expressions were not translatable. Commonly this type of record addresses the mundane, recurring everyday business and they remained in the possession of the local congregations.

---

6 BMA D-1.101,102 Friedrich Jost, Jahresbericht der Station Kumase für 1913, Kumase, 20.2.1914: 8.

7 The superiors visiting Nkoransa were the following: F.A. Jost (Swiss) visitations to Nkoransa 1911–1917; A. Lipps (German) visitations 1911–1917; C.E. Martinson (Ghanaian) visitations 1916–1919; G. Agyakwa (Ghanaian) stationed in Mampong, visitations 1919–1920. (Beutter 2016: 225).

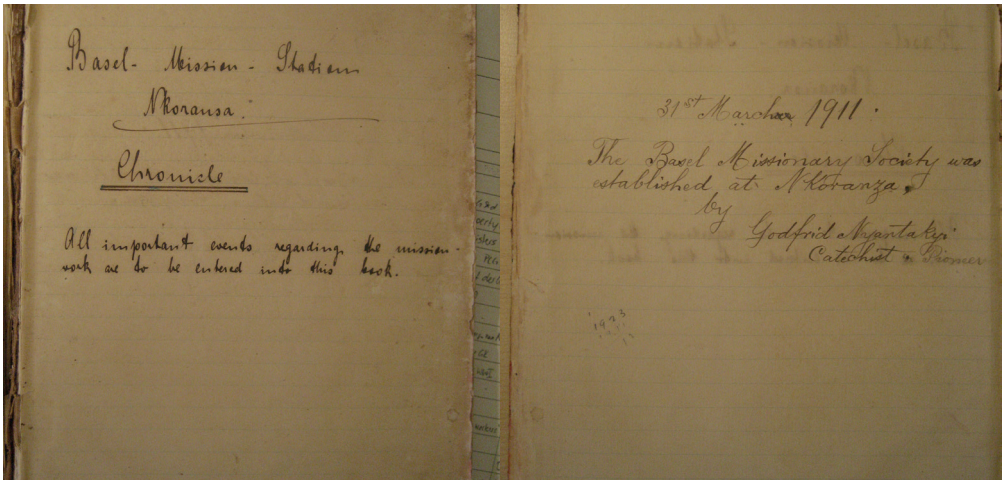

Fig. 7: Cover page of the Nkoransa chronicle, written by Missionary Jost.
Fig. 8: First entry, written by Catechist Nyantakyi (BMA D-5.9,1 Nkoransa chronicle 1911–1920).
Source: Photographs by A. Beutter.

On the other hand, we have the reports produced by European missionaries and Ghanaian pastors supervising the many outstations in distant places. Reports were always written in retrospect, sent to Basel, and stored there. These reports were mostly written in German—with a few exceptions where the authors were Ghanaian pastors. Annual reports generally focused on quantitative and general developments of the out/station infrastructure and congregations for the management of the international superstructure of the BM and on the most notable events in their area. Quarterly reports were often narrative in tone and illustrated the context of missionary work for the public and donors of the Mission in Switzerland and Germany.

Reports of both types give the reader a readily accessible story, a contemporary interpretation of events that is couched in narrative, descriptive and explanatory elements and theologizing and missiological language. On the contrary, the reader of sources like the Nkoranza chronicle, weekly session minutes, or even announcement books, faces fragments and seemingly scattered or fleeting detail in short passages that at first sight allow for largely unrelated glimpses of ongoing happenstances. Since activities often stretched over a lengthy period and were interconnected with other processes; entries regarding a specific question are scattered over many pages. If one aims to unearth more of the history of this realm of local everyday life and religion as it is lived, working through the patchiness of the chronicles, minutes, and diaries and carefully contextualising them with oral, written, visual, and material sources is necessary and rewarding.

What's So Interesting? Content, Epistemologies, and Perspectives

This section draws on three short examples to show the potential of this type of source, since they differ from the reports not only in style, language, and purpose, but also in content, in the epistemological background of the authors that transpires and in how historical events were experienced on different levels of the church hierarchy.

The characteristics of the different types of sources are best illustrated when they report on the same incident, even more so when written by the same person. In one of the few entries in the Nkoranza chronicle written by the visiting missionary, Jost, we read a rather sober and short report on the first baptism service, recorded as follows: "I had the pleasure to baptize the first [three] adults ... . The service, held for that purpose, was well attended; in fact, the chapel was quite overcrowded".[8] His account of this same occasion in the annual report to Basel is much more elaborate. Not only is it much longer but we find the author giving a specific reading from the perspective of his own life and zeal as a missionary:

> It was not only a baptism day, it was a triumphal celebration that took place on the 11. of August [1915] in the sober inornate chapel of Nkoransa. The king with his royal household and his elders and many spectators had gathered too. So that not only was every last little place occupied but the whole building was surrounded by a crowd of people standing densely as a wall ... . This is reason to praise, glorify and thank [the Lord]. These are the prime events of a missionary life.[9]

The report goes on to mention the state of the Mission House and the church building. However, what we learn only from the catechist's entries in the chronicle is that the building and upkeep of this infrastructure to a significant degree depended on the cooperation and goodwill of the local authorities. And it is the chronicle, not the reports, that gives an idea of what amount of time and effort the interested parties had invested into bargaining for resources such as building materials and labour and for children to be sent to the Christian school. The interested parties were not only the catechist, the missionary, and the church members, but also the local authorities, the Ɔmanhene, the queen-mother, and their elders. These authorities—mentioned in a somewhat triumphalist tone by Jost—had a close and ambivalent eye on the activities of the catechist and "his" Christians in their town. Larger socio-political dynamics that were at stake and played out in such encounters are discussed by **Afari** in this volume in the context of Akyem Abuakwa.

Not only is the chronicle a testimony to some of the more subtle local power relations among the people interacting at the grassroots of the church and with the surrounding

---

8 BMA D-5.9,1 Nkoransa chronicle 1911–1920: 39.

9 BMA D-3.6,XI/1, Friedrich Jost: Jahresbericht der Station Kumase 1915, Kumase, 17.3.1916.

society. The entries of the catechists also show how in their own lived realities, local African interpretations and Christian interpretations of events converged. At times one can readily see the different epistemological backgrounds of the Ghanaian and the European authors in the way they report on the same events.

This is the case with an incident that was reported in the chronicle by catechist William Opare, and an annual report by Friederich Jost. It is a situation where practices that may be attributed to the spectrum of local religious practices were directed against the teacher's house in which the catechist and some of the pupils lived at the time. Catechist Opare's entry on the day after the incident reads:

> On Thursday evening 4th December 1914, four men came to the Basel, Miss[ion] Station ... at the opposite of the House, these four men [names of four men] dug a hole, put something in it, poured a pot of palm wine on it; turned their face to the Mission house, and fired three [night?] guns. At this time ... only the children were at home. They [the children?] asked ... [for] the reason of their [the men's] doing, no answer was given, but [the men were] determined to flog the boys. The Agent [catechist] at once went to the Linguist[10] Adu Koffi and explained to him their doings. The Agent told him to let the Omanhin, the Queen-Mother and all the Nkornaza Elders Know that, IF ANY Decease or ANY thing AT ALL HAPPEN in the Mission House, as it happenes on the order Agent Mr. Nyantakyi, The Mission has the right to ask the cause from these four men ... .[11]

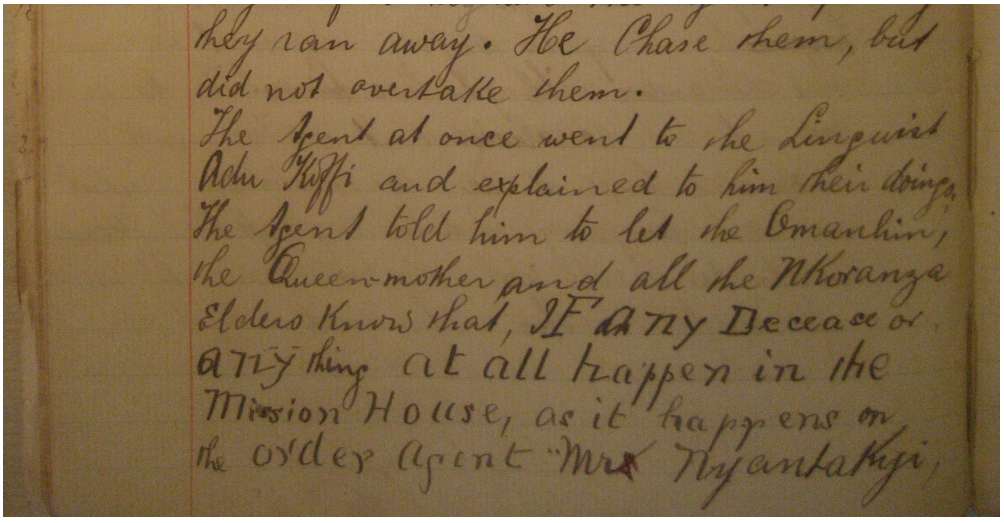
they ran away. He Chase them, but
did not overtake them.
The Agent at once went to the Linguist
Adu Koffi and explained to him their doings.
The Agent told him to let the Omanhin,
the Queen-mother and all the Nkoranza
Elders Know that, IF ANY Decease or
ANY thing at all happen in the
Mission House, as it happens on
the order Agent Mr Nyantakyi,

Fig. 9: A page from the Nkoransa chronicle (BMA D-5.9,1 Nkoransa chronicle 1911–1920: p. 35). Source: Photograph by A. Beutter.

[10] Spokesperson of the *Ɔmanhene* (the paramount chief).
[11] BMA D-5.9,1 Nkoransa chronicle 1911-1920: 35f, capital letters in the original, additions AB.

A report on the same incident was included in the annual report for 1914. Interestingly the wording shows great similarity to the first phrase in the chronicle. So arguably Jost had oriented his description of the incident towards the catechist's account in the chronicle. In contrast to the chronicle, however, the report does not mention the names of the suspected attackers nor the attempted physical assault on the children. Most importantly, there is no mention of the confrontation with the local authorities that ensued and no word on the reference to the fate of the former catechist who had left the post due to illness or poisoning.[12] Both the catechist's demand transmitted to the linguist as well as the unconventional style of his handwriting in this passage can be read as expressions of anger and fear. The author seems to have experienced the practices directed against his house as a real menace while Jost belittled the incident as "merely another vain attempt to chase the work of God away".[13] Not only was Jost not present and exposed to the attack but he also lacked the epistemological framework in which these practices were rooted. Meanwhile, for Opare, both a local and a Christian worldview seem to be present in his reading of the incident. Thus, for him, it was a serious, potentially fatal, assault on a physical and spiritual level, directed against himself and other mission house dwellers.

Not only did Catechist Opare's and Missionary Jost's epistemological background and reading of the same event differ, but also the experience of events was not the same at the different levels and loci of the church hierarchy. When reading reports and even documents that were written on the intermediary level of the stations, arguably the single most prominent issue of the Period between 1911 and 1920 are the effects of the First (European) World War. One impact was that it curtailed travelling and funding in the early years of the war and ultimately led to the removal of the BM's European missionary agents, discussed as a great breach to both the deported as well as the Ghanaian agents, who now suddenly found themselves entrusted with managing the church (Prempeh 1977; Smith 1966: 155–161).[14]

At the level of the outstation, however, at least in the case of Nkoransa, one gets a rather different impression. There is no explicit mention of any effect related to WWI and, where changes such as the replacement of the European by a Ghanaian visiting minister are documented, they figure as part of a long-standing transitional process, rather than as a state of emergency. The chronicles show that the transferral of church leadership into the hands

---

12 BMA D-5.9,1 Nkoransa chronicle 1911-1920: ii, 4f, 25-8; BMA D-1.100 No. 239, No. 240 List of Kumasi Catechists June and December 1913; BMA D-1.101,102, Friedrich Jost, Jahresbericht der Station Kumase für 1913, Kumase, 20.2.1914: 22f, 36).

13 BMA D-3.6,XI/1, Friedrich Jost: Jahresbericht der Station Kumase 1915, Kumase, 17.3.1916: 26.

14 BMA Y.2, Hundertundzweiter Jahresbericht der Evangelischen Missions-Gesellschaft zu Basel auf 1. Juli 1917, Basel 1917; PRAAD EC 1/78, Chronicle and Presbyter Sessions Book of Basel Mission Kyebi.

of the Ghanaian agents transpires as an organic process, low-key, woven into the everyday business of the outstation, not a breach.

Understanding these differences not only illustrates Primianos' contention that all "official" as well as "popular" lived religions are "vernacular" (1995: 39, 41f, 45). It invites us to recalibrate the history of this church by focusing on the outstation as an important locus of church life and how its actors were also embedded in other arenas structuring the local lived reality of both members and non-members. The locally oriented sources discussed here, with their more iterative form of documentation are an inroad to do so and therefore valuable to current approaches to reconfigure the history of European evangelical missions and local histories alike, in Africa as well as in other regions formerly addressed as "mission fields" (Konadu 2019; Etherington et al. 2015; Wetjen and Ratschiller 2018; Rüther 2016, Maxwell 2015). Approaching the perspectives of local agents through different means is vital to address the everyday experience of what must have been the greater share of members of the church and the society in which they were embedded. The quotidian in the Christian quarters and outstations were crucial spaces in which this everyday history and lived religion unfolded.

BM Records: A Dense Apparatus of Documentation

When thinking about the sources stored in the different repositories in Ghana and Switzerland it makes sense to view the reports stored in Basel as only one element in a much larger and much denser apparatus of written documentation (Vismann 2010: 8). In this apparatus each form fulfils its specific and interlinked purpose—from the *reports*, as a periodic accountability report, always addressed to the "honorable Kommittee", through the *chronicles*, centred on the locality, iteratively and briefly putting on record all the "more important happenings intervening in the life" on the respective (out-)station,[15] down to the highly standardised pre-printed *(out)-station diaries*, in which the preachers routinely noted which bible-verses they based each of the daily prayers on, etc.[16] Just as the latter, *announcement books*[17] and *session minutes*[18] were also produced from the everyday practice of the local congregation. Session minutes were the confidential record of the regular meetings of the

[15] BMA Q-9.11,27, Verordnungen für die Basler Missionsstationen VII: Korrespondenz-Ordnung 1842–1865: 1.

[16] E.g., ACIA 75A: Church Diary (57), 1962; Nkawkaw Station Diary, 1951.

[17] E.g., Announcement book Apenkwa 1979–1985, kept at the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Eternity Congregation, Apenkwa.

[18] E.g., ACIA 73A: Presbyterian Church Apenkwa-Protocol (PCA/8/14), 1954–1955; ACIA 73A: Minutes book, Nsawam (PCA/8/12) 1949, 1949–1954; ACIA 73A: Minutes of meetings b[oo]k, Old Tafo (PCA/8/15), 1953–1965.

church elders (presbyters) and local catechist or minister and thus only accessible to them and to superiors for inspection. Announcement books, on the other hand, document information that was publicly conveyed to the whole congregation. The latter tend to be short-term in purpose, publicly announcing pertinent decisions, upcoming activities or amounts and the purpose of offerings. The minute books imply longer-term use, they are an iterative rather than a narrative format. This, like the chronicle discussed above, makes them appear patchy, at first glance reporting briefly on unrelated issues spread over a lengthy period. However, in their chronological form, they document the processes of negotiation, argumentation, decision-making, tensions, conflicts, and alliances within the governing body of the local congregations. They justify, fix, and authorise decisions precisely by documenting the basis for and processes of decision-making (Beutter 2023: 128).

Drawing a parallel to Vismanns' observations on legal files (Akten), *session minutes* can be read as a "selective written record of communicative action" that, according to Vismann, contains "in a phonocentric perspective that which other written forms no longer reveal—the life, the fights, the struggle for decisions, the speeches." At the same time, they carry the nimbus of an authorised and authorising, (semi-)official, document as well as in varying degrees the polished surface that comes with this. It manifests in the form of formalised and ritualised openings with the roll of attendees and their greeting by prayer, in their nature as copies of immediate minutes to be authorised in the next meeting and at times deliberately written in the passive voice, wherein "the session"—as a collective actor and the local embodiment of the organisation—"speaks" in and through these documents; both revealing and reproducing its internal structures and power relations (Beutter 2023: 121f).

In several ways the minutes are a work of translation, which simultaneously implies a loss and a multiplication of meaning (Beutter 2023: 130f): The authors translate oral negotiations and interactions to the medium of a written record. Often this includes a transformation from local languages and epistemologies into English. And due to the character of the document the transformation of lifeworld language and goals into the language and goals of the officials governing the congregation and the church—at times they translate the quotidian into their theological reasoning but mostly into the staccato of the practice, procedure, rules and regulations (Kpobi 2011). This cascade of translation and transformation that reconfigures but does not completely erase the different epistemological standpoints as they are crafted into each other, is the premise underpinning this type of source subtly leaving its traces in the documents.

An Appraisal of Patchiness

It was when working on documents of this type, which were similar in character to the Nkoransa chronicle, but from a larger and more established congregation,[19] that I learned for what reasons these sources are not only relevant *despite* but *because* of their patchiness: When looking at session minutes as documents for legal practice in the church and approaching them through the lens of Garfinkel's document analysis (Beutter 2023: 130–133), I started to realise what exactly made them so enigmatic and attractive.

Beyond the reported events, these documents point to the interactions that brought them about: through the interventions depicted, but also through the unwritten and the gaps. The fragmentary, or better the pinpointing, nature of the accounts is characteristic of this genre of sources, as is the distancing passive voice. And this characteristic must not be understood as a deficit, but rather as an asset: It has its good organisational reasons (Garfinkel 1967). Garfinkel's observation in his classic analysis of systematic gaps in medical records can very well be transferred to the "patchy" records discussed here. The file is part of a structure of reference, interaction, and knowledge that refers far beyond the written document. It draws on and thus points to what is known and directly accessible to the addressees (here elders, catechists, district pastors, etc.) but not to the researcher (Garfinkel 1967: 295).

The files—and by extension the minutes and the chronicle—are a tool produced in a process of self-documentation in interactions and for interactions (Garfinkel 1967: 187). As such they assume knowledge of the contexts in which these interactions and their creation take place. Understanding the content thus presupposes the competence and practical understanding that the author and intended readership share in carrying out their common task (Garfinkel 1967: 201). Thus, that which appears as enigmatic or a "gap" to the outsider points exactly to the knowledge, routines, and abilities that qualify the insider as a competent participant in the interaction.

The character of these documents as selective written products bordering on orality and performance is what makes their "patchiness" so valuable. The "gaps" refer to the world of practice and knowledge outside of scripture, in which scripture is embedded and from which it draws its meaning. The gaps force one to be attentive and look there. Working with these documents means unpacking opaque, dense passages, looking at implications, at what is insinuated through recurring patterns or clandestinely mentioned, it means seeing what is presupposed, taken for granted, or assumed.

To take the epistemologies of these records seriously means to engage in a similar exercise as the "long listening" **Paul Grant** advocates for in this volume. It requires a thorough engagement

[19] ACIA 73A: Presbyterian Church Apenkwa-Protocol (PCA/8/14), 1954–1955.

to piece together their stories with parallel developments, cross-references, and loose ends. It necessitates engaging with their irregular timelines that combine iteration, hindsight, and projection. Furthermore, it requires appreciating overlapping logics and orders of knowledge informing concurring or incommensurable interpretations.

The entries in the chronicle and minutes resemble everyday life in the way they unfold, as non-linear quotidian encounters in a myriad of parallel happenstances running alongside or nestled into each other. Long detailed entries alternate with cursory notes and formalised recurring formulations full of encoded shorthand. It seems almost as if the written document mirrors the subjective experience of time, where the quotidian moves in leaps and bounds with patches dense to the brink of incomprehensibility alternating with phases of empty waiting, fleeting moments, or the rhythm of routine. Not only do these sources hold rich data on themes and activities, grievances and hopes of everyday life, and the practice of religion in these local Christian communities, but their "patchiness" is a testimony to the character of everyday life itself.

Patchy *Hence* Interesting

As a prerequisite for true global history, Paul Jenkins has argued for research on the local *Alltagsgeschichte* in the regions that were made the object of missionary ambitions. So far, there are far less nuanced historiographical accounts of the sociopolitical, cultural, and epistemological formations of these different local contexts than of the European contexts the missions came from (2019: 555f). Sources such as the ones discussed here are resources that—combined with other repositories of knowledge, oral, visual, and material—may contribute to this formidable task. This is why we should take seriously these types of sources, their content, and epistemologies.

At this point, I would like to rephrase the initial quote. These sources are valuable not *despite*, but *because* of their "patchy"—that is simultaneously dense and elusive—character. In their idiosyncratic epistemologies, these sources are as patchy and as interesting as everyday life of which they are a product. Taken with a pinch of salt and read alongside other forms of evidence they prove to be valid and valuable documents, and the rich narratives that emerge from these accounts are not only rounded but also take us close to lived religion as it unfolded in a multifaceted historical context. However, they do not reveal their power to the hasty reader. One needs to piece together the stories that were jotted down as they evolved. There is much to be found between the lines, in similar patterns of how issues are accounted for, in allusions, that become clear only in a thorough network of intratextual and contextual connections.

The fact that these sources are patchy is *why* they are interesting. They leave gaps that are not filled by official narrative and formal rules, but that refer to the tacit knowledge of the multiple actors involved in their creation and use—actors who, in their lived normativities, drew on much more than one single narrative. To submit to their logic allows us to unpack dense stories that may go unnoticed if we only read the official annual and quarterly reports.

The minutes and chronicles, just as the reports, are one part of a documenting organism that allows us to tell different histories, each patchy in its way. To systematically look at "patchy *hence* interesting" written sources and further connect them with oral, visual, and documentary sources to access and produce such processual and polyphonous accounts is not only interesting but necessary.

