

The Making of the Everyday: A Study of Habits in Colonial Ghana (Gold
Coast) During the Early Twentieth Century

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Abstract

Everyday practice often goes unquestioned. Yet in Gold Coast society during the early twentieth century, everyday habits and practices served as an important device for both subalterns and elites to negotiate status or contest colonial control. Between 1900 and 1920, the Gold Coast was experiencing many changes that offered opportunities for actors to influence, negotiate, or contest emerging everyday habits and experiences. The monitoring and modification of everyday habits provided a way for the British colonial government to consolidate its rule in the Gold Coast following the period of military expansion in the late nineteenth century. For many Gold Coasters, increased access to education, the expansion of wage labour and the cocoa industry, led to a reconfiguration of social status and relations affecting daily life.

While scholars are increasingly examining the theme of everyday practices, many tend to focus on the experiences of subaltern peoples. This study focuses instead on the role of an emerging, yet subjected, urban elite comprised of educated Africans. Caught between their understanding of African “tradition” and Western ideas of modernity, educated African elite attempted to influence everyday experiences and habits as a way to claim greater authority and enhance their position in the colony. Furthermore, this study examines how colonial administrators, too, used everyday habits and experiences to reinforce colonial governance in Gold Coast. In early twentieth century Gold Coast society, everyday habits and practices served as a battleground for

contests for authority and influence as educated Africans and colonizers narrativized their own concepts of modernity and visions of the Gold Coast's future in the pages of colonial reports, diaries, missionary correspondence, and Gold Coast newspapers. Using this and other primary source material, this thesis demonstrates how space, personhood, and food became important arenas through which various actors – African and European – vied to control, construct, and influence everyday habits and experiences in early twentieth century Gold Coast.

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INTRODUCTION: **BEGINNING THE EVERYDAY IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY GOLD COAST**

While I am in school I'm practicing "everything shall be in its rightful place," not to put ink where books should be neither the place where water should be. All this will not come by itself unless to practice it little by little, then it will get to my habit.¹

Young Grace Addison's description of the usefulness of her missionary education was based on the assumption that through the adoption of new habits she could enhance her place in Gold Coast society. Everyday habits were central to determining one's "rightful place" in Gold Coast society. Grace's remarks about everyday practice reflect a larger project of modernity occurring in early twentieth century Gold Coast. Everyday habits pervaded all strata of colonial society and the various spectrums of daily life. These everyday habits cemented modernity in seemingly mundane acts that people came to take for granted: the spatial arrangement of households and the practices therein, the professional, social, and leisurely pursuits of youth, and the making and eating of daily meals. Everyday practices in the Gold Coast became a way for Gold Coasters to challenge or negotiate their position in the colony. Europeans and Africans competed for control over everyday practices in the Gold Coast in order to cultivate their authority over daily life.

Everyday habits are often unquestioned as patterns of social behavior and activity are internalized. Using the concept of habitus, Pierre Bourdieu proposes that the

¹ Lady Clifford C.B.E. ed., *Our Days on the Gold Coast: in Ashanti, in the Northern Territories, and the British sphere of occupation in Togoland* (London: John Murray, 1919)
http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7114103M/Our_days_on_the_Gold_Coast, 205-206.

habits of a society penetrate a person's subconscious leading to an unquestioning acceptance and practice.² Yet the complexity of the colonial encounter disrupted these patterns, rendering everyday experience an arena for the contestation of control over social, economic, and political structures. This was linked to the European colonizers' construction of the colonial "Other" against whom they defined themselves -- a process that was reinforced by positing particular modes of behavior as superior to alternative forms.³ Colonial administrators, settlers, and missionaries then used these "superior" and "modern" modes of behavior as justification for the colonial presence. Claims to superiority and modernity in the colonial context formed the basis of European identity while framing the colonized as "primitive" or "savage." Colonial officials, administrators and settlers invoked this dichotomy to legitimize European rule.⁴

The British designed social, economic and political structures to reinforce their hegemonic rule in the Gold Coast. However, the daily expression of British hegemony required cultural capital -- the control of symbols and meanings that enable an intelligible social influence. Hence, domestic arrangements, fashion, recreation and cuisine and other attributes of everyday experience conveyed cultural capital by categorizing "high" and "low" class and race distinctions. In early twentieth century

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, (London: Routledge, 1984), 170-172.

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize : The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, eds.

Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

⁴ See, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); José Rabasa, *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize : The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); V.Y. Mudimbe, *Ideas of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Jean and John Comaroff, "Home-Made Hegemony: Modernity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in South Africa," In *African Encounters with Domesticity*, ed. Karen Transberg Hansen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 37-74.

Gold Coast, power relations and notions of modernity were tied to competing claims for control over the everyday. A focus on the colonial administration's monitoring and control of everyday practices, followed by an analysis of Africans' various responses to these measures, demonstrates how colonizers and colonized both harnessed the quotidian, although in different ways, to define modernity and to shape power relations within the Gold Coast. Negotiations over everyday practices took place in three main arenas of space, personhood, and food, and my thesis treats each of these pivotal sites in turn. In the first chapter, I examine the contested use of space, where social relations were enacted and physically articulated. In chapter two, I probe the complexities of constructions of personhood through which propriety and the Gold Coast's future was defined, revealing how elders, Europeans, Africans, missionaries, and traditional authorities, all sought to shape the behaviour of youth who, in turn, found ways to circumvent these controls. Finally, I historicize the production and consumption of food as an expression of aspirations for the future, expectations of the colonial government and a critique of colonial era social inequalities and political tensions.⁵

The British administered the Gold Coast, like the rest of British West Africa, through the system of Indirect Rule.⁶ In British West Africa, and in particular the Gold

⁵ For further analysis of the role of the everyday in structuring notions of propriety and the significance of food and space, see: Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayor, *The Practice of Everyday Life: Volume 2: Living and Cooking*, ed. Luce Giard, translated by Timothy J. Tomasik, (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1998). For more on the significance of place as a mode of analysis, see Tim Creswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell publishing, 2004).

⁶ Indirect Rule was a colonial system of governance practiced by the British to minimize the cost and number of men required to rule colonial territories they used local leaders (chiefs). The colonial government deferred certain tasks to local rulers, such as tax collection, while securing colonial power over major political structures and concerns. For more on indirect rule as it was practiced in colonial Africa and the integral role of local rulers see Karen Fields' work, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Also see A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, "The Thin White Line: The Size of British Colonial Service in Africa," *African Affairs*, 79, no. 314 (1980): 25-44. Indirect Rule as a policy was formalized with Frederick Lugard's description of it in his work called *The*

Coast, the European population was comprised, not of permanent settlers, but rather of traders, missionaries, colonial officials, and government workers who came and went. In the early twentieth century, the colonial state consolidated its rule by replacing military dominance with administration through African intermediaries, including civil servants in urban areas, and traditional authorities in rural regions.⁷ Gradually, everyday practices emerged as a means for the British to exert power over the lives of Africans. Using the rhetoric of modernity, the colonialists questioned the practices of colonial subjects in attempt to extend British hegemony and dismantle prevailing