Bibliography

Beutter, Anne. "Church Discipline Chronicled: A New Source for Basel Mission Historiography". *History in Africa* 42 (2015a): 109–138. https://doi.org/10.1017/hia.2015.17.

Beutter, Anne. "Räumliche Etablierung und Vernetzung der Basler Mission in Nkoransa auf der Basis der Chronik der Außenstation (1911–1920)". Abschlussarbeit im Fach Religionswissenschaft zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades MA, Religionswissenschaftliches Institut, Universität Leipzig, 2015b.

Beutter, Anne. "Was auf dem anderen Blatt steht: Die Chronik von Nkoransa (1911–1920) Als Dokument lokaler Gemeinde-Praxis der Basler Mission und der Perspektive ihrer afrikanischen Mitarbeiter". In *Sources and Methods for African History and Culture: Essays in Honour of Adam Jones*, edited by Geert Castryck, Silke Strickrodt, and Katja Werthmann, 221–237. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2016.

Beutter, Anne. *Religion, Recht und Zugehörigkeit: Rechtspraktiken einer westafrikanischen Kirche und die Dynamik normativer Ordnungen* (forthcoming). Critical Studies in Religion/Religionswissenschaft (CSRRW). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023.

Eckert, Andreas, and Adam Jones. "Introduction: Historical Writing About Everyday Life". *Journal of African Cultural Studies* Special Issue: Everyday Life in Colonial Africa 15(1) (2002): 5–16.

Etherington, Norman, Gareth Griffiths, Jacqueline van Gent, and Peggy Brock. *Indigenous Evangelists and Questions of Authority in the British Empire 1750–1940.* Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Garfinkel, Harold. *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1967.

Jenkins, Paul. "Opening up Transregional Analysis in the Basel Mission Archive". In *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, edited by Matthias Middell, 555–565. London: Routledge, 2019.

Knibbe, Kim, and Helena Kupari. "Theorizing Lived Religion: Introduction". *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35(2) (2020): 157–176.

Kpobi, David Nii Anum. *Mission and Governance: The Evolution of Practice and Procedure in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana.* Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2011.

Konadu, Kwasi. *Our Own Way in This Part of the World: Biography of an African Community, Culture, and Nation.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.

Maxwell, David. "The Missionary Movement in African and World History: Mission Sources and Religious Encounter". *The Historical Journal* 58 (4) (2015): 901–930.

Prempeh, Samuel. *The Basel and Bremen Missions and Their Successors in the Gold Coast and Togoland, 1914–1926: A Study in Protestant Missions and the First World War.* PhD thesis., University of Aberdeen, 1977.

Primiano, Leonard Norman. "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife". *Western Folklore* 54(1) (1995): 37–56.

Rüther, Kirsten. "Plädoyer für eine akteurszentrierte Geschichte religiöser Veränderung". *Zeitschrift* für *Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 100 (2016): 110–118.

Smith, Noel. *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana, 1835-1960: A Younger Church in a Changing Society.* Accra: Ghana University Press, 1966.

Vismann, Cornelia. *Akten: Medientechnik und Recht.* Fischer Taschenbuch 14927. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2010.

Wetjen, Karolin, and Linda Ratschiller (eds.). *Verflochtene Mission: Perspektiven auf eine neue Missionsgeschichte.* Köln u.a. Böhlau, 2018.

5 Pizza in 19th-Century Ghana: Or the Challenge of Controlling Academic Zeal

Veit Arlt, University of Basel

Introduction

As I write these lines, I am expecting the delivery of a parcel from Oxford University Press. It contains the first copies of the long-awaited book, *The Reports of Theophilus Opoku: A 19th-Century Gold Coast Pastor*. The reports were meticulously edited by Michelle Gilbert and Paul Jenkins for the prestigious *Fontes Historiae Africanae* series of the British Library (Gilbert & Jenkins 2024). Theophilus Opoku stands out as a writer and observer of 19th-century society and his reports to the board of the Basel Mission are a great source for the study of Ghanaian history. When Michelle and Paul signed the publication contract on 28 July 2016, one of the series editors, David Maxwell, asked me to facilitate the process and ensure that the book would see the light of day within a reasonable time. Admittedly, we did not manage to meet the contracted deadline. But the eight years of collaborative contracted work already started in the mid-1980s when Michelle and Paul discovered their mutual interest in Opoku's writings. Indeed, Paul's engagement with Theophilus Opoku goes back a decade further, into the 1970s.

So, for almost eight years, I had time and again the opportunity to break out of the daily management of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Basel and to engage with the 700 plus pages of the book manuscript. It was difficult to carve time out of my fully loaded programme to work on the voluminous manuscript, which needed countless checks and revisions until we achieved the degree of standardisation we aimed for. The biggest challenge was to keep Michelle and Paul from perpetually commenting, detailing, and researching to enrich the editing work, assuring them of their lead over the readers (see **Heuser**'s chapter in this volume) and insisting that only once published all their work would be of any use. But it was a true pleasure to engage with the two scholars, their manuscript, and the countless footnotes opening up treasure troves of information accumulated in the course of their professional lives as academics. My engagement as facilitator of this project was a trip down memory lane taking me right back to the days when, as a student, I first ventured into the Basel Mission Archives (now Mission 21) in the framework of the courses on African history Paul offered at the University of Basel.

The Lasting Effect of Pizza in 19th-Century Akuapem

As a student of history and geography, I gradually developed an interest in the history of the African continent. Though the late Albert Wirz, who in 1992–3 was a visiting lecturer at the University of Basel, importantly sparked my interest in this direction, it was the famous block seminars organized by Paul that got me and many of my colleagues hooked. It was amazing how, as archivist of the Basel Mission (BM), he got us students to venture into the mission house and to engage hands-on with original documents from the 19th century, at a time when it was far from fashionable to engage with a mission. Was it the direct encounter with archival evidence from the past, was it the stupendous photographic archive of the BM, or was it the unique presence of the lanky British archivist with his charming German dotted with elements of English, and his inner fire for dialogue—be it with documents and personae of the distant past, be it with people from all walks of life interested in African and/or mission history?

In any case, Paul got us going and he made sure we met and engaged with scholars and other resource persons. I remember how in the first archival seminar on the Kingdom of Bamum in Cameroon in 1992–3 our student team engaged with a series of pictures of the royal palace in Foumban and detected details that allowed us to trace a partial destruction and reconstruction of the palace. This was exciting work, which was appreciated by Christraud Geary, then working for the Smithsonian Institution, and Revd Jonas Dah from the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon, who acted as resource persons in that seminar and were a great inspiration for us.

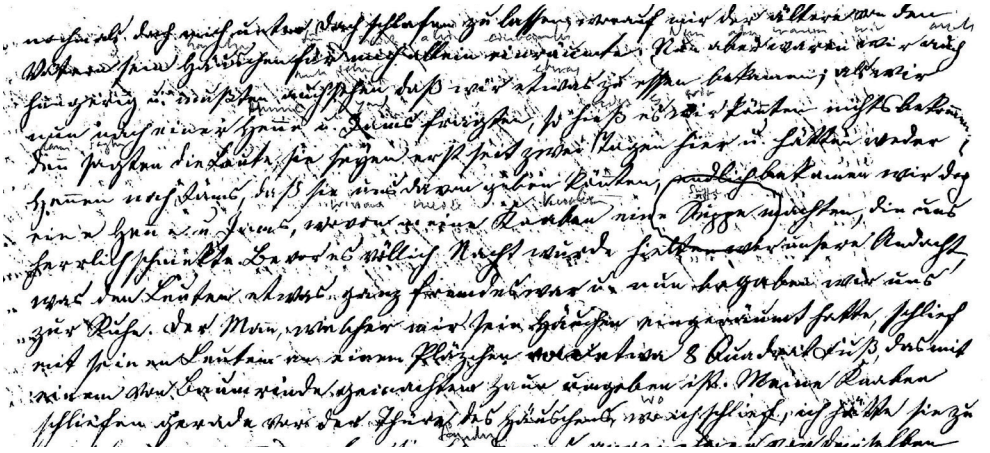

Fig. 10: A page from Dieterle's report dated 31 May 1852 (BMA D 1.4a Afrika 1851 1853, No.56, p. 2.). Markings by Author. Source: Photostat by V. Arlt.

Even the challenging deciphering of the old German handwriting could be fun. In a block seminar on the history of Ghana in 1993–4, my classmates and I tried to unlock the treasures of a travel report written by Missionary Dieterle in 1852, narrating his journey from Akropong in the kingdom of Akuapem to neighbouring Krobo.[20] I think we were four students bowing over the photocopied text, clutching in one hand an alphabet of the kind in use in that report as a reading aid. After a very slow start, we picked up pace and made progress until we suddenly got stuck. Our missionary and his party had stopped for the night in a little hamlet on the outskirts of Krobo, where to our great surprise they had pizza for dinner. Of course, we soon found out that the word was "Suppe" (German: soup) rather than "pizza" (see Figure 10), but the havoc had been created already exhausted as we were, we could hardly stop laughing. Probably, our report to the plenary was not all that convincing but what is more important: we had discovered the excitement and fun of deciphering the old handwritten texts.

Instilling a Commitment to Share

One of the key messages we got from Paul, was the importance of making 19th-century documents written in the old German hand accessible to the people in the respective area the sources documented, and that we as students could play a part in this. Paul himself had first engaged in this endeavour when during his time as a lecturer at the University of Ghana he used his sabbatical in 1969–70 to produce his famous "Abstracts of the Basel Mission's Gold Coast Correspondences", containing English language translations of key documents originally written in the German language about the (church) history of south-eastern Ghana. It was an endeavour that had already been started by Hans W. Debrunner, a former staff member of the BM in Ghana (1950–8) who played a pioneering role as a historian of Africa and its diaspora in Swiss academic circles (Gilbert and Jenkins 2024: xxiv). Paul, together with other researchers visiting the archives over the years, had also produced direct transcripts of reports in the Basel Mission Archives. Often, the cross-checking of these transcripts against the original was one element he built into his teaching projects. I remember checking transcripts of sources relating to the kingdom of Bamum in Cameroon as part of the preparation for the block course in 1992–3 mentioned above. It was an excellent way of making us students engage closely with the reports, learning about the technique of transcribing sources, and the importance of detail in this endeavour. Similarly, the comparison of reports that were published in one of the mission journals (the scholarly *Missionsmagazin* or the

[20] BMA D 1.4a Afrika 1851 1853, No.56, Report by Missionary J. Chr. Dieterle to the Mission Board, Akropong 31.5.1852.

infamous *Heidenbote* directed to a broader public) against the original source raised awareness for the powerful role of the editors of those publications and for censorship.

When, finally, it came to identifying a topic for my Master's thesis (*Lizentiatsarbeit* as it was called in those days), it was obvious to me that working hands-on with original sources from the 19th century should be a key element of the project. As one of the possible topics, Paul suggested looking at the early encounters of the Basel Mission with the two Krobo states on the then south-eastern Gold Coast. Systematically looking at the earliest reports relating to Krobo in the mission archives and establishing a corpus of transcripts of these sources was an integral part of the mandate. Subsequently, I spent much time identifying all documents written between 1828 and 1867 and preparing full or partial transcriptions. Within no time I learned 10-finger typing—a skill that I had failed to acquire during my studies so far—so that I could keep my eyes on the original while transcribing it. I soon got carried away by the project and, in the end, the annex with transcripts was as thick as the thesis itself (Arlt 1995). And I am deeply indebted to then-fellow student, Giorgio Miescher, who played a crucial role in keeping me from perpetually further detailing and researching. He made sure I somehow wrapped up the thesis and handed it in on the very day of the deadline. This experience taught me a lesson, which proved very valuable in student counselling (and in getting the Opoku edition published—see above): "Only a submitted thesis is a good thesis!" In hindsight, I should have invested more time engaging with the literature and defining a thorough research question before engaging with the documents. However, the project was truly exciting, and it laid the basis for my continued engagement with Krobo history in the framework of my later PhD (Arlt 2005). My findings proved relevant when I travelled to Ghana following my graduation, not only presenting them at the University of Ghana, Legon but also sharing and discussing them with Krobo historians (Arlt 1997).

Encounters and Lasting Acquaintances

As indicated above, bringing people together has always been one of Paul's special gifts. During the preparatory phase of my PhD, I got the chance to work with Paul as an assistant at the Basel Mission Archives. During working hours, I attended to queries and correspondence, and the rest of the day (or night) I conducted my research on the handwritten correspondence from the mission stations on the Gold Coast. I was always a bit nervous when Paul introduced me to a visitor to the archive ("You must meet XYZ!" Paul would insist!) and abducted me for a joint coffee at the Rosengarten behind the mission house. I could not always see the point of why I should invest my precious research time in this encounter, and only in later years did I come to realize the breadth of the networks, topics, perspectives, and

life worlds that Paul introduced me to, fostering an openness and understanding beyond my horizon. And of course, this was a two-way process, whereby I can only speculate about the effect of the encounter with a young Swiss PhD student and his particular research interests on the visitor.

The engagement with resource persons from the respective area or a particular academic field was an important part of every block seminar Paul organised. Often these were fraternal workers from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana stationed in Baden-Württemberg in Germany such as the late Revd Peter Maugbi Kodjo. Peter made a lasting impression on me as a student with his deep observations and sharp comments. He enjoyed the opportunity to engage with us students and our reading of the mission documents and this also holds for my later periods of research in Ghana when as chairman of the Gã Presbytery, Peter Kodjo, time and again carved out a moment for a meeting and enjoyed the engagement with Krobo history and chieftaincy.

In the same way, Paul invited us to the international seminar held to mark the 100th anniversary of the publication of Carl Christian Reindorf's *History of the Gold Coast and Asante* (1895) on 25–28 October 1995. This was the first major conference in the field of African history organised at the University of Basel. It featured Tom McCaskie, John Peel, Adam Jones, John Parker, and our own Peter Haenger, who was then a PhD student at the University of Basel, authoring, as far as I know, the first PhD situated in African history at this university (Haenger 1997).[21] The event and the subsequent conference of the Swiss Society for African Studies on *African Writing about the Past: On the Frontier between Local Oral Tradition and International Public Discourse* provided an ideal space for us students to hand over our petition for the institutionalisation of African history at the University of Basel to the dean of the Faculty of the Humanities. This initiative first resulted in (or at least supported the process towards) an endowed professorship funded by the Carl Schlettwein Foundation and eventually the institutionalization of a professorship for African history at the University of Basel.

Pioneering Engagement with Historical Photographs

Historical photographs from the Basel Mission Archives, of course, played a major role in all archival seminars and in 1994–5 Paul offered a dedicated joint seminar with the late visual anthropologist, Barbara Lüem, which introduced us to methodological issues. In the same way Paul pioneered the digitisation of the photographic collection of the BM, he thus

[21] For the publication of the papers presented at the conference see Jenkins 2000.

played an important role in introducing us to the use and discussion of these pictures. Paul's open-ended enquiries into historical pictures, combining a close reading of the pictures and related written documents, and often discussing what could NOT be seen in the picture (or in the written record), were a great source of inspiration.

The use of historical photographs (and maps) thus became quite naturally an integral element of my PhD research and when I first travelled to Ghana in 1996, I took several reproductions of photographs from the Basel Mission Archives along, which I then discussed with my interview partners (Arlt 1997). Paul had asked me to take a set of pictures to Abetifi in Kwahu, where the Ramseyer Training Centre of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana was preparing an exhibition in the framework of its centenary jubilee to be held in 1998. I was to assist in a close discussion of the pictures which, ideally, would stimulate an open dialogue on the past. It was an exciting addition to my research on Krobo history and led to some surprising results concerning the figure of Missionary Fritz Ramseyer, who together with his wife pioneered the Abetifi mission station (Jenkins 2001: 166).

Fig. 11: BMA QD-30.041.0049. "Leopard killed near Abetifi (Kwahu)". A discussion of the picture on site revealed far more information than is visible in the document. The picture is attributed to Missionary Fritz Ramseyer and was taken between 1888 and 1896. Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

It was one single picture[22] of a dead leopard, set in a proud pose in front of a rock, its head held up by the help of a near invisible fine rope, that opened up an alternative view on this stout and rather authoritarian missionary. The picture stood out among the series of photographs depicting motifs related mainly to mission and chieftaincy. But for the elders in Kubease, with whom I discussed the picture, it made perfect sense. The leopard was the totem animal of *Etena ne Bretuo*, the royal lineage of Abetifi, and Ramseyer had been integrated into that family due to the role he played in facilitating the secession of Kwahu from the Asante kingdom (Haenger 1989). The picture thus opened up a rich narrative that was very different from the one I was familiar with and which I would have hardly been able to access otherwise. The local oral tradition invited me to question my habits of perception and thought; I would never have interpreted the story in this way, which is so logical and self-evident for some people on the ground.

And this is what makes dealing with African history the way Paul introduced us to so exciting, challenging, and enriching. Our thought patterns are constantly overturned, and we find ourselves in a learning process that can sharpen our senses for dealing with the unfamiliar. What we learn and practice in the process provides us with the impetus for reflecting on our own history and positionality. This is why, back in the 1990s, we students were so committed to ensuring that this encounter with a different kind of history, in which oral tradition and dialogue are very important, was given a permanent place within the teaching of history at the University of Basel.

Mission, Passion, and Attention to Detail

Paul Jenkins' passion for African history, and his open-ended attitude to scholarly inquiry, combined with his work as an archivist of the BM and as a lecturer at the University of Basel made him outstanding. He found a partner in crime in Michelle Gilbert, an anthropologist, when it came to their shared enthusiasm for the Opoku project. With her deep knowledge of and dedication to Akuapem and its *Odwira* rites, and her interest in Theophilus Opoku, Michelle Gilbert has been a great inspiration. It was a tremendous pleasure to work with them on the edited volume, and while I am glad the proofs are off my desk, I already miss to keeping in touch with them regularly.

But is the word "passion" sufficient to capture the zeal and inner fire driving Paul's relentless engagement both with African and church history? "Paul is such a missionary!" Michelle exclaimed more than once, when they were arguing over an interpretation of a

[22] BMA QD-30.024.0031 "Erlegter Leopard (künstlich aufgerichtet), Abetifi (Ramseyer)". Photographed by Fritz Ramseyer, between 1888 and 1896.

specific detail or the phrasing of how to present it in the book. Yes, why should we not call Paul a missionary—a missionary propagating African history (thereby shedding new light on mission and church history), the work with historical photographs, and an open-ended dialogue?

It is thus befitting to end this modest contribution with a last recollection—it was precisely three decades ago that I had my first encounter with Theophilus Opoku. This was within the framework of an archival seminar on the topic of Mission, History, and Culture focusing on the Kingdom of Akuapem in 1993–4. The interdisciplinary seminar in partnership with Prof Christine Lienemann, a theologist, and Prof Meinrad Schuster, a social anthropologist, attracted students from a broad range of fields. One of them, a student in theology, Katrin Kusmierz, gave a captivating presentation on Theophilus Opoku. In Paul's words, this interdisciplinary seminar resulted in the most sustained outcome of his career as a lecturer at the University of Basel ... . So, together with my now wife Katrin, I commend Paul on his achievements, sharing his passion, and sustained curiosity, and thank him for the encounters we had with him through his seminars. And guess what? Just as I revise this article, on Paul's 86th birthday, the Opoku volume was delivered. Mission accomplished!

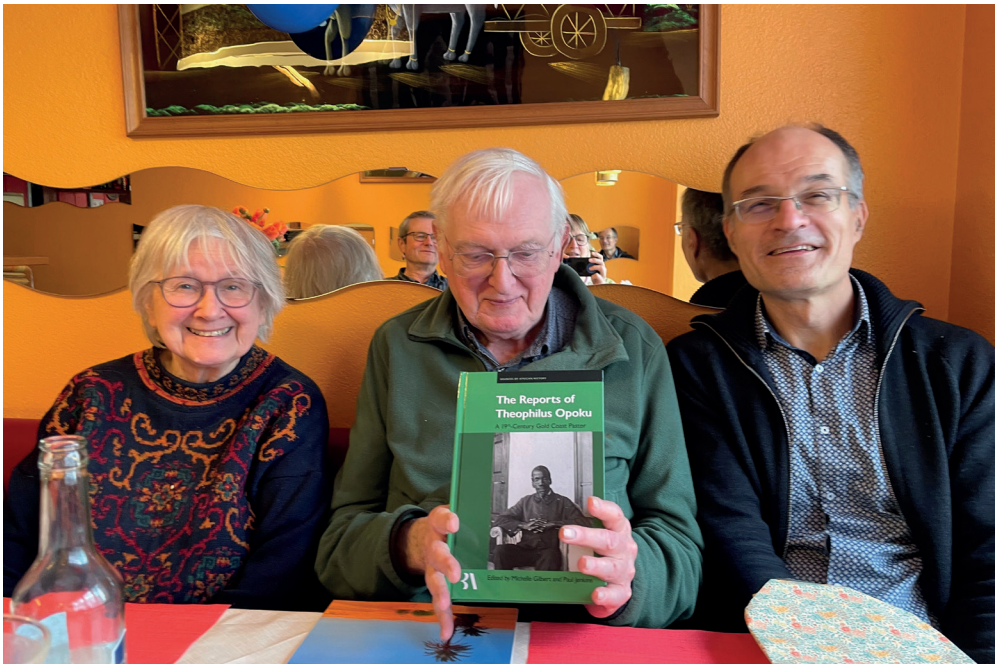

Fig. 12: Handing over the freshly delivered Opoku volume, which arrived right in time for Paul's anniversary on 15 March 2024. L-R: Jennifer Jenkins, Paul Jenkins, and Veit Arlt. Source: Photograph by Rachel Jenkins.

Bibliography

Arlt, Veit. *Die Basler Missionare und Krobo zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die Etablierung weltlicher Herrscher in Krobo im Lichte der frühen Berichte aus dem Archiv der Basler Mission*. MA thesis, University of Basel, 1995.

Arlt, Veit. "Come Back When the New Paramount Chief is Enstooled, Then we Will Tell You the Real Story!" *Le forum suisse des africanistes: Werkschau Afrikastudien*, edited by Beat Sottas, Thomas Hammer, Lilo Roost-Vischer, Anne Mayor. Hamburg: Lit, 1997: 128–137.

Arlt, Veit. "Christianity, Imperialism, and Culture: The Expansion of the Two Krobo States, c. 1830–1930". PhD thesis, University of Basel, 2005.

Gilbert, Michelle and Paul Jenkins (eds.). *The Reports of Theophilus Opoku. A 19th-Century Gold Coast Pastor*. Fontes Historiae Africanae. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024.

Haenger, Peter. *Die Basler Mission im Spannungsbereich afrikanischer Integrationsversuche und europäischer Kolonialpolitik: Vorbereitung und Anfangszeit der "Asante-Mission" in Abetifi, Kwawu, 1869–1888*. MA thesis, University of Basel, 1989.

Haenger, Peter. "Sklaverei und Sklavenemanzipation an der Goldküste. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis von sozialen Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen in Westafrika". PhD thesis, University of Basel, 1996. Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn. English translation: *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast. Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage in West Africa*. Edited by J. J. Shaffer and Paul E. Lovejoy. Introduction by Paul E. Lovejoy. Translated from the German by Christina Handford. Schlettwein, Basel 2000.

Paul Jenkins (ed). *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century–C.C. Reindorf & Samuel Johnson*. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2000.

Jenkins, Paul. "Sources of Unexpected Light. Experiences With Old Mission Photographs in Research on Overseas History". *Jahrbuch* für *Europäische Überseegeschichte* 1/2001, 157–167.

Reindorf, Carl Christian. *History of the Gold Coast and Asante. Based on Traditions and Historical Facts, Comprising a Period of More Than Three Centuries From About 1500 to 1860*. Basel: Missionsverlag, 1895.

6 Long Listening: Historical Creativity and Archival Endurance

Paul Glen Grant, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The Problem

Responding to an article on colonial photography in *African Arts,* which declaimed the salacious colonial gaze behind photographs of topless African women taken by a certain Frederick Grant (Engmann 2012), Paul Jenkins wrote: "I think the author allowed herself to be seriously misled when she implies that the photographer of the portraits she analyses, Frederick Grant, was an Englishman" (Jenkins 2016: 4). Explaining that Grant was a known Fante photographer who had collaborated with the Basel Mission (hereafter, BM) for years, and whose work is thus in part available to the public through the digital collections of the University of Southern California,[23] Jenkins added: "Naturally there could have been two Frederick/Fred Grants taking photographs in Ghana in the second half of the 1870s and the early 1880s—but this is highly unlikely" (Jenkins 2016: 4).

This essay uses Jenkins' intervention as an example of the possibilities for human understanding that may arise at the intersection of creativity and discipline in historical writing. What initially manifests as a simple generational dynamic—Jenkins, drawing on decades of experience—is, in fact, something deeper, because not all experience is useful or valuable. It was not accumulated knowledge in itself that mattered here, but the understanding which may, at least when combined with appropriate humility and generosity, grow out of that knowledge. On the one hand, Jenkins knew who Frederick Grant was. Crucially, Jenkins therefore realised that a photographer bearing the name Frederick Grant could be African. One consequence of Europe's five centuries of presence in Ghana is that many Ghanaians have European names, often in combination with African ones. In itself, this nomenclature is an expression of an ancient West African tradition of accommodating and incorporating foreigners, including Europeans, first as slave traders, then as colonisers, with a few missionaries thrown in (Ipsen 2015). Rachel Engmann's innovative public project of recruiting members of these families to excavate the Danish-Gã settlement at Osu—something she has termed "autoarchaeology"—testifies both to the complexity and moral relevance of these centuries-old encounters (Engmann 2021).

[23] International Missionary Photography Archive: https://digitallibrary.usc.edu/Archive/International-Mission-Photography-Archive--ca-1860-ca-1960-2A3BF1OL0UB.

It is thus unsafe to assume that a man named Fred Grant was English. Jenkins' frustration lay in part in seeing a peer-reviewed journal, with access to a significant amount of information not carefully checking an article's claims. What lent Jenkins' rebuke such force was the simplicity with which it was established. Knowledge, especially decontextualised knowledge, derived from image searches on the internet, is not the same as genuine understanding (regarding the "shifting understanding" that researchers both from within and from outside the communities depicted may experience about historical images see **Sewordor** in this volume).

This chapter discusses this distinction by way of what I am calling "long listening", which I understand as the hard work of reading, digesting, sifting truth from falsehoods, and winnowing what is real from within a cloud of shimmering mirages. Using Jenkins' work on the archives of the Basel Mission (BM) as a model for historical scholarship, I argue for an approach serving priorities other than those represented by European archives—but which is nevertheless grounded in a sustained immersion in the same. Since so much of the archival record was created by missionaries (and in their languages), successful revisionism must begin with a deep understanding of those missionaries in all their human contradictions. Long listening is about recognising the layered cultural contexts of a given historical event or artefact, sufficiently nuanced that one can overcome one's own confirmation biases—such as assuming that the photographer of naked African women must be a European man—as well as those of the historical participants. Most importantly, it is about deriving real meaning from the historical record, by which we may grow to be better people in our own times.

At a moment in our technological society at which artificial intelligence models capable of drafting undergraduate essays have induced some scholars to argue that, for example, we are now in a situation in which students might pass their classes "without learning, developing critical-thinking skills, or working hard at anything" (Bodnick 2023; see also Marche 2022), the value of human judgement is greatly heightened. A large learning model can tell us when such and such an event happened, and increasingly sophisticated ones might be able to tell us, for instance, whether Muslim historians have written about Mohandas Gandhi in different ways than Hindu historians. (When I posed this question to the ChatGPT programme in the spring of 2023, I received a nuanced and confident reply—but supported by references to a non-existent Italian historian. Such errors, called "hallucinations", can undoubtedly eventually end up, unchecked, in peer-reviewed publications). More meaningfully, however, artificial intelligence cannot tell us whether Gandhi was "Mahatma", a great soul. As computing tools grow stronger, the value of a deep understanding both of the past and its associated scholarly community is increased rather than diminished. Fred Grant may not have been English, but he seems to have been prepared to exploit a salacious

colonial market for his photographs. Did that make him complicit in colonialism? Perhaps. But perhaps he was also a shrewd businessman at a moment in time at which commercial opportunities were growing scarce for people like himself. Artificial intelligence might someday be able to tell us how much of Grant's livelihood was owed to British colonialism, but cannot tell us what he should have done—or what any of us would have done had we been in his shoes.

As is so often the case, cross-cultural religious encounters make everything more complicated. Commenting on the Christians of the first generation, as they (at times grudgingly) recognised that the universal implications of their faith tended to violate ethnic frontiers, Gambian historian, Lamin Sanneh, wrote: "the experience of the Gentile church brought Paul to the radical edge of his own tradition. His religious sentiments were progressively adjusted by exposure to the Gentile movement; mission does not spare its own founders" (Sanneh 2009: 33). Sanneh posited two modes of cross-cultural propagation for historical religions such as Christianity and Islam. The first he termed "diffusion". Practitioners of this approach usually sought to copy the sending culture for implantation in a new place. If diffusion is the basic missionary mode of Islam, with its insistence on the Arabic language, there is also an enduring diffusionary thread in Christian missionary history. Christian insistence on retaining a geographical centre (be it Rome or Canterbury or Geneva) will often insist, explicitly or implicitly, that indigenous Christians assimilate to the missionaries' home culture.

Against the diffusionary mode of religious propagation, Sanneh identified an approach he called "translation", a mode of intercultural theology running much deeper than mere linguistic recoding of a message. In a translation approach to mission, the message inevitably changes, sometimes in significant ways. The BM was relatively unburdened by diffusionary tendencies, leaving a global legacy of linguistic study and Bible translation—in Africa and beyond (Jenkins 2015). This does not mean, of course, that the BM was innocent. On the contrary, the mission was staffed by human beings, with their own contradictions and petty rivalries, socialised into a stifling corporate culture (Herppich 2016). However, because the BM was committed to learning local languages and seeing the Christian message enculturated, at least more so than nearly every other 19th-century European missionary society, its early staff in West Africa were more prepared to hear—and to a lesser extent, receive—that same message from indigenous Christians.

The complexity of Christian history in West Africa, and especially in south-eastern Ghana, lies in the synchronicity of translation and diffusion; two processes Sanneh had viewed as oppositional. The untidy reality was that Africans and Europeans together—sometimes working in tandem, and at other times directly impeding one another—initiated an

unfinished project of translating into African life an originally West Asian message that had landed on the Gold Coast (colonial Ghana) refracted through centuries of European history. These processes were simultaneously empowering and unjust, and Africans routinely appropriated and reconfigured the message despite, not because of, the messengers.

Despite the Messengers

The counterintuitive historical reality was that many Africans found healing and power in a foreign message initially introduced by people alternately committed to European supremacy or, at the very least, oblivious to the dehumanising quality of their own organisational culture. Such complexity presents an occupational hazard for young historians, who may be tempted into abbreviating their time spent listening to the voices buried inside the archival record. It will only be a matter of time before computers can read handwriting, even the most impenetrable nineteenth-century (old) German manuscripts. Perhaps eventually they will be able to recognise faces in the BM's photographic database. And once that happens, a researcher looking for, for example, internal Basel missionary debates on the relative merits of bringing Africans to Switzerland for higher training will no longer need to comb through endless committee protocols and even marginal notes scribbled on unrelated letters. In that way, technological improvements potentially infuse the painstaking process of archival excavation with bolts of lightning. Not all efficiencies are abbreviations.

The problem with targeted searches, however, is that we often find precisely what we are looking for, and in the process overlook far more meaningful questions. Take for example the question of colonial collusion. Was the BM complicit in Britain's imperial grasp? The answer is complicated, of course. Unlike most other missionary societies from Europe, which began arriving late in the century and were more or less wedded to the racial contradictions of imperialist Christianity from the beginning, the BM had been on the Gold Coast for decades. Thus, when the BM made its peace with British rule on the Gold Coast in the 1870s, this was very different than when the same Mission entered Cameroon explicitly in support of the German imperial project a decade later. On the Gold Coast, the BM could only embrace British colonialism by first retreating from an earlier mode of reciprocal and interdependent communion. This was one of the ugliest betrayals in the history of Christian complicity with empire, but it took place years before most other European missionaries set foot in Africa. That people change over time is a nuanced perspective much wanting in recent scholarship—but is precisely a perspective that might be gained from a sustained immersion in the archive. It was only years after Paul Jenkins advised me, in passing over coffee at a conference, to focus my dissertation on the third quarter of the nineteenth century that I realised

he had been directing me to the final years preceding the BM's decline into paternalism. Understanding that I was hunting for moments of genuinely reciprocal encounter, Jenkins had known that it was in those years, before high colonialism, that I would find the stories I was looking for.

Ghanaian churches of the early independence years were rightly proud of the ways their nineteenth-century forebears had created a Christianity that was both intelligible and useful, relative to the priorities of local societies. Those years, Jenkins wrote, were "shaped by a strong desire to show how important indigenous leadership had been in their growth" (Jenkins 1974: 24). This drive was especially strong among the Presbyterians, whose movement toward autonomy had begun earlier than other mission churches, on account of the deportation of German missionaries during the First (European) World War. The Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast became autonomous under the guidance of the Scottish Mission that replaced the BM, proving more than competent to manage its own affairs by going so far as to raise charitable donations to impoverished former missionaries back in Europe (Grant 2020).

However, despite having published many biographies of African Christians over the decades, and often with an explicit call for German-speaking readers to follow the example of Africans, the Mission's Swiss leadership had no compelling interest in publishing histories of Africans (or Indians) wresting autonomy from the hands of the Mission. Thus, the task fell to independent Ghanaian Christians to write their own histories, defining their own ancestors (as **Kwakye** does in this volume). Beginning in the mid-1960s, Waterville Publishing House of Accra published several biographies in their "Pioneers" series, and, beginning in 1970, Asɛmpa Publishers of the Christian Council of Ghana published several more. There was a twist, however. While the first generation of independent Church leaders in Ghana often had bitter memories of the later generations of Swiss and German missionaries, they felt quite different about those who had come earlier, in the late precolonial years. Those men and women, including Johannes Zimmermann and Johannes Christaller, enjoyed ongoing respect. In 1944, J.B. Danquah, one of the leaders of the nationalist generation, went as far as to acknowledge Christaller in the preface to his seminal study *The Akan Doctrine of God*: "Christaller ... appears to me ... the ancestor of the thought that informs these pages. In that sense, the spiritual sense, this book must be taken as having been written by him, or, not to be unnecessarily mysterious, with his spiritual cooperation" (Danquah 1944: 185). Over thirty years later, in 1976, the traditional king of the Krobo people of south-eastern Ghana travelled to the Württemberg village of Gerlingen. Dedicating a plaque in honour of a Gerlingen native who had translated the Bible into Krobo, *Konor* (Paramount Chief) Azzu Mate Kole said:

> I dare to claim that the secret of [Johannes] Zimmermann's success lay not only in his deep faith in God and in his full dedication to the realisation of God's will, but also in his attitude of trust and friendship toward all people, regardless of race. We still need this trust and this friendship today (Stutzmann 2007).

Was the BM complicit, then, in imperialism? Yes. But a simple perusal of the archive cannot reveal the relational abuse that issued from that complicity. The latter accounts, in my thinking, for the paradox that nationalists like Danquah could adopt early missionaries as ancestors, within a book that emphasised indigenous philosophy in Ghanaian Christian history. The context for Jenkins' epistemological turn to Basel was thus a growing awareness of the asymmetry in mid-twentieth-century Ghanaian public memory. What he found in Switzerland, however, did not align with the nuanced memory he saw in Ghana:

> When I arrived in Basel in 1972 and found that "everyone" hated the old missionaries, including many of the people actually working for the Basel Mission then ... I began to look for ways of getting people to think again about them, and appreciate their ... commitment.[24]

Even before moving to Switzerland, then, Jenkins had already embarked on his life's work, his long listening. And despite his meticulous archival work, his programme has always had an element of personal—indeed spiritual—seeking. It has always been about the possibility, against all odds and the bloody realities of history, of Christian life together across human divides. Concluding his 1974 discussion of the need for biographies of early African Christians, he circled back to the hybrid nature of the latter: "But it is also true that in their early decades the churches were organisations set integrally in two social landscapes, African and European, and inevitably influenced by both" (Jenkins 1974: 24). In other words, people were changing as they lived their lives in relationship to one another. Early African Christians, even those of royal blood, like David Asante and Theophilus Opoku, were inescapably awkward—misfits in both worlds, just like the missionaries themselves. And this reciprocity is not to be taken lightly; few Europeans in Africa have been receptive to African rebuke and correction; even fewer have been willing to receive charity and emotional support from Africans.

And yet, as long as the missionary societies back in Europe own the missionary archives, they continue to control whatever historical narratives and publications issue from those holdings. This structural reality is substantially exasperating for the BM for linguistic reasons. Not only are most of the archival materials in German—and often in very difficult handwriting—but the cultural theology of the BM, which had always prioritised African vernacular in the indigenous congregations, had exclusion as an unintended consequence.

---

[24] Paul Jenkins, personal communication, 25 March 2016.

After the first generation, African clergy and lay leaders were discouraged from learning or speaking German. Yet, in an act of structural injustice, meaningful decisions continued to be made in German, as were most field reports posted to headquarters with the intention of shaping policy. Thus, the upshot of a policy designed to promote indigenous autonomy by favouring vernacular language was the opposite; the throttling of indigenous autonomy. Moreover, some of the most important details of early Ghanaian Christian thought—such as missionary-penned synopses of indigenous homiletics and Biblical hermeneutics—languish in archives located in Europe in languages few African scholars should reasonably be expected to have mastered before contributing to theological or historical scholarship.

Recognising that the German language of these sources constituted an obstacle toward the repatriation of Ghanaian Christian history, Paul Jenkins began concerted efforts at bridging this gap—abstracting archives, creating finding aids in English, and so on. Introducing an 1883 report by Theophilus Opoku, Jenkins wrote: "This document ... is a good example of a type of written source which could easily become available to historians in Ghana" (Jenkins 1972: 245). Beyond the issue of language, Jenkins has served the cause of repatriation by disseminating reports on the BM photographic collections and, eventually, organising the digitisation and metadata thereof, along with his scholarly interpretive work on the BM'sarchival collection (Jenkins 1985; Jenkins and Geary 1993; Jenkins and Theye 1995; Jenkins 2002).

The African and European men and women whose traces remain in the missionary record were whole people, brimming with motivations and contradictions, dreams, and disappointments. If a full understanding of other humans must always elude us, a long listening to the archival sources—a work of patience and endurance—may move us close. Paul Jenkins' long listening in the BM archives is an outstanding model for younger historians, and it proceeds from a prior commitment to regarding the actors in this historical drama as complicated people, irreducible to political positions, and competent to impose their will upon one another, at times overtly, at times subtly.

Case Study: Pastor Simeon Koranteng Mfodwo[25]

Perhaps Jenkins' finest work on this theme came in a "visual essay" interpreting missionary photography through cross-cultural perspectives (Jenkins 2011). In this approximately twelve-minute film (also discussed by **Sewordor** in this volume), Jenkins discusses several historical photographs that agents of the BM created. The result is a splendid case study not only of African influence on the photographic gaze, but also of the historical creativity that may arise from archival endurance. Proceeding from a straightforward premise that people of different historical and cultural backgrounds will tend to see different things in photographs, Jenkins argued that Africans have continuously spoken into the camera, conveying their own messages to the viewers—messages which might fundamentally contrast with the photographer's. The trouble, however, is that few African photographic subjects had control over the subsequent fates of their likenesses, such as what was said about them, or how, if at all, their portraits were used (on the last point see also **Schürer-Ries** in this volume).[26]

To make this abstract argument concrete, Jenkins focuses on a family portrait (Figure 13), from the first decade of the 20th century.[27] The photograph was probably taken by the missionary doctor, Rudolph Fisch, who served in Ghana from 1885. Jenkins notes that in photographing the indigenous Akuapem pastor, Koranteng, his wife, three small girls (likely grandchildren), and a young adult woman posing with the group, Fisch was likely documenting one of the Mission's successes: the establishment of an African church, pastored by Africans (while Europeans retained control over ordination and finances).

---

[25] Simeon Koranteng appears several times in BM photography, but in the first instance only, from the late 1860s, has the additional name "Mfodzo" (see https://doi.org/10.25549/impa-m36993), probably a misspelling of "Mfodwo". Mfodwo originally referred to an inauspicious day in the Akan calendrical cycle (fodwo), but since the late nineteenth century has also become a surname within Akuapem royal matriclans (Konadu 2012; McCaskie 1980; and Bartle 1978). It may be impossible to know why this name disappeared from Koranteng's subsequent archival record, and whether it was of his own initiative or that of the missionaries. I thank Francis Sakyiama Addo and E.S.K. Sewordor for their guidance on this matter.

[26] In 1913, for example, another missionary, Erwin Nothwang, used a photograph of Koranteng—by this point retired—as a postcard, mailed to Basel from Ghana. BMA D-30.11.17; https://digital-library.usc.edu/asset-management/2A3BF1KYK2ZE.

[27] BMA D-30.11.018, https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/56464.

Fig. 13: BMA D-30.11.018. "Negerpfarrer Koranteng mit Familie [Negro pastor Koranteng with Family]". c. 1900. Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

The caption, probably written by Fisch himself, reads "The African [Negro] Pastor Koranteng, with Family" (Jenkins 2011: timestamp 1:27. Author's translation). Jenkins hastens to point out the racial dynamic in Fisch's caption, when he tells us that:

> Those adjectives have a whole lot of prejudice packed into them. Friends of the Mission in Germany and Switzerland will have thought he did well to qualify as a pastor, this Koranteng, but he's black. He's an African—and automatically, by definition, a subordinate in need of close missionary supervision (Jenkins 2011: timestamp 2:29).

A word on vocabulary: Jenkins translates "Negerpastor" as "the African pastor, or the Black pastor", when a more obvious English adjective is on hand. A minor complaint I have with Jenkins is his tendency to soften the BM's racial blind spots despite acknowledging their presence in general, exemplified in his discussion of prejudice facing Pastor Koranteng. The German word "Neger" (derived from the Iberian languages—and thus inextricably tied to the slave trade) carries less violence than its English equivalent (as in Johannes Christaller's argument (Christaller 1882) that Twi ("Tschi-Neger") vernacular proverbs contained what Sanneh would later call "indigenous theological inquiry" (Sanneh 2009: 34)). However, rendering the term "African" tends to suggest that Fisch and other missionaries were more prepared to view Africans as their equals than was usually the case.

Either way, Jenkins points out that although Fisch's caption directs the attention of German speakers toward the pastor, the latter is situated at the group's side. The obvious way to view the image would be by focusing on the wife, Amelia, who sits front and centre, and who stares directly into the camera, while her husband, the photograph's ostensible subject, cocks his head off to his right.[28] Even without further detail, a close observer will sense a tension between the caption and the image. Clearly, Fisch and the Korantengs saw the same situation through different eyes.

But the real twist is yet to come, and this is where long listening comes into play. Jenkins introduces Michelle Gilbert, an anthropologist whose own sustained focus on Akuapem allowed her to immediately and delightedly identify Mrs. Koranteng as "Akua Oye", a personage of much greater importance in Akuapem's history than her husband (Jenkins 2011: timestamp 5:12). *Ohemmea* Akua Oye, to use her proper name and title, was the reigning queen mother of the kingdom (Jenkins 2021). She thus had two identities—that of Akua Oye, the most powerful, most dignified, and most respected woman in the kingdom, a kingmaker responsible for some of the most important spiritual-political machinations in Akuapem, and that of Amelia Koranteng, the wife of a lowly African pastor (see Gilbert 1993).

To Rudolph Fisch, whose twenty-six-year career on the Gold Coast centred on a project of confronting indigenous religion in the hopes of seeing it relegated to a historical relic of no greater weight than that of Switzerland's own heathen past, Akua Oye's identity as queen mother was irrelevant at best and was most likely regrettable. But for Jenkins, this one missing piece of context—that of Mrs. Koranteng's dual positions in life—opened the doors for profound insight. Recognising that the old woman was the most important person in the household, Jenkins no longer needed to puzzle over the pastor's relegation to the photograph's margins. Rather, and despite Fisch's wish to take a portrait of an African pastor and his nuclear family, the same couple had arranged themselves to display not only the queenmother but her three female kinfolks who, Jenkins explains to an international audience, would not be expected to understand the Akan matrilineal system of succession, represented the kingdom's future.

Of course, by the time Jenkins published this visual essay, he had been working on the photographic collection for decades, which is to say that in twelve short minutes, Paul Jenkins has distilled a lifetime of listening, not only to the archival record, but also to deeply held cultural values about power, prestige, inheritance, marriage, and family, and the cross-cultural process in global Christianity. While the key piece of information came from

[28] Jenkins calls Koranteng's posture "whimsical" (timestamp 4:18). All three BM photographs of the elderly pastor hold the exact same posture; I suspect what Jenkins calls "whimsical" was nothing more meaningful than Koranteng's default photographic attitude.

Michelle Gilbert, Jenkins was equipped to make great use of the smallest shards of information, even that which had been obscured by the missionary photographer's patriarchal myopia. This feat testifies to the importance of long listening. As powerful as Google searches and artificial intelligence may be, at least for the initial stages of listening, neither tool could ever have pulled it off. This is because true understanding, deep enough to make sense of cross-cultural religious encounters, can only be acquired with thoughtful patience. There are no shortcuts to wisdom.

Conclusion

To close my chapter, it is worth returning to Jenkins' intervention on Ghanaian photographer Frederick Grant. The web of 19th-century cross-cultural encounters on the Gold Coast was no less complex than in our own times. People were still people, complete with their hypocrisies and mixed motivations. We tend to reduce our forebears to simple political positions or binaries of good and bad at the peril of missing out on the breadth of possibilities for life together in our own times.

As in the performing arts, historical creativity is predicated on discipline. Musical performance demands more than technical mastery of the instrument. Both musicians and historians must know their respective texts inside and out, understanding not only why certain phrases recur and how they contribute to the whole, but also what the composer's intentions were—even if the latter must be transcended. A missionary archive is a peculiar text in which the voices of the principal subjects are usually refracted through the interpretive lens of outsiders. Such an origin requires of historians a deep understanding of all the people involved—the Africans and the Europeans alike—and the ways they changed over time, as they influenced one another. If the goal is a kind of creativity whence profound insights may arise, the surest way to get there is courtesy of archival endurance—long listening. Then, and perhaps only then, might we not only understand the past, but also learn from those who went before us.

Bibliography

Bartle, Philip F. W. "Forty Days: The Akan Calendar". *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 48(1) (1978): 80–84.

Bodnick, Maya. "GPT-4 Can Already Pass Freshman Year at Harvard". *Chronicle of Higher Education* (26 July 2023). https://www.chronicle.com/article/gpt-4-can-already-pass-freshman-year-at-harvard. Accessed 26 May 2023.

Christaller, J.G. "Einige Sprichwörter der Tschi-Neger". *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin* (1882): 316.

Danquah, J.B. *The Akan Doctrine of God: A Fragment of Gold Coast Ethics and Religion.* London: Lutterworth, 1944.

Engmann, Rachel Ama Asaa. "Under Imperial Eyes, Black Bodies, Buttocks, and Breasts: British Colonial Photography and Asante 'Fetish Girls'". *African Arts* 45(2) (2012): 46–57.

Engmann, Rachel AA. "Unearthing Mixed Raceness at Christiansborg Castle". *Journal of the Society for Architectural Historians* 80(4) (2021): 385-388.

Gilbert, Michelle. "The Cimmerian Darkness of Intrigue: Queen Mothers, Christianity and Truth in Akuapem History". *Journal of Religion in Africa* 23(1) (1993): 2–43.

Grant, Paul Glen. "Forgiving the Missionaries: African Moral Imagination and Postcolonial Germans". In *After the Imperialist Imagination: Two Decades of Global Germany and Its Legacies*, edited by Sara Pugach, David Pizzo, and Adam Blackler. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2020: 117–131.

Herppich, Birgit. *Pitfalls of Trained Incapacity: The Unintended Effects of Integral Missionary Training in the Basel Mission on Its Early Work in Ghana (1828–1840).* Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2016.

Ipsen, Pernille. *Daughters of the Trade: Atlantic Slavers and Interracial Marriage on the Gold Coast.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

Jenkins, Paul. "The Anglican Church in Ghana, 1905–24". *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 15(1) (1974): 23–39.

Jenkins, Paul. "A Conflict of Faiths at Kukurantumi". *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 13(82) (1972): 245–256.

Jenkins, Paul. "The Earliest Generation of Missionary Photographers in West Africa and the Portrayal of Indigenous People and Culture". *History in Africa* 20 (1993): 89–118.

Jenkins, Paul. "Everyday Life Encapsulated? Two Photographs Concerning Women and the Basel Mission in West Africa, c.1900". *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15(1) (2002): 45–60.

Jenkins, Paul. "Frederick Grant, Ghanaian Photographer". *African Arts* 49(1) (2016): 4.

Jenkins, Paul. "Notes on the Basel Mission's Production of Knowledge in the Kannada Language in Nineteenth Century South India". In *Explorations in African History: Reading Patrick Harries*, edited by Veit Arlt, Stephanie Bishop, and Pascal Schmid. Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2015: 51–60.

Jenkins, Paul. "On Using Historical Missionary Photographs in Modern Discussion". In *Critical Readings in the History of Christian Mission*, vol. 1 edited by Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2021: 255–269.

Jenkins, Paul. "Reading an Image in the Other Context" (2011). Accessed on 4 October 2023 via https://vimeo.com/33251261.

Jenkins, Paul, and Christraud Geary. "Photographs From Africa in the Basel Mission Archive". *African Arts* 18(4) (1985): 56–100.

Jenkins, Paul and Thomas Theye. "Further Consideration of Two Photographs Ascribed to Christian Hornberger". *History in Africa* 22 (1995): 271–79.

Konadu, Kwasi. "The Calendrical Factor in Akan History". *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 45(2) (2012): 217–46.

Marche, Steven. "The College Essay Is Dead." *The Atlantic* (6 December 2022). https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2022/12/chatgpt-ai-writing-college-student-essays/672371/. Accessed 26 May 2023

McCaskie, T. C. "Time and the Calendar in Nineteenth-Century Asante: An Exploratory Essay". *History in Africa* 7 (1980): 179–200.

Sanneh, Lamin. *Translating the Message*, 2nd edition. New York: Orbis Books, 2009.

Stutzmann, Imanuel. "Johannes Zimmermann. 'Verschiedenes und besonders Merkwürdiges': Leben und Werk eines Gerlinger Missionars". Lecture, 11 March 2007 Gerlingen, https://www.johannes-rebmann-stiftung.de/cms/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/vortrag_zimmermann.pdf. Accessed 26 May 2023.

Part III

Visualising Africa's Past Across Continents

7 Making Sense of Early Missionary Photography: From Paul Jenkins' Pioneering Approach to the Photography Complex of Mission

Anke Schürer-Ries, University of Bayreuth

Fig. 14: BMA D-30.15.004. "Open-air preaching before a chief", gelatin dry plate, 1888/1895. Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

While trekking through the hinterland of Abetifi, August Friedrich Louis Ramseyer, more commonly known as Fritz Ramseyer, was permitted to preach at a gathering held by *Abankwa*, the Chief of Obomeng. Regarding this meeting, he noted in his 1895 publication, *Achtzig Ansichten von der Goldküste (Westafrika) nach Originalaufnahmen des Missionars Fritz Ramseyer*: "if we come across a gathering of this kind when we are on trek, and if the people are not too worked up, we ask them to interrupt their proceedings for a while,

which they usually do very willingly, at least in Okwawu. And we use this fine opportunity to preach the good news of the gospel" (Ramseyer 1895).[1] This caption resonates with the negotiative character of preaching as a missionary in Ghana in the late 19th century but is not reflected in the captions created for the multiple prints that can be found in the collections at the archives of the Basel Mission (BM). Figure 14, however, seemed to have made an impression on Ramseyer, for he included the image in his publication, and in three albums he created for his children, which are captioned in French, his native tongue. A further copy, the negative, as well as other images within a series of photographs depicting the encounter, found their way into the photographic collection of the BM. This information shows us that Ramseyer afforded Figure 14 a range of social biographies as he distributed it in a variety of vessels, an action that would create and expand the visual economy of a single image and enlighten us on how photography performed and was performed in the given context of a Protestant mission.

The discourse of the image as an object with its contextual background would not have readily occurred in the pre-digital age and may have reduced the image to its visual content alone. The information on the photograph of Ramseyer preaching before Abankwa, as well as comparative materials made available through online access, digitisation, and curation, allows researchers to think about the image beyond the visual representation of a given moment in history. It allows us to broaden our understanding of the role of missionaries in the field as opposed to the narrative at home, as well as of photographs that were created in a mission context, that is, the visual economy that originated from the engagement with the medium. The Fritz Ramseyer Collection in the Basel Mission Archives (BMA) is a prime example of how Paul Jenkins' work highlighted the significance of contextual information found in and around the image, which expanded the meaning of historical images in many ways. Sound curation can bring together emic and etic approaches to visual materials and represent the solid foundation of Jenkins' work. He invites us to consider what James L. Hevia later coined the "photography complex", an approach that includes the examination of the smallest details linked to an image. This includes its lifespan of social biographies and "structures that give photographs meaning", although Jenkins primarily concentrated on the visual content of the image (Hevia 2009: 82ff). I have therefore chosen two images from the vast collection to highlight both Jenkins' work and how the photography complex of mission can assist us in expanding our knowledge of the Protestant mission in the 19th century.

[1] In the archives of the Basel Mission, Okwawu seems to have been the established spelling for Kwawu, a name for a people and area of the Twi-speaking Akan group in the Eastern Region of Ghana, on the west shore of Lake Volta.

My interest in the Ramseyer collection and the influence of the archives on photographic collections sent me on a journey to research how our understanding of photographs needs to include the purposes, practices, and materiality inherent to photographic prints of the nineteenth century (Edwards 2012). My first point of contact began with Jenkins' attention to detail and his keen awareness that these images are embedded in a distinct environment of institutional appropriation and consumption, which is reflected in the catalogue of the BMA. The challenge for me lay in expanding our understanding of photography created in a mission context and including the influence of archives in assisting us to reimagine the Protestant mission through concise archival practices that include in-depth research (as **Grant** advocates in his contribution to this volume). This approach concentrates on what was expected of the image and what the efficacy and effect of photographs created in a mission context was and is (Edwards 2012: 223). I argue that the image needs to be seen beyond the visual to appreciate its full potential and agency as an object of affect in the history of contact zones between Protestant mission societies and the peoples among whom they worked. I moved beyond the visual, which can suffer from speculative interpretations, toward encapsulating how the mutability of the archives can bring to light the modes of production and visual economies of the photographic images that influence and shift how we regard photographs.

Returning to the image of Chief Abankwa and Ramseyer's photographs of the encounter with both the chief and his people, we need to consider how research has shifted from a focus on the idea of the contextual image to perceiving the photographic image as an agentic object, which was created in a privileged space, close to the chief and his entourage. This includes the visual economy of the image, undergoing a change of social biographies, as it traversed from Ramseyer's private collection into the public photographic collection of the BM. Historical images were and still are reduced to the role of documentative visuals of aged mission propaganda and probably considered, by the mission institute and researchers alike, to be a remnant inherent of missionary work among colonised people in Ghana. Both the missionary institutions and the researchers may not even have given it much thought beyond the fact that the photograph had been created in a missionary context. Yet, toward the end of the second half of the 20th century, several researchers and archivists including Paul Jenkins, found themselves confronted by vast collections of visual materials that had not yet been fully acknowledged as significant historical objects in their own right. Paul Jenkins' "seminal encounter" with Christraud Geary in 1977 and his resourcefulness, put developments into motion that brought to light the abundance of visual materials in Protestant mission archives, and how in-depth engagement with the photographs can make sense of them (see Albrecht et al. 2004: 5; and **Sewordor** in this volume). Besides pioneering the way

we access photographs created in a mission context, Jenkins, together with Barbara Frey-Näf,[2] and the team at the BMA, substantially shaped the way we think about and research the abundance of visual materials in mission archives. Jenkins advocated "the importance and value of mission records for the study of African history", with a critical eye on bias toward photographs created in a mission context (Albrecht et al. 2004: 5). His approach toward and scrutiny of missionary photographs and their agentic nature revealed that a wider discourse was needed to open up these valuable historical resources to research. It also reflected his understanding that "photographic images, with their composite nature, need to be understood as part of a particular practice as well as individual agents" (Schürer-Ries 2021: 68). His contextual approach enabled researchers to consider photographs as primary materials that could potentially inform their research, and how photographic images force us "to amplify and retool" the way we consider visual materials and how they may be included in the discourse on history (Jenkins 2001).

Drawing from Jenkins' approach to photography, researchers critically adopted visual materials created in a mission context into an array of research topics and approaches. They were also able to expand his pioneering understanding that a systematic approach to visual repositories was essential to bring order into what seemed chaotic, an understanding that context plays an important role in comprehending the agency of a photograph. Research into photography created in a Protestant mission context has, however, moved away from the focus on the visual and toward the agency of photographic images to include the perpetuation and appropriation of the visual through what Michael Kannenberg coined the modern Protestant reformatory movement. This strand of Protestant reformation was driven by Württemberg Pietism, which also formed the nucleus of the modern Protestant missionary movement in Switzerland in the nineteenth century (Kannenberg 2007; see also Kuhn and Sallmann 2002). It brought with it a particular approach to visual materials that had never entirely been dispelled from reformatory movements. The combination of the want of visual materials alongside text, and the *Sehsucht* of the 19th century, created a space for photography to be appropriated by various emerging religious groups (Faulstich 2002: 62).[3] From this emerged particular purposes and practices that were inherent to the Mission's approach to photography, and which ultimately created the social biographies of the photograph found in the BMA. It gave meaning to the abundance of photographs created in a mission context.

---

2 Barbara Frey-Näf jointly curated the digitisation and cataloguing of the photographic collections of the Basel Mission over 20 years.

3 Faulstich coined this term and described the rediscovery of the desire for the visual in Protestant movements.

The second image I have chosen from the Fritz Ramseyer collection is a good example of an image that contains information beyond the visual. On the one hand, there is a digital image of the original collodion print and its cardboard mount, with key information in the metadata in the BMA online catalogue. It also indicates that we are looking at a copy that can be allocated to the "official series" of the BM, a large set of images that were collected for missionary purposes, such as education or publications. The metadata lists the references of copies that were chosen by Ramseyer to be part of 80 photographs placed in albums designated for his children as well as the negative of the image. However, if we look closely at the digital images of the copy in the "official series", we can detect markings, an inking of sorts of social biographies of the photograph, as the photograph entered the appropriative spheres of the BM and traversed into various phases of use.

Fig. 15: BMA D-30.11.001. "Missionshaus in Akropong" 1880/1881. Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

There are two captions, one handwritten in French, Ramseyer's native tongue, and another typewritten in German, probably in alignment with the BM's primary language. Furthermore, several references in ink and pencil are on the back of Figure 15 and provide information about the negative of the image, its incorporation into a particular series of images in several cases and its usage in printed matter, e.g., Jb. G. 22 (Jahresbericht, G. 22 =

Ghana no. 22 (?)[4]). More recent inkings include the current reference number, D-30.11.1. which is used to reference the image today. If we turn the board over (Figure 16), we find further information that contains the names of the trees and plants featured in the images, as well as further names of missionaries, and persons, but also contradictory information to the exact location shown.[5] The mounting, varied handwriting, types of writing instruments and reference numbers, as well as the comments on the reverse of the board are not only indications of the constraints through historical classification decisions and modes of ordering the images, but also of the varied social biographies that were created as the image traversed these uses by the BM. It reflects less stringent cataloguing practices alongside lack of geographical knowledge by the cataloguers. Although the image was destined to play a particular role, the tangent of its role as a mounted photograph turned it into an agent of the transformative values of the archives and uses of photography in the BM. The biographies inked onto the mount irreversibly connect the visual content to the purposes and practices of the BM, the series, reorganisation, the history of the archive, and ultimately in my hands as part of Ramseyer's photographic oeuvre.

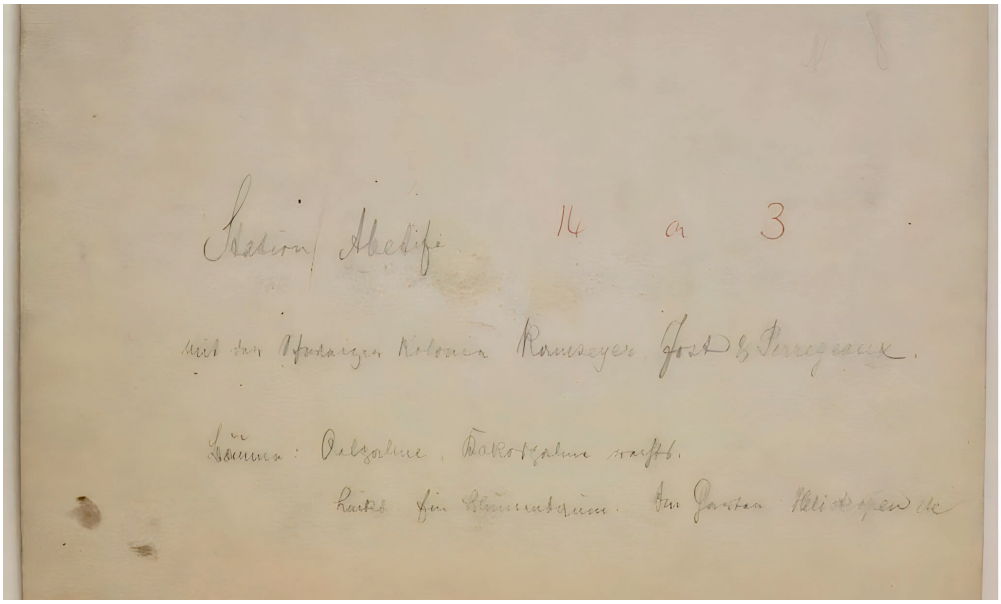

Fig. 16: Reverse of D-30.11.001 (Figure 15). Source: Photograph by A. Schürer-Ries.

[4] The letter G was allocated to the first larger set of images catalogued by the Basel Mission, and this image is one of the earliest in the "official series" of the Basel Mission photographic collections in the archives.

[5] This erroneous information implies that less stringent cataloguing practices in conjunction with lack of geographical knowledge created this conundrum.

I have chosen Figures 14 and 15 to exemplify Paul Jenkins' approach to making sense of photographs created in a mission context and represent his pioneering contextual approach toward the visual in a Protestant missionary archive. His work is part of the backbone of how historical photographs were propelled into the consciousness of researchers and mission societies through in-depth curation, digitisation, and accessibility. Jenkins' keen understanding of context and the historical significance that visual materials can have, put these images at the forefront of archival practices that made the images accessible and later became pioneering in themselves.

Jenkins invited researchers to reimagine mission through the lens of photographing missionaries, albeit with the awareness that we need to read against the grain of history, or, as Walter Benjamin aptly stated: "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger" (Benjamin and Arendt 1969: 255. See also von Ranke 2011: 86, von Ranke 1885). This enabled Jenkins' successors, like me, to realise the potential of photographic materials and expand his methods as a point of departure into methods such as visual economies or photography complexes that concern themselves with the images as agentic objects. These methods reflect the negotiative nature of the encounters in the mission fields and how photography placed African chiefs into the archives of the BM and bring to light the complexity of the visual as a valid source of historical research, beyond the visual content.

Bibliography

Albrecht, Michael, Veit Arlt, Barbara Müller, and Jürg Schneider (eds.). *Getting Pictures Right: Context and Interpretation*. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2004.

Benjamin, Walter and Arendt, Hannah. *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

Faulstich, Werner. *Einführung in die Medienwissenschaft. Probleme, Methoden, Domänen*. München, 2002.

Ramseyer, Fritz. *Achtzig Ansichten von der Goldküste nach Originalaufnahmen des Missionars Fritz Ramseyer*. Neuenburg: Attinger, 1895, No. 41.

Hevia, J.L. "The Photography Complex: Exposing Boxer-Era China 1900–1". In *Photographies East: The Camera and Its Histories in East and Southeast Asia*, edited by R. Morris. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009: 79–119.

Edwards, Elizabeth. "Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image". *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 221–234.

Schürer-Ries, Anke. "The Fritz Ramseyer Collection–An Ethnography of a Protestant Mission Archive (1864–1908)". PhD thesis, De Montfort University Leicester, 2021.

Jenkins, Paul. "On Using Historical Missionary Photographs in Modern Discussion". *Lefait missionaire* 10(1) (2001): 71–89.

Kannenberg, Michael. *Verschleierte Uhrtafeln. Endzeiterwartungen im württembergischen Pietismus zwischen 1818 und 1848*. Göttingen, 2007.

Kuhn, K. Thomas, and Sallmann, Martin. *Das "Fromme Basel." Religion in einer Stadt des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Basel: Schwabe, 2002.

Von Ranke, Leopold. "Preface to the First Edition of Histories of the Latin and Germanic Peoples". In *The Theory and Practice of History*, edited by Georg G. Iggers. Translated by Wilma A. Iggers. New York: Routledge, 2011: 85–88.

Von Ranke, Leopold. "Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1515". *Sämtliche Werke* 33/34. Leipzig: Duncker und Humboldt, 1885.

8 Notes on "the Other Context" for Reading Missionary Photographs of Ghana in the Basel Mission Archives

E. Sasu Kwame Sewordor, University of Basel

The Parameters of Getting Pictures Right

For two days in September 2003, a group of Paul Jenkins' ex-students and colleagues met at Missionsstrasse 21 in Basel, Switzerland. Their single purpose was "Getting Pictures Right", the theme of the symposium which had brought them together to honour Paul. To be clear, the notion of getting pictures right was not meant to suggest an ideal approach or singular interpretation of historical photographs. Rather, as Ute Röschenthaler—an attendee—put it, the symposium's title referred to Paul's "endeavours to make sense of early mission photography, about which next to nothing was known" (Röschenthaler 2004: 8). Despite the optimistic tone of the theme and impressive line-up of speakers, the participants understood that their gathering could only make modest contributions to how scholars read, understand, and interpret historical photographs, particularly those created by agents of the Basel Mission (BM). Today, missionary photographs offer us unique historical glimpses into African/Ghanaian cultures but were originally created as complements to reportage from the "mission field" to supervisors in Basel since 1860 (Jenkins 2001: 71–72). When the glass plate negatives of the photos arrived in Basel, they were processed and then printed in the Mission's pamphlets, including the *Christian Messenger*, mainly for fundraising in Europe to support evangelical work.

Retrospectively, from today's viewpoint, "What indeed does 'getting the picture right' involve, and what is the scope, the order of magnitude of the increase value which serious work with historical photographs may achieve?" Paul quizzed (Jenkins 2004: 119). For Ute, it entails "treating an image as a social entity and paying respect to its individuality. It meant acknowledging that a photograph had its own history, a context in which it was created, an author who had snapped it, and journeys taken before arriving at its temporary destination in a museum or an archive" (Röschenthaler 2004: 85). In the spirit of academic exchange, the symposium debated several questions without conclusively answering all of them.[6] If the participants of the symposium were unable to resolve all arising questions, they only

[6] See Patrick Marcolli's article in Basler Zeitung, "Ein Leben im Dienst der Missionsgesichtichte", 18 Sept. 2003.

added to unanswered ones in historical photography studies that scholars have long known (Jenkins and Geary, 2004; Edwards 1992). Productively, however, these unresolved musings inspired later publications and broadly challenged the scholarship to refine methodological strategies and reminisce on how to glean evidence from historical photos from the Basel Mission Archives or BMA (Thomas and Schürer-Ries 2012; Schürer-Ries 2021). Additionally, the symposium paid attention to "context and interpretations"—as the sub-theme of the event and as fundamental components for understanding and deducing meaning from historical photographs held in the BMA. The general tasks of situating missionary photographs in their relevant context and then interpreting them are intertwined and sometimes require looking beyond the visual contents of a single photograph or a collection for further information (as **Schürer-Ries** shows in her contribution to this volume). For different reasons, photos may contain insufficient data to determine who created them, where, when, for what purpose, and for which audience, and not least who and what they show. Paul has pondered over some of these questions in his pre-2003 writings (See Jenkins 2001; Jenkins and Frey-Näf 1991; Jenkins 2000).

I contend that "context" or the setting in which the symposium took place also matters in light of how the predominantly white male participation in the event shapes positionality. This is key because it has ramifications for epistemology or claiming expertise about what entails the historical "context" of missionary photos and how that informs interpretations of pictures depicting experiences in Africa, its peoples, and un/built spaces. Taking the symposium as a point of departure, I suggest that attempts at "getting pictures right" can be limited if the African cultural contexts being interpreted are framed as a dualised "other" despite the aim to steer European scholarly lenses away from "a typical view" of pictures of Africa. Thinking together with **Heuser**'s evaluation of Paul's idea of "there-centricity" in this volume, I insist that if we consider European scholars of missionary photos taken in Africa as cultural outsiders to the African contexts they study, the conceptual challenge that emerges is that we fix their positionality as Caucasians in relation to an African "other". This conceptual fix runs the risk of essentialising being European or white against being African and arrests the capacity for scholars to learn and critically interpret cultures besides their own. To offer an analytical frame that goes beyond the dualised "other", I make a case for a reflexive take on a researcher's cultural positionality by putting Paul's reflections on getting pictures right in dialogue with my previous research and analysing two photos from the BMA.

In the next section, I engage a visual essay published by Paul under the title "Reading an Image in the Other Context" (Jenkins 2011; see also Jenkins 2001: 74–78) as an entry into my reflections on what he calls "the other context" and discuss its limitations. After this, comes a section that draws on my personal academic experiences between the years I was

a graduate student in Ghana and my relocation to Switzerland in 2018 as a background to discuss two versions of an image from the BMA taken in Ghana to underscore the relevance of intimate knowledge about the "other context" when gathering evidence from photographic sources. The final section contemplates the interplay between enduring "typical" or uncritical narratives about the BM's history in present-day Basel and how to reconceptualise scholarly reading of missionary photos of Ghana and Africa at large.

The Other Cultural Context and Its Limits

It must be stated at the onset that the idea of "the other context" is well intended because in such an undertaking, Paul writes, "lies the possibility of recapturing dimensions in the history of environing societies and culture which [available archival] sources so far have been able to display" (Jenkins 2001: 74). Primarily, though, the audience to whom Paul was speaking were westerners, among whom he naturally counted himself. Needless to repeat here, Paul did not simply admit that the African cultures represented in the historical photographs he studied were foreign to him "and at best only partially understood", but added that keeping this in mind was essential to "lead us [westerners] away from colonial readings" (Jenkins 2004: 129–130). Paul increasingly took seriously the need to inform oneself of what cultural realities surrounded a given photo in order to avoid what Edwards calls "a disturbing analytical compression" (2004: 11) in the minds of westerners who interpret images of Africa (Jenkins 2011). His previous work on and writing about historical missionary photographs had taught him the usefulness of "experiences of transformation" in unpacking evidence from pictures. Reflecting on shifts in his research into missionary photography, fashioned by surprising encounters that brought new information to light and transformed his instinctive assumptions, he wrote:

> Each one of these experiences with African photographs has to do with images where readings in a non-Western cultural context are possible. Each has to do with the hope that readings from another cultural context can be communicated to us, or even generated by us if we learn to look at a photograph from another standpoint, one linked to life in a particular culture, or to the life of outsiders working in that particular culture. In other words if you are handling mission photography, or any bodies of photography taken essentially by Western figures in a non-Western context, then experiences of transformation are not only possible, but should be regarded as likely, to be expected, to be sought out – and as absolutely vital if we are not to succumb to the heinous crime of exclusively Eurocentric thinking (Jenkins 2004: 130).

Paul, therefore, encouraged non-African researchers examining photographs depicting African experiences to be sensitive to the local cultural context in which the photographs were created, to at least guard against stereotypic interpretations of what the images depict. What

is, however, insufficiently developed in Paul's publications on this subject is the conceptual frame within which this crucial undertaking may be grounded.

At best, Paul gestured how such a task could be undertaken when he wrote: "It would, of course, be important, in a sustained programme of research, to check that the chains of thought built into this essay would be recognised and responded to by a group of people in the culture concerned" (Jenkins 2004: 131). In taking up this invitation, I submit that setting the cultural lifeworld of "westerners" or "outsiders" apart from that of African (or "the other") context creates a binary frame of analysis. The conceptual challenge that arises from setting westerners aside, as cultural outsiders, is that an unquestioned position is created for white researchers[7]—as a starting point from where it is supposed that they can arrive at getting a picture right, given information about the other cultural context and the willingness to submit to what Paul describes as "experiences of transformation"—and for Africans "in the culture concerned" to respond. Clearly, the transformative experiences Paul offers do not fully dissolve at least two possibilities: Firstly, that critical white researchers may still interpret what they see in photos showing Africa/ns through familiar references in western cultures. Secondly, that African researchers may misinterpret photos depicting African societies they may be familiar with but may lack the crucial information required to situate an image in its historical context. These considerations must conceptually move scholarly thinking about how to interpret missionary photographs of Africa/ns beyond Paul's warning to be attuned to what the "other context" has to say and reframes his linear idea of experiences of transformation.

Paul was, no doubt, alert to the accumulative formation of cultures, either in Africa or Europe, and the limits that this truth places on a researcher who is not a local of a given society. "Multi-facetted culture", he writes, "is a challenge to the outsider [manifesting as a] struggle to understand [local] peoples everyday tactics, peoples life strategies" (Jenkins 2004: 130), to which we may add their aspirations and imaginations. Yet, by prescribing "experiences of transformation" to westerners/outsiders as an immersive practice to critically appraise the other cultural context and his invitation to African scholars to respond, he creates a dichotomy. Without a thorough conceptual roadmap to frame the "sustained programme of research" Paul suggests, the experiences of transformation neither clarify the confines of "the other context" nor robustly explain the epistemic implications of a Swiss academic who, for instance, develops the capacity to make informed assessments of "the other context" after being deeply immersed in a particular aspect of Ghanaian culture. The overlaps of cultural context must therefore transcend assumptions attached to a researcher's

[7] I am grateful to Kaue Nogarotto, a colleague at the University of Basel, for helping me clearly formulate and articulate this point.

place of origin. As a Ghanaian, yet by no means a representative of that country's rich and diverse cultures, my objective is not merely to take on Paul's invitation, but to also rethink his notion of the other context, in a reversive way—unlike the underlying binary of his proposed experiences of transformation. Conceptually, I am undoing Africa as the "other context" by repositioning the continent and its (human and natural) geographies as *another context*. My intention is to open the possibility of thinking of how we may "get pictures right" through rigorous interrogation that a specific geography (Ghana or Switzerland) can spark. This way, we avoid the restriction to follow a linear pattern of "transformation" that begins with European epistemology, and only when found insufficient for holistic interpretation or to be lopsided are "other" contexts considered. I will return to this thread of ideas in the next section where I discuss Figure 18. For now, let us consider Paul's visual essay titled, "Reading an image in the other context", in which he analysed the photo reproduced here as Figure 17.

Fig. 17: BMA D-30.11.018. "Negerpfarrer Koranteng mit Familie [Negro pastor Koranteng with Family]". c. 1900. Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

In his visual essay, Paul tells us that it was by chance that he learned something crucial about the picture in the 1980s from Michelle Gilbert, an anthropologist, who was then visiting Basel as part of her ongoing research about an ethnic-Akan kingdom called Akuapem, located in south-eastern Ghana.[8] Unbeknownst to Paul then, the woman seated centre in Figure 17 was the queen of Akuapem and doubled as the wife of a BM-trained African pastor when the photograph was taken. She, therefore, occupied two stations in life, as *Ohemmea* (or Queenmother) Akua Oye and Amelia Koranteng (wife to Simeone Koranteng, seated to the extreme right). This insight about the picture radically shifted Paul's sensibility from a western lens that understood Akua as a wife, to an *Ohemmea* as the people of Akropong, the capital of Akuapem, would have. Much as Paul's exchange with Michelle unlocked new contextual information about Figure 17 that enriched his understanding of the photo, their encounter also amplifies the unequal chances for scholars with different privileges to get the experience of transformation.

Paul's encounter with Michelle shows us that experiences of transformation can sometimes be exclusive. Without forgetting Paul's caveat that only some photos in the BMA can be properly contextualised, where flanking information exists, it is no secret today that Europe and North America command privileged access to major collections of original research materials available for producing historical knowledge about Africa, particularly where mission societies are concerned. Consequently, an advantage is tilted in favour of scholars in the global North. This imbalance is deepened by the fact that few African researchers on the African continent can ordinarily afford to travel to the West for archival research, mainly owing to a lack of funding and restrictive conditions for visa acquisition. Though these realities shape the production and distribution of knowledge globally, they do not override source complementarity as a central principle in historical research. Of course, some excellent histories have been produced with sources from archives located in Africa, as evidenced by the earliest monographs written about BM activities in Ghana by local professional historians such as Kwamena-Poh (2011). The transformative information Michelle shared with Paul was not a written source found in a mission archive, but the fact that it was gathered in Akuapem through anthropological research methods suffices to say that while questioning the present undemocratic access to archival sources worldwide is legitimate, it should not foreclose creative explorations for locally available ones like oral traditions (as **Mark-Thiesen** has also discussed in this volume).

[8] Personal communication with Paul Jenkins, 13 January 2023. Paul also writes about this encounter in his preface to their forthcoming edited volume of Theophilus Opoku with Oxford University Press.

Benign as the encounter between Paul and Michelle may initially seem, it is a strong metaphor for the coming together of Figure 17 and important complementary information that uncovered additional meanings embedded in the photograph. It goes without saying that the exchange between the two scholars in Basel could have happened in Ghana. However, the point that is hard to ignore is that the privileged access by westerners to historical photos of Africa and the financial means to gather information to conjure "the other context" is systematically structured to the disadvantage of African researchers of Africa's pasts located on the continent. Though the BMA's digitised visual collections are publicly accessible online, this creates a misleading impression that they are truly open access. For example, though one must pay to publish an image from the BMA, the institution obliges visitors, upon signing a user agreement, to submit a "depository copy" of their publication "produced using documents from the Basel Mission archive" for free! This institutionalised gatekeeping deepens the existing uneven playing field in the global academy created by practices such as the BMA's, with devastating consequences for Africa-based African scholars committed to producing knowledge about Africa.[9] Consequently, the opportunities for African scholars in Africa to partake, within a global community of scholars, in the crucial task of situating missionary photographs of Africa in their appropriate cultural contexts are further alienated.

On the Problems of Shifting Understandings of Missionary Photographs

Between 2014 and 2017, I researched the activities of the BM in Ghana for my undergraduate and MPhil theses (Sewordor 2014: 2017).[10] My interest was then in the BM's urban and architectural legacies at Abokobi, a small settlement about 15 miles north of the capital city, Accra. In 2018, I moved to Switzerland to start my doctoral studies at the University of Basel on a different topic. My previous research into the Mission's history in Ghana coincided with my earliest general interest in the use of visuals, specifically photographs, as sources of historical evidence. It was also how I came across Paul's writings on missionary photographs and the broader interdisciplinary literature on their critical use (Jenkins 2002; see further Brizuela-Garcia and Getz 2012, Geary 1999; Edwards 1992). Naturally, I included

[9] Certainly, the BMA's gatekeeping affects non-African/Africa-based scholars too. Yet, the fact that the global academy is not an equal playing field requires that we acknowledge the advantages some "colleagues" have over their peers. This truth calls for a critical reflection on the promises and restrictions of digitising archives located in the West in the spirit of making them "open access", but which end up being restricted by guidelines that are not in force in archives located in the global South.

[10] I subsequently published two peer-reviewed journal articles from my MPhil thesis, in 2020 and 2022.

some visual sources in my MPhil thesis. My use of historical photographs was then mainly limited to deploying them as graphic illustrations for arguments I crafted based on evidence sourced from written archival materials. So, I did not make much of an image that I had found from an auction website and used in my MPhil thesis.[11]

Fig. 18: D-30.13.048. "The outstation Kade in Akem ... ". c. 1880s Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

The said image purported to depict Abokobi, and I believed so until I consulted the BMA's online collection after submitting my MPhil thesis, while still living in Ghana.[12] Upon comparison, I realised that the one I already knew from the auction website was a rendition, as a postcard, of an original copy archived in Basel, which is reproduced here as Figure 18. The two images were identical, but their captions claimed they depicted different locations in southern Ghana. This realisation made me second guess my first impression of the postcard I had used years ago without suspicion. The new light in which I saw Figure 18

[11] For copyright reasons, I am unable to reproduce the image (in the form of a postcard) in this chapter.

[12] I have reflected on this experience in my 2022 article in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians.*

posed the problem of reconciling the disjointed labels accompanying the two versions of the image. Verifying each required piecing together complementary information. This task taught me that sometimes the full extent of the other context does not reveal itself to us. We at best have a partial view of the gamut of historical realities a photograph encapsulates. As I have tried to demonstrate, the undertaking to contextualise historical photographs can be challenging in many ways. In the case of Figure 18, the existence of a replica postcard misplaced the location depicted in the photo. The inconsistency in their respective labels created uncertainty as to what degree of evidential validity may be attached to Figure 18 or its identical replica.

During the years Paul and his family lived in Ghana, he keenly engaged with the African cultures that surrounded him. Yet, only decades later did Paul come to understand and appreciate the socio-political and cultural significance of Akua Oye, purely by coincidence as I have described. There is only so much that non-Africans or even Africans can learn about Africa (Jenkins 2004: 129–130). Hence, it is self-evident that historical knowledge about Africa, produced by Europeans, for instance, must be embedded in long-term equitable partnerships with the African societies from where the pictures studied have come,[13] following what **Grant** calls "long listening" in this volume.

The take-away point here is that the African context may sometimes be obscured and never fully revealed, or if recovered probably by chance to locals, just as to non-Africans. This was true both in my "experience of transformation" with Figure 18 and Paul's capacity to interpret Figure 17 beyond "a wholly mission-dominated and Europeanised context" (Jenkins 2001: 202–203). The best guard against these oversights is when, as scholars or enquiring minds, we immerse ourselves into the cultural knowledge systems of local communities to afford us the toolkits to reasonably contextualise and refine our readings of missionary photos as much as possible. Being sensitive to the other context does not entirely guarantee that we will be able to read missionary photos in ways unaffected by cultural assumptions familiar to us. Therefore, experiences of transformation must be sustained, reversive, and collaborative across cultures as a step further beyond the need for westerners to consider the other context to curb misinterpretations.

[13] I should perhaps mention here that a Basel-based scholar, Veit Arlt, once took a sample photo from the BMA's collection to Ghana with the intention of understanding the local circumstances surrounding its creation and meaning. Similarly, in 2012, Guy Thomas organised a study trip to Ghana. The group, which included Anne Beutter, on this occasion similarly tried to situate maps from the BMA in the context they depicted.

How Can the Dialectics of "[An]other Context" Be Made Productive?

In the fall of 2021, almost twenty years after the symposium honouring Paul took place, a colleague with whom I was teaching a seminar titled "Cityscapes as Archives" at the University of Basel took our students to the BMA. During our visit, some students became alarmed by a formalised narrative presented to them by our tour guide—one that decoupled the BM from the British colonial project in Ghana. This encounter revealed that some uncritical voices about the BM's past entanglements with European imperialism in Africa still linger on the corridors of Missionsstrasse 21,[14] as one also finds in Ghana (Jenkins 2015: 55). This incident reinforces my argument that the exclusive epistemic position the West—embodying both a geographical space and a knowledge-making site—enjoys in the discourse of "getting pictures right" should be troubled. This move invites scholars to read the West as *another context*; as only one of several vantage points from which scholars may think "relationally" (Edwards 2004) to enrich our understanding of missionary photographs depicting Africa/ns.

Contextualising and interpreting missionary photographs do not guarantee that we will get them right. But it is not to say that we will get it all wrong. Rather, it prompts us to think of "getting pictures right" as an exercise that requires a spirit of continuous open-mindedness and reciprocal reception to new information that can transform initial opinions, no matter how educated they might be. At the intersection of open-minded thinking and reciprocity is cross-cultural interpretation—itself a process that brings together the politics of memory and the process of recall in shaping specific narratives at a given time and place. Since cross-cultural interpretation is shaped by different forms of subjectively negotiated memories, the position on what meaning a photograph takes may differ from one reader to another, or the same reader who is differently informed at separate points in time, or between two people of the same cultural background. Such possibilities for divergent interpretations return us to the critical historical research methodology of reading archival sources along, across, against, or beyond the grain (Stoler 2008).

[14] To be fair, I must state that I am aware that the BM (Mission 21) is presently composing a public statement that acknowledges the organisation's colonial heritage/past. This information became known to me after writing the original draft of this essay and after the event described above.

Bibliography

Brizuela-Garcia, Esperanza and Getz, Trevor. *African Histories: New Source and New Techniques for Studying African Pasts*. Boston: Pearson, 2012.

Edwards, Elizabeth. *Anthropology and Photography, 1860–1920*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Edwards, Elizabeth. "Thinking Materially/ Thinking Relationally". In *Getting Pictures Right: Context and Interpretation*, edited by Michael Albrecht, Veit Arlt, Barbara Müller, and Jürg Schneider. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2004: 11–23.

Geary, Christraud M. "Life Histories of Photographs: Constance Stuart Larrabee's Images of South Africa (1936–1949)". Paper presented at the "Encounters with Photography: Photographing People in 1860 to 1999" conference in Cape Town (14–17, July 1999).

Gilbert, Michelle and Jenkins, Paul (eds.). *The Reports of Theophilus Opoku: A 19th-Century Gold Coast Pastor*. Forthcoming with Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, Paul. "Reading an Image in the Other Context" (2011). Accessed on 13 February 2023 via https://vimeo.com/33251261.

Jenkins, Paul. "Camera Evangelica—Camera Lucida? Trans-Border Experiences with Historical Photographs From a Mission Archive". In *Getting Pictures Right: Context and Interpretation*, edited by Michael Albrecht, Veit Arlt, Barbara Müller, and Jürg Schneider. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2004: 117–140.

Jenkins, Paul. "Everyday Life Encapsulated? Two Photographs Concerning Women and the Basel Mission in West Africa, c. 1900". *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 15(1) (2002): 45–60.

Jenkins, Paul. "On Using Historical Missionary Photographs in Modern Discussion". *Le fait missionaire* 10(1) (2001): 71–89.

Jenkins, Paul. "Four Nineteenth-Century Pictorial Images From Africa in the Basel Mission Archive and Library Collections". Unpublished manuscript (2000): 1–18. [Available at the Basler Afrika Bibliographien in Basel, Switzerland].

Jenkins, Paul and Frey-Näf, Barbara. *Historische Photographien und moderne Medien: Die Erschliessung des Bildarchivs der Basler Mission*. Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 1991.

Jenkins, Paul and Geary, Christraud. "Photographs From Africa in the Basel Mission Archive". *African Arts* 18(4) (1985): 56–63 +100.

Kwamena-Poh, Albert M. *Vision and Achievement: 1828–1978: A Hundred and Fifty Years of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana*. Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 2011.

Marcolli, Patrick."Ein Leben im Dienst der Missionsgesichtichte". *Basler Zeitung*, 18 September 2003.

Röschenthaler, Ute. "'Getting Pictures Right': A Symposium Honoring Paul Jenkins". *African Arts* 37(1) (2004): 8+85+95.

Schürer-Ries, Anke. "The Fritz Ramseyer Collection – An Ethnography of a Protestant Mission Archive (1864–1908)". PhD thesis, De Montfort University Leicester, 2021.

Sewordor, E.S.K. "The Urban Culture of the "Model" Christian Settlement at Abokobi, Ghana, 1854–1929". *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 81(2) (2022): 179–212.

Sewordor, E.S.K. "'The Humble Petition of Johana Nyewuame Bekrah': Becoming/Being Gã, Straddling 'Spaces,' and Negotiating Boundaries in the Gold Coast Christina 'Model Town' (Abokobi), ca.1860–1980". *Journal of West African History* 6(1) (2020): 1–27.

Sewordor, E.S.K. "The Basel Mission and the Establishment of a 'Model Town' in Ghana: The Case of Abokobi, 1854–1926". MPhil thesis, University of Ghana, 2017.

Sewordor, E.S.K. "The Evolution of the Basel Mission and its Impacts in Abokobi, m.19th Century–20th Century". BA thesis, University of Ghana, 2014.

Stoler, Ann L. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

Thomas, Guy and Schürer-Ries, Anke. "Visualising History and Space in the Basel Mission Archives". *The Newsletter* 61 (2012): 29–31.

Part IV

The Archive and Historical Knowledge Production About Africa

9 Erasures and Invisibilities in Mission History: In Quest of "There-Centricity"

Andreas Heuser, University of Basel

Over the years Paul Jenkins has tremendously enriched the study of African and mission history. With this essay, I like to honour the critical mission historian and a widely networked colleague, who senses emergent subjects and alerts me to novel themes in research, always ready for comments and references. In 2006, Paul Jenkins received an honorary doctorate from my faculty, at the University of Basel, for his immensely valuable contribution to a visual turn in mission historiography, besides establishing critical terms in the study of mission history. Here, my aim is modest: I am not diving into a deep discourse on mission history, I rather focus on his latest plea for "there-centricity" in mission historiography, rarely referenced by now. Tellingly, Jenkins brought up this thought-provoking concept in the context of the bicentenary of the Basel Mission (BM) in 2015. Inherently, the term decentres perspectives of a hierarchically structured mission organisation and its power of interpretation to read mission history through the headquarters' eyes. I link it with the prolonged duration of the editing of a much-awaited publication that may be considered a there-centric masterpiece. As a side note, Jenkins announced the publication to me in late July 2023, thus ending an exceptional two-decade-long research process. I ponder about some possible reasons for the kind of meticulous meandering around this publishing project which I suggest connecting with the concept of there-centricity. Before exploring the concept, at the occasion of this Festschrift, I will frame my presentation with a few autobiographical notes (see also **Jennifer Jenkins**' Foreword in this volume).

Honorary Doctoral Degree

In November 2006, the Faculty of Theology at the University of Basel awarded the title of *doctor honoris causa* to Paul Jenkins. Three years following his retirement from the position as archivist of Basel Mission/Mission 21, the laudatory address at the traditional *dies academicus*, commemorating the birthday of the University of Basel, praises Jenkins' decade-long engagement to profile archive policy.[1] The BM archivist had opened archive resources

[1] For the following, I am using the unofficial file on honorary doctorates stored at the Faculty of Theology. It is for internal use only. Therefore, I do not quote from any proposal list, or initial

for researchers from around the globe and, as it were, brought the Basel Mission Archives (BMA) to international acclaim. Such policy Jenkins developed within a long 31-year professional life with the BM since 1972, first as a librarian and since 1980 as an archivist and research assistant of the BM and later Mission 21. Yet, the importance of his archive strategy stretches over more than bringing the rich textual documents, historical data, and material sources of a mission archive to a wider public. The laudation specifies his peculiar engagement in the visualisation of mission and colonial history, indicating his ground-breaking as well as systematic exploration of photographic evidence (which is discussed in Part III of this volume). By focusing on the relevance of visual material from the erstwhile "mission fields", the laudation continues, Jenkins would have given new historiographical weight to the sources collected in mission history and stored in mission archives. According to the faculty dossier from 2006, one may find a tight block of 16 essays on historical photography and its interpretation, forming the densest single theme among his record of publications during that period. The laudation, thus, points at Jenkins' renown as a mission archivist endeavouring to produce an early visual turn in mission historiography, and in historiography in general. In retrospect, his archive policy to access rare material on life-worlds in former mission fields may be still seen in another light. One may trace an implicit first caption of what Jenkins would term only around 2015 a "there-centric" approach in mission studies (similarly discussed by **Sewordor** in this volume).

In this respect, the faculty dossier contains an interesting side note. Reference is made to a joint publication project by Paul Jenkins with his long-standing friend and colleague, Michelle Gilbert, social anthropologist at Trinity College Hartford, CT. This project is about the edition of the reports of the Ghanaian pastor of the BM church on the former Gold Coast (colonial Ghana), Theophilus Opoku. Opoku, who was born in the 1840s, wrote them in English for the leadership of the BM. Opoku's reports cover the period from 1868–1908, shortly before he passed away on 7 July 1913.

A Vexed Pioneering Editing Project

This note in the faculty dossier for presenting Jenkins' academic stature for the honorary doctoral award in 2006 is the first mention I came across of an edition project that is presently, as I am completing this essay (August 2023), in the final stage of publication in Oxford University Press' *Fontes Historiae Africanae New Series* on sources for African history. However, the material of some thirty reports and a well-structured corpus of com-

eulogy versions except from the official laudation read out during the festivity.

mented chapters seemed to have been systematically explored years earlier. Already in March 2019, an interdisciplinary graduate workshop was held at the University of Basel to discuss the content and outline of the publication draft. I was privileged to be among those invited to introduce and critically comment on one of the pre-edited chapters of the book. Over several decades, the co-editors, Gilbert and Jenkins, managed to assemble and transcribe the complete corpus of texts, provided insightful background information in introductory chapters, and guided readers through Opoku's reports by an immensely helpful apparatus of annotations, for instance, on place names, historical persons or social contexts referred to in the main texts. My overall impression was that this editing project urgently needed to see the light of day. In my view, we witnessed the careful preparation of a most captivating, weighty, and indeed pioneering editing project on primary African sources covering critical periods of British colonial and BM history. I vividly remember the passionate expressions of approval by everyone participating. Although left with an overwhelming encouragement to publish those primary sources, both editors kept a hesitant gesture that prevented them from publishing the edited reports of Theophilus Opoku up to date.

I am sure there are good reasons for such caution. Pondering over the substantial delay in publication, I find one hint already woven into the invitation to the graduate workshop. The description of the event in March 2019 informed me of the "challenging and exciting task" of "editing primary sources from Africa". In prudent wording, it states an ambiguity of historical discernment, or to put it otherwise, a hermeneutical insecurity about perceiving historical contexts adequately even though applying refined academic repertoires to access, categorise and interpret archival sources.

> [T]he course offers an introduction to the methodological problems in working with this kind of source and an opportunity to judge how far the editors have succeeded in their objective to facilitate the reading of social history of change and continuity in an African community.[2]

This is surely meant as an invitation to debate the findings presented and enter discourses over themes, portrayals, and complexities in African history as mirrored in Opoku's reports. Yet, seen from a perspective in the fourth post-workshop year, I sense another argument that discloses the editors' doubt about their evaluation of data and presentation of the Opoku files. Far from attesting to a sense of failure, do we face instead a conceptual striving towards the notion of "there-centricity", a term coined by Paul Jenkins a few years earlier?

[2] Universität Basel/Departement Gesellschaftswissenschaften. n.d.

There-Centric Irritation of Bicentenary Mission Historiography

In the frame of the bicentenary of BM in 2015, Jenkins was made aware of uncertainties, lacunae, and imprecise terminology available for descriptions of mission history. His plea was for a stronger commitment to what he called "there-centricity" in the study of African and Asian societies. The BM jubilee incited a veritable publication campaign to commemorate the work of the influential continental missionary society and to portray its transition into a contemporary faith-based organisation with a focus on inter-religious peace projects, among others. Next to various single articles and publications that appeared in the context of the bicentenary, two collections of essays were mandated by the BM to explore its history. The most representative volume, edited by Christine Christ-von Wedel and Thomas K. Kuhn (2015), is available both in German and English. It contains summary articles on key subjects, including controversial research issues like slave emancipation in mission territory, provides biographical notes on personalities, either from Basel or the former mission fields, and identifies certain institutional transformations in the history of the BM.

The German branch of the BM, with its long and influential tradition of Pietism in the Württemberg region, edited a smaller collection of essays, published alongside an exhibition, with a focus on interactions and exchange patterns in the contact zones Basel missionaries found themselves in (Kittel 2015). Whereas Paul Jenkins does not appear in the list of authors in the first volume mentioned, he wrote a chapter on "Missed Encounters" in this second volume (Jenkins 2015a). In this article, he explores the first Hindu-Christian encounters in the 19th century, involving BM missionaries in southern Indian regions. He explicitly mentions his wife, Jennifer, for her particular interest in analysing BMA sources concerning inter-religious dialogue. According to Jenkins, most interactions remained on a superficial level due to theological misrepresentations of Hindu belief and controversies over ritual life, or in some cases due to a lack of sustained encounters. A dialogue only started at a later stage and with the crucial involvement of converted intellectuals. Following Jenkins, Indian members of the BM church had a more constructive understanding of the inter-religious dialogue that could even guide similar encounters nowadays. In "Missed Encounters", Jenkins throws light on early inter-religious dialogue in India by giving credit to a comparative analysis of dialogue policies in place within different BM milieus.[3]

This insightful contribution finds a counterpart in a much longer chapter in another volume published in the context of the bicentenary. In acknowledgement of the transfer of

[3] Judith Becker (2015) published a monography on the BM and the understanding of "conversion" in India. Becker concludes that Basel missionaries' accomplishments are best characterised by establishing rather short-lived situations of inter-religious encounter (Kontaktreligiosität), rather than achieving a deeper, or theologically more intense idea of contact.

the rich ethnological BM collection in 2015, the Basel Museum of Cultures staged a major exhibition, between May–October of the same year on the theme "Mission Possible? The Basel Mission Collection: Reflecting Cultural Encounters", accompanied by a homonymous book, again available in German and English (Museum der Kulturen Basel 2015). An intriguing programmatic contribution came from Paul Jenkins, exploring "Legends and Silences" in the entangled history of global missions (Jenkins 2015). Jenkins explores the "public image of Basel Mission history" by reading archive sources against the grain. He draws attention to the colonial "comfort zones" (Jenkins 2015: 61) designed by mission politics in the "mission fields". Consequently, a mission politics of silence was woven around burning issues of the time on the one hand. On the other hand, it gave way to the creation of missionary legends. Thus, Jenkins calls for a re-lecture of archival sources produced inside BM and from those areas. In this respect, Jenkins speaks about West African scenarios, especially the involvement of the BM in the anti-colonial land rights movement in Cameroon. And he raises the disturbing question, who "really founded the Basel Mission in Ghana?" (Jenkins 2015: 55). Here, Jenkins addresses the hagiographic narrative around missionary agency (in this case of Andreas Riis in Akropong) in the early 19th century to successfully organise the formation of the first long-lasting mission station in BM history. This, he states, is the official BM record. By referring to unofficial sources, i.e. oral sources that are not stored in BMA but belong to the cultural memory of local people in Ghana, Jenkins posits the huge impact of Ghanaian authorities to invite and protect BM on their ground, as well as the sustainable effects of Caribbean members of the newly founded BM on the erstwhile Gold Coast church (in this vein).[4] "Legends and Silences" provincialises official BM history by deploring a politics of missionary (self-) representation that does not give full rights to the entangled history of intercultural contact.

In conclusion, Paul Jenkins' legacy for the BM bicentenary is to deal with the ambivalences of mission historiography in a context that seeks to enact collective memory. For the 175-year jubilee in 1990, Jenkins authored a short history of the BM—originally published for the centenary celebration of the arrival of the BM in Cameroon (Jenkins 1989). His perspective was no longer on the institutional history as in BM celebrations before. Instead of glorifying the past of a mission society, he suggested scrutinising mission history in a self-critical way. By relating to "a growing number of questions on the subject of mission", as the current president of the BM, Karl F. Appl, acknowledged in his preface to the 2015 bicentenary volume (Appl 2015: 7). Jenkins' idea then was to bring out historic heritage for the present. Although his publications appear in selected spaces, and partly outside the inner circles of the BM

[4] I stick to an internal reading of Jenkins' article here and leave further references to detailed accounts of BM history in Ghana. For a short analysis of some oral sources in early BM church history in Ghana, see for instance Kwakye 2016.

organisation, they mirror the spectrum of themes visible in the publishing agendas of bicentenary activities—but with "Legends and Silences" he adds the most critical intervention.

Shadow of "Legends and Silences"

In "Legends and Silences", Jenkins exposes a controversial one-sided perspective in mission archives, manifest in the institutional memory of the BM. Moreover, the Janus-faced mission politics of alliance with colonial politics that created legends and constructed spaces of silence inspired the historiography of the missionary movement. The writing of mission history generated hagiographic genres of missionary self-representation; it focused on the centrality of an institutional mission agency, despite the limited amplitude of missionary action around the mission station. Jenkins also refers to the longevity of Eurocentric perspectives, or otherings, in other words, on different worldviews and religious cultures encountered in mission history. Yet, Jenkins transfers his critical commentary on "legends and silences" to mission historiography in general. According to Jenkins, historical studies were engaging with the "silencing" of events, incidents, and themes that are recorded in archival collections. Jenkins highlights some of those protruding hermeneutic filters instrumental for such reduction of historical ambiguity and complexity of cultural interaction. Jenkins intervenes in such constructions of mission historiography. Quite blatantly he disclaims the underlying scheme to present mission history as a "common myth" (Jenkins 2015: 52), evoking and consolidating historiography of sameness only: "The history was, in other words, identity history, familiar to everyone, and revealing no secrets or major surprises" (Jenkins 2015: 52). In this vein, the writing of the BM's history tends to produce "a more or less homogenous entity" (Jenkins 2015: 52). Jenkins now deplores that the genesis of a coherent narrative of mission history prompts silences. Controversies, divergent voices, or the staging of non-missionary viewpoints may not interfere with the favoured "common myth" of mission history.

Jenkins is determined to disrupt uniform master narratives of mission history. Aiming at breaking silences and dethroning legends, he insists on a different reading strategy for archival sources. Prime attention should go to local perceptions of mission encounters. The decentering of euro-centric institutional history necessitates what Jenkins calls "the ability to think 'there-centric'" (Jenkins 2015: 59). There-centricity, he envisages, "opens up a whole new set of fateful, and often shaming, areas of silence for us to cope with", and finally to advance an "indigenous social and intellectual history" (Jenkins 2015: 59).[5]

[5] Claudia Hoffmann's detailed description of a Tiwah-discourse on secondary burials in Kalimantan is using the concept of "there-centricity" in order to trace theological resignifications within Basel mission milieus (see Hoffmann 2018).

It is telling that Jenkins' interference in mission historiography accompanies the BM bicentenary from an eccentric position. "Legends and Silences" appeared in *Mission Possible? The Basel Mission Collection Reflecting Cultural Encounters*, not in any BM publication. In a critical reading of bicentenary publications by the BM, one may get an impression that overall, they present mission insiders' perspectives, engage in institutional mission history and portray a mission society as the role model in the global diffusion of western Christianity. In other words, *here*-centricity, so to speak, dominates at the expense of fragmentary *there*-centricity. Obviously, the editing project of the reports by Theophilus Opoku navigates the new terrain of presenting a there-centric mission history. Opoku's writing unfolds discourses connoted to there-centric terms, historical knowledge, and a wealth of accounts from the fringes of the archived orbit of the Mission society (as **Beutter** also examines in this volume).

Open End, or the Invisibility of Embodied Memory

Embedding archival sources in a complete "indigenous social and intellectual history" seems to be ambitious, if not paralysing in view of sources. If assumptions include such totalizing portrayals, they are not all that easy to fulfil. In fact, master narratives are subject to hermeneutic suspicion, and parameters of historic analysis depend on theory conjunctures. If the open-ended editing story of the Opoku files finds its root cause in the editors' doubts about a missing validity "to facilitate the reading of social history of change and continuity in an African community", as asserted for the workshop that took place in Basel in 2019, then at least the project itself finds integrity as part of a postcolonial concept. The core intention in proclaiming there-centric archive research is to provincialise Eurocentric readings and to centre on a more refined comprehension of contact zones and mission dynamics in previous, and mainly rural "mission fields".

African historians, John Wright and Cynthia Kros, have recently emphasised that oral discourses in the local language about historical developments had been marginalised by translation into written discourses in the language of the coloniser in the process of colonisation. This transformation into the power of writing, they claim, "in many ways effaced and supplanted" oral forms of knowledge-activating (Wright and Kros 2022: 95). Consequently, they advise remaining sensitive to other expressions of knowledge than total reliance upon archived texts: "We need to know particularly how ideas about the past and present were being made and circulated among African people in the rapidly changing societies of the rural areas" (Wright and Kros 2022: 99). The there-centric turn in mission historiography, postulated by Jenkins, has provided some answers on how to deal with such "historical

erasure of the oral archive" (Wright and Kros 2022: 97). The most poignant is the passage on the aesthetics of images stored in mission archives. However, the sensitivity to transformations of knowledge-making may extend even further. A significant deviation from the textually based interpretation of history comes from performance theory. In view of discourses on the Black Atlantic, Esiaba Irobi critiqued the Eurocentric valorisation of the written word that causes the undervaluation of "the power of the body as a site of multiple discourses for sculpting history, memory, identity and culture" (Irobi 2007: 900). If bodily experience carries narrations of the past and communicates cultural skills for the present, how is this mappable in archive sources? The methodological challenge also poses itself in view of there-centric mission historiography and its privileging of social and intellectual history. How do we then engage archival sources with embodied experiences of encounter—in ritual praxis, dance, music, trance, festival costumes, vision or in scarification, facial expressions, usages of colour, etc? Surely, embodied memory may be translucent in pictures, recorded music, or texts. However, Diana Taylor's compelling argument remains:

> Written documents have repeatedly announced the disappearance of performance ... . What is at risk, in thinking about embodied knowledge and performance as that which disappears? Whose memories "disappear" if only archival knowledge is valorised?[6]

There-centricity stages the ambiguity of mission history. However, regarding the Opoku reports, Jenkins seems to privilege textual coherence that has come under scrutiny. Considering the dialectics of writing and remembering, then this corpus comprises texts written by Theophilus Opoku at crucial periods of colonial domination characterised by the erasure of orality and the disappearance of embodied memory. However, the Opoku reports can still count as reports of the "official" here-centered type, even though they are written by a Ghanaian missionary. They may still be considered representative of local missionary practice (see **Beutter** in this volume). These are critical objections against the definiteness of written sources. Do they carry the underlying cause for delaying the publication of the Opoku reports? Anyway, Jenkins' there-centric intervention expects irritation. It does not seek to narrow down the vagueness of historiographic effort, but unlocks the power of interpretation. This remains a precious reminder. And possibly, it radiates around the always exciting, yet incomplete production of historical knowledge.

[6] Quoted in Irobi 2007: 911.

Bibliography

Appl, Karl F. Preface. In *Basel Mission: People, History, Perspectives 1850–2015*, edited by Christine Christ-von Wedel, and Thomas K. Kuhn. Basel: Schwabe, 2015: 7–8.

Becker, Judith. *Conversio im Wandel. Basler Missionare zwischen Europa und Südindien und die Ausbildung einer Kontaktreligiosität, 1834–1860*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.

Christ-von Wedel, Christine, and Thomas K. Kuhn (eds.). *Basel Mission: People, History, Perspectives 1850–2015.* Basel: Schwabe, 2015.

Heuser, Andreas. "Prisms, Mirrors, and Refractions: There-Centric Perceptions of Basel Mission History in Ghana". In *The Power of Interpretation: Imagined Authenticity—Appropriated Identity: Conflicting Discourses on New Forms of African Christianity*, edited by Klaus Hock. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016: 149–171.

Hoffmann, Claudia. *Fremdbegegnung: Das Totenritual Tiwah und die Basler Mission in kontakttheologischer Perspektive*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2018.

Irobi, Esiaba. "What They Came With: Carnival and the Persistence of African Performance Aesthetics in the Diaspora". *Journal of Black Studies* 37(6) (2007): 896–913.

Jenkins, Paul. *Kurze Geschichte der Basler Mission*. Texte und Dokumente, Basel: Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft, 1989.

Jenkins, Paul. "Legends and Silences: The Public Image of Basel Mission History". In *Mission Possible? The Basel Mission Collection: Reflecting Cultural Encounters*, edited by Museum der Kulturen Basel. Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2015: 51–62.

Jenkins, Paul. "Begegnungen verpasst?" In *Unterwegs zu anderen Ufern: 200 Jahre Basler Mission und Württemberg (Das Buch zur Ausstellung)*, edited by Andrea Kittel. Stuttgart: Logo Print, 2015a: 126–129.

Kittel, Andrea (ed). *Unterwegs zu anderen Ufern: 200 Jahre Basler Mission und Württemberg (Das Buch zur Ausstellung)*. Stuttgart: Logo Print, 2015.

Kwakye, A. Nana Opare. "Mission Impossible Becomes Possible: West Indian Missionaries as Actors in Mission in the Gold Coast", *Interkulturelle Theologie/Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 42(2–3) (2016): 222–235.

Museum der Kulturen Basel (ed). *Mission Possible? The Basel Mission Collection: Reflecting Cultural Encounters*. Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2015.

Universität Basel/Departement Gesellschaftswissenschaften. n.d. Graduate Workshop: Editing Primary Sources from Africa. https://dgw.philhist.unibas.ch/de/event/details/graduate-workshop-editing-primary-sources-from-africa/#top. Accessed 5 May 2023.

Wright, John and Cynthia Kros. "Izithunguthu". In *Changing Theory: Thinking Concepts from the Global South*, edited by Dilip M. Menon. London/New York: Routledge, 2022: 94–108.

10 African Initiatives and Sources in Christian History: Paolo Mohenu (1809–1886), a Gold Coast Traditional Priest who Became a Basel Mission Evangelist

Abraham Nana Opare Kwakye, University of Ghana

Introduction

Early West African Christian historiography has often been criticised as a Eurocentric narrative that undermined the role of Africans. This kind of historiography was predicated on the erroneous assumption that Africans are less intelligent than Europeans and other Caucasians and devoid of historical thought. However, one must not assume that this approach was the only one among non-Africans. Many European historians have produced monumental works on the history of Africa. There were several European historians as well as missionaries who have highlighted the work of Africans in the Christian evangelisation of the continent. One such historian is Paul Jenkins whose research and teaching focused on the roles of Africans in mission/church history. He influenced several of his students to highlight Africans in the history of Christianity on their continent through an examination of archival documents located in Basel.

Scholars such as Paul Jenkins (1998), Andrew F. Walls (2002), Ogbu Kalu (1983, 2005), and Daniel Antwi (1998) have called for a new African Christian historiography that examines the work of the African without neglecting the roles of various missionary bodies. This allows us to free the local agents to tell their own story, not least by using sources available in Africa. In doing this, however, one cannot entirely delink the story of missions in Africa from archival holdings in the West that provide substantial information that is unavailable in Africa. The monumental work of Paul Jenkins in providing access to the correspondence of the Basel Mission (BM) through his "Abstracts from Correspondence in the Basel Mission 1852–1898" (1970) has enabled scholars from the global South to hear the stories of the African agents who served in the BM and to deal with what Paul has described as "a continuing intercultural blindness in mission historiography" (Jenkins 1998: 73). One of the African agents who played a significant role in the BM was Paolo Mohenu, the protagonist of this chapter.

The captivating story of Mohenu recounts an episode of a man proficient as a traditional religious priest but with little western education who became a towering figure in

a western-mission-founded church. Mohenu's historical significance stems from his work as an evangelist among the Gã of present-day southern Ghana, and other communities to the West. He was a traditional priest who was converted dramatically, like the biblical Paul, after whom he was christened, and became an agent of the BM. Mohenu's ministry led to the expansion of the Christian faith in the Gã District. Whilst the Mission's efforts seemed to make strong inroads in the Twi or Akan Districts between the 1840s and the 1860s, its progress in the Gã District was slow. John Parker has noted that:

> [F]ar from being the site of a spectacular evangelical breakthrough, early colonial Accra was characterised by an ongoing uneasy dialogue between Christianity and indigenous belief. The town was notable for being neither particularly receptive to Christianity, nor implacably hostile towards the new religion … the missionaries found indigenous Ga belief an especially tough nut to crack. Despite a superior organisational structure backed by the financial resources of its trading company, the Basel Mission at Osu experienced difficulties similar to those of the Wesleyans in attracting committed Ga converts outside its core congregation of Euro-Africans (Parker 2000: 155–156).

Mohenu's conversion coincided with a watershed moment in the BM's proselytising attempts in the Gã districts. Soon after his conversion, Mohenu itinerant preaching began to bear fruit. In 1869, the Christian community in Abokobi, where he resided, stood at 232, outnumbering that of the long-established head station at Osu (Schweizer 2000: 58).

Building on this brief introduction, the remaining parts of this paper will first trace his life then highlight the central topics of his ministry and conclude by making a case for foregrounding African agency and sources in writing church history.

Fig. 19: BMA 96073. Map of the Gold Coast (Ghana), 1873. Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

Paolo Mohenu

Mohenu's year of birth is uncertain. In his account of oral tradition/history about Mohenu's life and work, E.M.L. Odjidja, a great-grandson of Mohenu, states Mohenu's year of birth as 1809. According to his epitaph at Abokobi, he was born in 1813 (Figure 21). Mohenu's parents, Ataa Ayiku and Adukoi, were indigenes of Teshie, a Gã fishing town about 8 miles to the east of Accra. Odjidja adds that Mohenu and his brothers moved to Abladzei, a village near Abokobi so they could get better land to farm on (Odjidja 1965: 5–6). Beforehand, a series of deaths plagued Mohenu's family and caused a spiritual stir and emptiness deep within him. It started with his mother and was followed in rapid succession by the deaths of four siblings. He was deeply affected by the death of one of these brothers who was very close to him. All his efforts to have him cured, including selling nearly all his possessions, proved futile. A few years later, he was attacked by a leopard but escaped. This incident made a deep impression on him. It probably set the ground for his eventual conversion as he later concluded that God had a special mission for him.

At about age 14, Mohenu was possessed by *Dsabaa*, a local guardian deity, and was enrolled as a traditional priest at 19 years old. This was sealed in a blood covenant with his mentor priest in the forest. Having learned the skills of traditional medicine from his father, he claimed that he possessed the ability to heal people of all ailments. He managed to skilfully combine herbal medical experience with priesthood, earning him great fame. His two principal deities were *Dsabaa* and *Antiko* (Odjidja 1965: 13). When the BM moved from Osu to Abokobi in 1854, following the British bombardment of the former settlement, Mohenu had already established himself in his village, Otsirihantang, close to Abokobi.[7] Following the destruction of Otsirihantang by fire in 1856, he moved to Gonwulluno, a village between Nkwantanang and Abokobi. Mohenu had become an unparalleled spiritualist known in the Gã-Dangme territory with a great following and patronage. Yet, he felt threatened by the street preaching of the missionaries, especially, Johannes Zimmermann and Andreas Stanger. This made him a bitter opponent of the BM, whom he perceived as destroyers of the local religion. Mohenu's was not new to the BM because they had experienced similar cases in other places, where stiff mutual opposition between the priests of the traditional religion and the mission was common. In Kyebi as **Afari** details in this volume, for example, the stirrings of the traditional religious leaders, led the chiefs to persecute the Christians in what was described as the Akyem Abuakwa persecutions (Kani 1992).

Mohenu was highly infuriated by the activities of the missionaries and so on one occasion he hired the services of some of his friends and went to Abokobi and demolished

[7] BMA D-1.27, I 198, Petition from Nath. Bekoe Mohenu, Pupil of the Middle School at Osu.

the walls of a new house being built for the missionaries. He repeated this act of vandalism on several occasions. This was mainly because some of his former clients had become catechumens, including his own brother, Adama, a blacksmith resident in Ashongman, a village near Abokobi. Adama was a free man and therefore did not need Mohenu's permission to become a Christian. The loss of customers and the conversion of the priest's brother must have had detrimental effects economically, but also on the perceived patronage of Mohenu's spiritual services and the power of his deities. Most of the opposition western missionaries faced emanated from the threat their evangelical activities posed to local religious leaders, who feared losing clientele and consequently, a diminished influence.

According to Odjidja (1965: 20–26), Mohenu's conversion experience was dramatic. He fell ill and after many herbal doctors had failed to heal him, he was declared mentally ill. Then he went into a coma which lasted several weeks; physical changes were noticeable, his body swelled and then he began to shed skin like a reptile. In his testimony of this experience to Basel missionaries, Mohenu recalled a vision in which an unidentified person held and shook him violently saying: "Why don't you want to listen, you strong headed servant of the devil. You must become my servant; if you don't you will be punished. This was followed by a revelation of heaven and there he was instructed by the Lord to go and preach what he had seen and heard" (Odjidja 1965: 22–23). This testimony rehearses pietist narratives of conversion. The BM was a product of Württemberg Pietism which held on to an emotionally intense set of beliefs and practices that placed strong emphasis on spiritual rebirth, close individual reading of scripture, personal asceticism, discipline, and social conservatism. For BM agents, a narration of the conversion experience was a key feature required before being posted to the mission field. These narratives were sometimes exaggerated to indicate the turning from a worldly life to a life of faith in Jesus Christ. The narrative of Mohenu seemed to place much emphasis on this dramatic conversion because of direct intervention by Christ.

Mohenu woke up from his coma miraculously healed and voluntarily went to Abokobi, where he met an African elder called Bartimaeus, who led him to Missionary Johannes Zimmermann. Initially, the missionaries at Abokobi, out of suspicion, refused his request but after persistent appeals, he was received by the Mission and brought under instruction. He was baptised on 11 October 1857, although his son, Nathaniel Bekoe Mohenu, gives 1859 as his baptismal year. At his baptism, in keeping with missionary tradition, he received the biblical name, Paul (Gã: Paolo). 19th-century missionaries expected African converts to adopt new names as indicators of their new status or belief. In some places, the new names were simply European and had little significance as an indication of recipients' true faith in a Christian God. Sometimes, the names were inherited from a European Christian benefactor of a baptismal candidate. In Mohenu's case, his Christian name earmarked a shift in his biography.

This act of shifting faith toward Christianity, together with Mohenu's baptism marked a shift from his past into a new beginning. He attended the adult learning class or Sunday School where he also learnt to read in Gã. He was commissioned a BM evangelist in 1867. Between 1867 and his death on 22 May 1886, Mohenu served as an evangelist of the church in Tema, Teshie, Mayera, Shai, and Obutu, all in southern Ghana. His knowledge of African spirituality played a very significant role in his ministry. Whilst on one hand, the Basel missionaries condemned African spirituality as superstition and heathenism, Mohenu employed the same spirituality to reach the Gã people. Although Mohenu did not attend the formal western school of the BM, he made a great impact.

Fig. 20: D-30.23.006, Paolo Mohenu on the day of his baptism. Source: Basel Mission Archives (Mission 21).

Mohenu never wrote reports to Basel as European and some African agents did. He lived in an era when reading and writing in southern Ghana was largely associated with the Christian faith. People learned to read and write in the schools which were started by the various missionary societies. This makes it difficult for us to hear the voice of Mohenu directly in the written sources. Sources on Mohenu are therefore commentaries on his life and records of things that he did, and they come in different forms, ranging from mentions in missionary reports to oral tradition among his descendants and in the different places where he was active, and to artefacts like inscriptions on gravestones. These sources are available in the

mission archives in Basel and at different locations in Ghana including the epitaph on his gravestone at Abokobi (Figure 21). These material testimonies of Mohenu's life altogether document his remarkable ministry that led to the conversion of several of his country folk.

Fig. 21: Paolo Mohenu's tombstone, 2005. Source: Photograph by E.S.K. Sewordor.

Mohenu's Mediation of Conflict and Confrontations as an Evangelist

After Mohenu was appointed an evangelist, he was first posted to his hometown, Teshie. He left his family behind in Abokobi, due to the itinerant nature of his ministry.[8] As an itinerant preacher, he travelled through the littoral villages. This would not always go without adversity. At Tema, where people had not been hospitable to evangelists before, he was originally well-received, because he was a kinsman. Later, however, when the locals discovered that his preaching did not come with gifts, as they had expected from a person associated with European missionaries, they shunned him and his preaching. They deprived him of access to food and water and eventually evicted him from the town (Odjidja 1965: 33–34). Similarly in Ada, further east of Tema, Mohenu was attacked by the non-Christian population over the burial of a Christian. The Christians were beaten up and Mohenu as the leader of the Christian community was severely injured. After this experience in Ada, he returned to

[8] BMA D-1.27, I 198, Petition from Nath. Bekoe Mohenu.

Abokobi for healing (Odjidja 1965: 31). After he had healed, he journeyed to preach at Shai. He became the pioneer evangelist of the mission among the Shai people. He later supported the resident African Pastor Daniel Saba who had opened a station in the town of Awutu (or Obutu) in south-western Ghana, in 1881.[9] Saba often preached in the neighbouring Agona towns of Kwanyako, Asafo, and Swedru. Mohenu's support helped Saba to establish the station at Kwanyarko which became the pivot around which mission to Swedru and Nsaba became successful.[10] Sadly, the church in Kwanyarko was not named after these illustrious African agents but after a European called Heinrich Bohner.

In no time, Mohenu became a prominent figure among Abokobi Christians at home and abroad. He extolled African values. Portraits of Mohenu show him in African cloth (see Figure 20), not the European dressing, affectionately worn by many BM converts as a status symbol. Mohenu's choice of non-European clothing set him apart from other African agents of the church and may be a result of his lack of western education. Since, as Parker has noted, men and women of the emerging literate elite opted for Victorian frock coats and dresses, to distinguish themselves from what was often referred to as the "cloth portion" of the Accra (1998: 35). It is remarkable to note dressing as a religious and social marker was problematic for many early Christians in southern Ghana. In the case of the first Christian chief of Osu, he agreed to assume office on the condition that he would be allowed to maintain his Christian faith and be allowed to wear European clothes (Kwakye 2020: 396). In 1929, the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast, successor to the BM, in regulating public life condemned traditional garment, insisting that "Christians should not go about wholly or half naked as the heathen do".[11]

The closely guarded life of BM converts did not preclude defiance. For example, the people of Abokobi at some point became resentful of European colonial domination, with implications for missionary control. In 1907, a major rebellion broke out in the church in Abokobi and the young men and middle school boys paraded before the mission house and exclaimed: "We now govern ourselves" (Debrunner 1967: 258). This was the climax of several years of agitation which had been contained because of the influence of leaders like Mohenu in the past. It is believed that the absence of leaders like Mohenu contributed to the 1907 rebellion. At one such gathering in 1882, he managed to use his indigenous wisdom to deal with a problem between the indigenes and the Europeans on the issue of an increase in church tax. He counselled the Synod on the need to be self-supporting rather than relying

[9] BMA D.1-33, No. 120, Report of Daniel Saba, Obutu, 31 Dec. 1881.

[10] BMA D.10-4,26, Report of Daniel Saba, Obutu, 18 February 1884.

[11] The Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast: Regulations, Practice and Procedure – Revised 1929 (Part Two – VI (1)-25), 22.

on funds that came from Europe. He reminded the church that they had in the past benefitted immensely from the European missionaries and it was time to take their rightful place as a self-supporting church. He advised: "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what belongs to Him".[12]

Mohenu also moderated conflicts elsewhere. For example, when he visited the BM catechist, Thomas Kwatei, at Odumase in Kroboland in 1873. During the visit, he commented that the "Krobo were rich and satisfied. Their mind was preoccupied with the extension of their farmland, oil, offspring, and money".[13] Mohenu's time in Odumase Krobo coincided with an incident involving one Maria Koryo, a Krobo convert. Marijke Steegstra discusses the story of Maria Koryo who came to live with the Zimmermanns in 1868 at age 8. In 1872, when the Schönfelds took over the mission station from the Zimmermanns, Koryo moved in with them. The next year, following the revival of the *dipo* puberty rites of the Krobo, Koryo fled to Abokobi to reside with the missionaries there, ostensibly to avoid participation in the puberty rites. This led to a major crisis in the town. Steegstra quotes the report of Tabitha Schönfeld to the oversight Committee in Basel:

> Now a storm broke out over us. The fetish (traditional) priests were enraged, and not only Odumase, but also the whole of Krobo were angry. More than once our house was besieged up to the doors by an angry and fuming mob. Maria's mother filled our house with her screaming for days on end. She danced on the veranda as if she was possessed, and threw whatever she could get hold of out on the street. Dark schemes were plotted against us, there were rumours that the mission house would be invaded and set alight. The Lord has guarded us and not allowed his kingdom's enemies to harm us in any way.[14]

In the heat of the confusion, Mohenu attempted to convince Koryo's mother, Patawutu, to allow her daughter to attend the boarding school at Abokobi. She was "enraged and slapped him many times in the face, abusing both the [African] Christians and missionaries in filthy language" (Odjidja 1965: 32). Odjidja, hints that Mohenu was calm, and told the woman that one day, she would come seeking to be a Christian herself. This prophetic word of Mohenu came to pass, as the woman later converted to Christianity (Odjidja 1965: 31–32).

One of the Gã towns where Europeans encountered much trouble was La. The people of La earned a reputation of being rebellious to the impositions of the Europeans, although it seems that the accusations against them may have been blown out of proportion. It seems that the rebellious attitude of the La people was not limited to the European merchants but also extended to the Christian missionaries. The BM first attempted working in La in the 1850s but

[12] Kristofo Senkekafo, December 1905, 30.

[13] BMA D-1.25 Afrika 1873, Odumase 14, C. Schönfeld, Odumase 31.12.1873, 6–7.

[14] BMA D-1.25, Afrika 1873, Odumase 13, Tabitha Schönfeld, 31.12.1873, Odumase, Jahresbericht der Mädchenanstalt".

failed. In 1870, the Mission leaped at an offer of a piece of land by the La *mantse* (chief of La), Nii Maale Atsem, for a church and school, employing African Pastor Carl C. Reindorf and the lay preacher, Paolo Mohenu as intermediaries in the transaction (Parker 2000: 160–161). The Mission faced stiff opposition from the *Laakpa wulomo* (priest of the *Laakpa* deity), Boi Fio, and his devotees. Parallel to Mohenu's own attacks years earlier on Abokobi, they mobilised by repeatedly breaking the walls of the building to prevent the establishment of the Christian faith in their town. It seems that the pulling down of walls became a way to show disapproval of the introduction of a new faith in the local communities. In La, the Mission responded by turning to the colonial courts, where they successfully sued Boi Fio and his followers. Following this, the Mission completed the construction of a chapel and school.

In 1871, instigated by Mohenu, Abraham Odamete led the Christians of La to fish in the sea on a Tuesday, in defiance of the custom banning fishing on that day, which was consecrated to a deity called Nai. The successful return of the fisherfolks was a direct provocation and turned out to be an added spiritual victory over the guardians of the traditional religion. By 1875, the number of church members had risen from 7 to 57 in La. Parker argues that this increase was the result of a smallpox epidemic that affected the non-Christian section of the town. This was attributed to retribution by the God of the Christians for the havoc caused by the *Laakpa wulomo* and his followers. Indeed, one cannot fail to see that the legal and spiritual victories of the Christians of La greatly enhanced the growth of the church. A hymn, attributed to Carl Reindorf as its composer, was composed to herald this victory. Though Reindorf receives official credits, Mohenu is believed to have composed the first verse.[15] So, if Mohenu was pre-literate, the text of the hymn may be considered a rare oral record directly traceable to him. Since Mohenu was the one present in La, it is likely that Reindorf adopted the song by Mohenu and added a few more verses.

Despite his past as a materialistic traditional priest, Mohenu did not seek economic gains from his ministry when he became an evangelist. Though lacking formal western education, his gifts as an adept mediator and zealous preacher advanced the work of the BM in Ghana. He worked in the BM church as did his son, Nathaniel Bekoe. His son-in-law, Daniel Ablorh, also served the BM for several years as an ordained pastor. Many more generations of his descendants served in the church including a past moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Rev. E.M.L. Odjidja, and the present Christian chief of Abokobi, Nii Samuel Adjetey Mohenu. One cannot lose sight of the fact that it all started with the conversion of the traditional priest, Mohenu, and his ministry among his country folk.

---

[15] Private conversation with late Sowatey Adjei, a former Presbyter of the Bethel Presbyterian Congregation during my days as a probationer minister in La (1997–1999). The hymn is Presbyterian Hymn Book 513.

Conclusion: Sources for African Church Historiography

Mohenu's conversion and impact on the development of the BM church in Ghana remain to be fully appreciated, in both European- and Ghanaian-authored church historiography. He is an example of what Paul Jenkins describes as the blindness in African Christian historiography. Focusing on Mohenu draws attention to the fact that modern African Christianity is not only about what European missionaries did (or did not) but also about the role of African agents.

A broad question Mohenu's story invites us to reflect on relates to sources for reconstructing the historical past. Despite the rich perspectives that the sources in the BM archives in Switzerland offer for telling the stories of the church's African agents, local sources including written, oral, and material cannot be ignored. Rather their limitations should be embraced as invitations that challenge us to think carefully about the possibilities to undo the limits of European-centred perspectives in the literature about West African church historiography (as **Afari** and **Beutte**r also contemplate in their contributions to this volume). To retrace Mohenu's story, I have heavily relied on Odjidja's accounts and combined them with further oral information and creative sources like Mohenu's grave or hymns as documents to church history. Odjidja's account of his great-grandfather is an oral transmission that was part of the "Pioneer Series", printed by Waterville Publishing House in Accra. The "Pioneer Series" (first issued in 1965, but now out of print) documented oral traditions/histories, autobiographies, and biographical writings on influential African agents of the church. The publications were part of widespread efforts in the 1960s to publish oral tradition in print and make it available for both scholars and lay users (see **Mark-Thiesen** in this volume). This renewed approach to reconstructing historical knowledge in post-colonial Africa aligns with Odjidja's account, which must be seen as a memorialisation of Mohenu, who had grounded his authority in his former identity as a Gã priest, his dramatic conversion to Christianity, and his inspirational journey as a preacher. Odjidja would have liked to see Mohenu "stand in our local church history as the man he was, an oldish man with grey hair and wrinkled face, but with an upright figure and youthful flexibility. His commanding personality [is] an outcome of his constant bible reading and communion with God ... . His speech vibrating with expressive emotion recalled the figure of the prophet in the old biblical days announcing the word of God" (Odjidja 1965: 36). This invites us to rethink the centrality of archives in the West, despite their significance, not only for the depiction of the agency of local African agents but also for the way we ought to see their lasting impact in the historiography of the church. We should not make the same mistakes of undermining African agency and thus the African history of Christianity. The case of Paolo Mohenu highlights how local sources in Africa, not only but especially if contradictory, invite us to rethink the politics of knowledge production and the archive across the global South and North.

Bibliography

Antwi, Daniel J. "The African Factor in Christian Mission to Africa: A Study of Moravian and Basel Mission Initiatives in Ghana". *International Review of Mission* 87(344) (1998): 55–66.

Debrunner, Hans W. *A History of Christianity in Ghana.* Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1967.

Jenkins, Paul. "The Scandal of Continuing Intercultural Blindness in Mission Historiography: The Case of Andreas Riis in Akuapem". *International Review of Missions* 87(344) (1998): 67–76.

Kalu, Ogbu U. "The Shape and Flow of African Church Historiography". In *African Christianity: An African Story,* edited by Ogbu U. Kalu. Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2005.

Kalu, Ogbu U. "Church Presence in Africa: An Historical Analysis of the Evangelisation Process". In *African Theology en Route,* edited by K. Appiah-Kubi, and S. Torres. New York: Orbis Books 1983.

Kani, Thomas Yaw. *Persecution of Kyebi Christians: 1880–1887.* Translated by Fred M. Agyemang. Accra: 1992.

Kwakye, Abraham Nana Opare. "Nii Noi Dowuona of Osu: A Christian King in Africa". *Interkulterelle Theologie* 46(2) (2020): 382–400.

Odjidja, E. M. Lartey. *Paul Mohenu the Converted Fetish Priest.* Accra: Waterville Publishing House, 1965.

Parker, John. *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra.* Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000.

Parker, John. "Mankraloi, Merchants and Mulattos: Carl Reindorf and the Politics of Race in Early Colonial Accra". In *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century–C.C. Reindorf and Samuel Johnson*, edited by Paul Jenkins. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographen, 1998: 31–48.

Schweizer, Peter. *Survivors of the Gold Coast.* Accra: Smartline Publishing, 2000.

Walls, Andrew F. *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History.* New York: Orbis Books, 2002.

Afterword

Enduring Legacies Across Continents

Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, Harvard University

I knew of Paul Jenkins by reputation long before I met him in the mid-1990s. I enrolled as an undergraduate student in the Department of History at the University of Ghana in 1980. We graduated in 1984, affected by a ten-month closure of the university under the military regime of Jerry John Rawlings' Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). I stayed on at the Department of History as a teaching assistant for my national service and then as an MPhil student. Our introduction to primary materials was a bound volume entitled "Abstracts from Correspondence in the Basel Mission 1852–1898" (1970) that had been put together by Paul Jenkins for use at the University. The "Abstracts" introduced us to primary materials, missionary sources, and the history of Christianity in Ghana. This was a central theme, many of us having been products of mission schools. With an undergraduate degree that combined history and the study of religions, Paul Jenkins' work and the "Abstracts" brought my two fields together. Later as a historian, when I could afford it, I had a copy of the "Abstracts" produced and bound and it sits on my shelf in my office at Harvard next to the PhD dissertations I have supervised. In a way, it was part of my introduction to the profession of academic history.

I would have the opportunity to meet Paul Jenkins in person during an international conference he organised on C. C. Reindorf and Samuel Johnson, pioneer West African pastor historians, in Basel in October 1995. It initiated my connection with Basel and the Basel Mission Archives, leading to my chapter in the volume edited by Jenkins on *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century* (1998), and later the collaboration to digitize and present the over 28,000 photographs taken and or collected by Basel missionaries in West Africa and Asia between 1860 and the 1950s (Akyeampong 2000).[1] This collaboration brought me to Basel a couple of times, providing opportunities to use the Archive and to learn more about the teaching of history at the University of Basel. Barely two years beyond my PhD when I was invited to Basel in 1995, it was

[1] For the photo archive, I served as a visual interpreter, providing "A Visual Interpretation of Photos taken from the Basel Mission Picture Archive". The Basel Mission Digital Photo Archive is now available through the University of Southern California.

an opportunity to meet a wider circle of scholars from West Africa, Switzerland, Germany, and the United Kingdom. It initiated my relations with several established scholars including Adam Jones and Albert Wirz. These connections were reflective of Jenkins' commitment to create scholarly networks that included Africans representative of areas documented in the Basel Mission Archives, and that brought different generations of scholars together. The connection to Basel reinforced my interest in photographs as historical sources and not just as illustrations of historical contexts or as aids to written texts. For more than two decades my graduate seminar on sources, methods and themes in African history at Harvard University has included a week on "Maps, Photographs and History", which features the Basel Mission's Photo Archive as a resource for students to explore the use of photographs as historical sources, and I include Jenkins' article on the earliest generation of missionary photographers in West Africa as one of the texts that help frame the use of historical photos (Jenkins 1993; Jenkins 2011).[2]

Reading this collection of essays celebrating the work and legacy of Paul Jenkins, I am struck by how enduring this legacy has been across continents this past half century, especially in Ghana and Switzerland, the two places he made home at different points in his life. In this regard the title of the volume is apt: *African History between Ghana and Switzerland*. The essay by **Frank Afari** (see Chapter 3) reminds me of the abiding influence of Paul Jenkins' "Abstracts", and how it continues to initiate young Ghanaian historians into mission history and the utility of missionary sources in African history. In his publications and his relations with his students and mentees—overall evident in several of the essays in the volume, but especially so in **Veit Arlt's** contribution—Paul taught them to read the missionary archive (texts, photographs and maps) against the grain, to be mindful of the "historiographical blind spots" embedded in the missionary archive, and by extension in most archives that we depend on for the reconstruction of African history, because of the reality that our archives are primarily "colonial archives", shaped by relations of power and reflecting more the exigencies of the missionary society, the colonial state, the expatriate company, than the colonial subjects they documented. Jenkins encouraged his students and mentees to interrogate and go beyond the "legends and silences" in the mission archive; in short, to be conscious of the limitations of the archive (**Schürer**-**Ries;** and **Sewordor** in this volume).

Jenkins urged researchers to bring in alternative types of sources that illumine underrepresented constituencies in the mission archive or personalities that come through the archives in rather undeveloped ways. **Abraham Nana Opare Kwakye**'s essay on Paolo

[2] This fall semester I will add to that week Jenkins's visual essay on "Reading an Image in the Other Context", an instructive exercise on the potential layers of historical and cultural information a photograph can unlock.

Mohenu, the Gã Basel evangelist domiciled in Abokobi is an excellent example, using oral traditions from Mohenu's family, the lyrics of a Gã hymn he contributed to, and his tombstone to flesh out his personality and career. The result is a nuanced portrait of Mohenu: his pre-Christian background and career as an indigenous or "traditional" priest and healer, his preference for non-western clothing, his skill in diplomacy and sensitivity when interacting with non-Christian communities and individuals that stemmed from his earlier religious history. In Mohenu's evangelistic career, we appreciate the indispensable role of African agents in mission proselytising. This role is often flattened in the reports missionaries sent to Basel; composite reports based on the outstation chronicles of African agents of the church but missing the flavour of day-to-day life at the mission. African agents of the church came with pasts that included their indigenous understandings of religion or spirituality, which mediated their engagement with Christianity. Reports of religious tensions conveyed by African catechists in station chronicles captured different worldviews and epistemologies that were weeded out in the sanitised, approved reports that European missionaries sent back to the home office. The chronicles at the outstations provide us with a window on how "lived religion" or "vernacular religion" unfolded (see **Beutter** this volume).

For Paul Jenkins, it was important that researchers understand and incorporate "the other context", or relevant contexts absent from the missionary archive. Jenkins' visual essay on "Reading an Image in the Other Context" (2011) is a wonderful example of how incorporating other contexts not revealed in a Basel Mission photograph of an African pastor's family sheds invaluable light on the personalities present in the photograph, the seating arrangement with the matriarch in the centre and not the African pastor, and the significant presence of females from three generations in this photograph. **Paul Glen Grant**'s essay in Chapter 6 of this volume examines the importance of "long listening" to the archival sources, "a work of patience and endurance" that can move us closer to the meanings (explicit and implicit) in a text or a photograph. Long listening or bringing in the other context in the archival photograph of "The African Pastor Koranteng with Family", would reveal that Mrs. Amelia Koranteng was no other than *Ohemmea* Akua Oye, the queen mother of the Akuapem state, and the matriarch of the royal family of Akropong. And in this matrilineal society, that females from three generations dominated the photograph, including what appears to be three grandchildren, underscoring the secure future of the royal lineage. The personality of importance in this photograph is *Ohemmea* Akua Oye, not the lowly pastor, Koranteng, in the hierarchy of the Basel Mission Society, though the photograph most likely taken by a European Basel missionary was meant to capture the African pastor's family for the church's record.

Focus on the other context is explored by several essays in this volume, including **Heuser**'s Chapter 9 which advances Jenkins' quest for "there-centricity". A commitment to "there-centricity" in the study of the Basel Mission archival record on societies from Africa and Asia where Basel missionaries worked can reveal new knowledge or information about these societies not contained in the archival record, like the identity and substance of *Ohemmea* Akua Oye in the family photograph of Pastor Koranteng. Heuser in this volume, and Jenkins, advocate for a provincialising of the official Basel Mission history with its tendency towards "legends and silences", a self-representation and privileging of the missionary intervention to the detriment of the "entangled history of intercultural contact". The commitment to there-centricity and the need to get it right might partially explain the long delay in the publication of the volume, *Reports of Theophilus Opoku: A 19th-Century Gold Coast Pastor*, edited by Michelle Gilbert and Paul Jenkins (see **Arlt** in this volume). I look forward to the appearance of this important volume scheduled for this year and assure Paul and Michelle that the volume will be generative in how readers, especially Ghanaians, imagine and develop the other contexts examined in Opoku's reports.

Trained as a social historian, I end my afterword with an acknowledgement of how invaluable missionary archives have been to my endeavour to reconstruct the everyday life of ordinary people and to transcend the silences in the official (government or colonial) archives with its focus on revenue, law, and order. We are usually given composite profiles of ordinary Africans and their place in the colonial political economy; agriculture, communal or road work, their conscription as porters and soldiers in World War I and World War II, and so on. When the names of ordinary individuals appear in the colonial archives, they have often broken the law, and then we are presented with as detailed a profile as possible of the individual who dared contravene colonial law. This is when counterfeiters, illicit distillers, prostitutes, armed robbers, or the violent mentally ill show up in the colonial record. There are several other subjects that missionary records have provided incomparable access to. Temperance was a passionate subject and preoccupation of missionaries. The study of slavery and emancipation was another area and, in Ghana, the Basel Mission was active in this area even before the formal declaration of colonial rule in 1874. The mission pressured its church members to end the practice of slavery, experimented with cash crops like coffee and cocoa as it encouraged alternative livelihoods, and proposed new forms of labour arrangement not based on slavery (Haenger 2000). In this volume, the essay by **Frank Afari** (see Chapter 3) on how the Basel Mission dealt with slave-owning among its African members and the contribution of **Kofi Baku and Nancy Andoh** (see Chapter 2.) on the legacies of slavery in Ghana and the contemporary reverberations and strictures of slave ancestry when it comes to traditional office underscores the visible role of the Basel Mission in the question of slavery.

Over a half century Paul Jenkins through his "Abstracts" at the University of Ghana, and his roles as a lecturer at the University of Basel, a librarian and then archivist of the Basel Mission have introduced several generations of Ghanaian researchers and those in Switzerland to the richness of the missionary archive. He has taught us how to read missionary sources against the grain, pioneered our use of photography as a historical source, and encouraged us to incorporate other contexts and bring local experiences and social circumstances into dialogue with the missionary record (see, for example, **Mark-Thiessen** in this volume). This Festschrift is a celebration of Paul Jenkins' huge impact on all our lives, and our enormous respect for and admiration of his intellect and work. May he continue to be an inspiration to many more generations of African and Africanist scholars.

Bibliography

Akyeampong, Emmanuel. "C. C. Reindorf on the Cultural Articulation of Power in Precolonial Ghana—Observations of a Social Historian". In *The Recovery of the West African Past: African Pastors and African History in the Nineteenth Century–C. C. Reindorf and Samuel Johnson*, edited by Paul Jenkins. Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998: 103–113.

Haenger, Peter. *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast: Towards an Understanding of Social Bondage in West Africa.* Basel: P. Schlettwein Publishing, 2000.

Jenkins, Paul. "The Earliest Generation of Missionary Photographers in West Africa and the Portrayal of Indigenous People and Culture". *History in Africa*, 20 (1993): 89–119.

Jenkins, Paul. "Reading an Image in the Other context" (2011). https://vimeo.com/33251261. Accessed 15 April 2024.

Figures

Contributors

Frank Afari studied History at the University of Ghana and recently earned his doctorate in International History and Politics at the Geneva Graduate Institute. He is a lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. His research focuses on transitional justice, political violence, human rights, transitions to democracy, the politics of archives, and the practices of memory.

Emmanuel K. Akyeampong is an Ellen Gurney Professor of History and African and African American Studies. Until March 2023, he was the Oppenheimer Faculty Director of the Harvard University Center for African Studies. His latest monograph is titled: *Independent Africa: The First Generation of Nation Builders* (Indiana University Press, 2023).

Nancy A. Andoh is a PhD student in History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her current research focuses on the complex interplay between colonialism, gender, and indigenous healing systems in northern Ghana between 1860 and 1960. Her research interests include medical history, gender studies, mental health, and slavery. Her UNC, MA dissertation is entitled "Mad Enough to Kill: Understanding the Complexities of Suicide and Akan Cosmology on the Middle Passage" 2023, doi.org/10.17615/x232-4175.

Veit Arlt is the coordinator of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Basel and of its interdisciplinary Master's program. He studied History and Geography in Basel earning his doctorate with a thesis co-supervised by Paul Jenkins and Patrick Harries. His research focused on the history of Ghana, photography and popular music in particular. Publication: *Christianity, Imperialism and Culture: The Expansion of the Two Krobo States in Ghana, c. 1830 to 1930*. PdD diss., University of Basel, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, 2005, edoc.unibas.ch/diss/DissB_7185.

Kofi Baku, a barrister-at-law, earned a PhD in Intellectual History at the University of Sussex in 1987 and has since then been teaching at the University of Ghana. He has held visiting positions at Boston University (1990); University of California at Los Angeles, (1994); and Pennsylvania State University (2008). His research interests include intellectual resistance to colonialism in Africa; slavery and society in West Africa; and the political, economic, and social rights of persons of slave ancestry in Ghana. He has published in the *International Journal of*

African Historical Studies; *Research Review*; *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* and in several edited volumes.

Anne Beutter is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Department of the Study of Religions at the University of Lucerne, Switzerland since 2021. She studied the Study of Religions and Sociology in Basel and Leipzig and completed her doctorate in Lucerne in 2020 with a thesis on law in religious organisations based on the example of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in the 1950s. Her research focuses on African religious history, religion and law and religion and diversity. Selected publication: "Concepts of 'Law' as Both Tools and Objects in the Study of Religions: A Case from 1950s Ghana—or When may a Christian Slaughter a Sheep?", *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 2023, doi.org/10.1163/15700682-bja10118.

Paul Glen Grant is a lecturer in History at the University of Wisconsin, where he received his doctorate in 2017. In 2020 he published *Healing and Power in Ghana: Early Indigenous Expressions of Christianity* (Baylor University Press), a study focused on mid-nineteenth-century African deliberations on a Christian message originally introduced by foreigners, and initially held to be irrelevant until appropriately reformulated by indigenous thinkers. He is currently working on biographies of two pre-colonial West African Christians—one from Ghana and one from Nigeria—who used the Bible to evaluate and partially reject European Christianity.

Andreas Heuser studied Theology and Political Sciences in Marburg, Montpellier, Heidelberg and Hamburg. He completed his doctorate in 2002 on "Shembe, Gandhi and the Soldiers of God", the interreligious and multicultural texture of nonviolence in a South African African Independent Church. Since 2012 he has been a Professor of Extra-European Christianity at the University of Basel. His research focuses on African Christianity, the global Pentecostal movement and migrant Christianity in continental Europe. Publication: "Dominion Theology as a Penumatic Theopraxis" in *Politischer Pentekostalismus: Transformationen des globalen Christentums im Spiegel theologischer Motive und pluraler Normativität*, edited by Fontana, Leandro B. and Luber, Markus (Regensburg 2023): 95–114.

Jennifer Jenkins was born in Harrow, England. Studied in Cambridge for an MSc in Natural Sciences. Part-time study in Basel for the "Grosses deutsches Sprachdiplom" of the Ludwig-Maximilian University, München. Lecturer in Biochemistry at the University of Ghana. Professional work in Switzerland mainly as a scientific editor, with some teaching. Part-time positions in the Swiss Tropical Institute and

as Assistant Editor for the journal Experientia. Other jobs included organisation of home and family, voluntary work for a Fair Trade enterprise, and participation in research and translation projects on the history of the Basel Mission, especially in India.

Abraham Nana Opare Kwakye, the current moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, studied at the University of Ghana, Legon where he graduated with a Doctor of Philosophy in Religions in 2011. His doctoral work focused on returnee Caribbean Christians in African Christianity. Between 2013 and 2014, he was an ESKAS post-doctoral fellow in the Faculty of Theology, University of Basel, Switzerland. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Department for the Study of Religions. His research focus is Church History, African Christianity, and Christian Missions. He is also the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. His publications include "Nii Noi Dowuona—A Christian King in Africa", *Interkulterelle Theologie, Zeitschrift für Missionswisenschaft* 46(2) 2020.

Cassandra Mark-Thiesen leads the junior research group "African Knowledges and the History Publication" at the Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence, University of Bayreuth. Previously, she was a lecturer in Global & African History at the University of Basel. She is a 2016–2018 Marie Heim-Vögtlin Fellowship recipient (Swiss National Science Foundation). Her research focuses on (West) African social and economic history, intellectual history, digital history and memory, as well as the history of inequality and globalisation. Publication: "Neglected Historiography from Africa: The Case for Postindependence Journals", *Journal of African History* 2023, doi.org/10.1017/S0021853723000257.

Anke Schürer-Ries studied History and African Studies in Basel. She finalised her doctorate in 2021 with a thesis on the photographic history of Protestant missions in the nineteenth century with a focus on the collections of Rev Fritz Ramseyer of the Basel Mission. Anke is an established archivist with a focus on special collections and research data management and decolonising metadata standards in a time of digital abundance. Her postdoctoral research deals with the Rev. Hans Knöpfli photographic collection and the African knowledge archive. Publication: Sowe, S. K., Schoenfeld, M., Samimi, C., Steiner, P., & Schürer-Ries, A. "Managing North-South Research Collaboration Projects During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Empirical Study", *International Journal of Information Technology Project Management* 13(1) (2022): 1–25. doi.org/10.4018/IJITPM.312255.

E. Sasu Kwame Sewordor holds a BA and an MPhil in History from the University of Ghana, and a PhD in Urban Studies from the University of Basel, where he currently teaches. His research on the architectural and urban practices of the Basel Mission in 19th– and 20th–century Ghana has received recognition from the Society of Architectural Historians, which adjudged him the winner of the 2024 Founders' Award for his article "The Urban Culture of the 'Model' Christian Settlement at Abokobi, Ghana, 1854–1929." doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2022.81.2.197.

BASLER AFRIKA BIBLIOGRAPHIEN
Namibia Resource Centre • Southern Africa Library

This collection of essays documents the formative decades of African history across two countries by following the career of the British historian-cum-archivist Paul Jenkins (born 1938 in Sutherland) from West Africa to Central Europe. It retraces his academic path from Ghana to Switzerland while engaging his curiosities in, contributions to, and impact on the development of African history since the 1960s. The volume reflects on Paul's academic services throughout the 1960s and 1970s, mainly at the University of Ghana (1965–1972) and subsequently at the Basel Mission Archive and University of Basel (1972–2003) in Switzerland—as key sites where he established himself as a teacher and promoter of African history.

These episodes led to lasting bonds of intellectual friendships between Paul and an array of inter-/national and -generational scholars of Africa, several of whom are contributing to this volume. Significantly too, the volume highlights the importance of resources Paul curated during the early 1970s, notably his "Abstracts of the Basel Mission's Gold Coast Correspondences," through which he increased access to the rich collections of the Basel Mission Archive for scholars of Africa. Altogether, the essays celebrate, engage, interrogate, and push beyond Paul's numerous past publications and ongoing academic work.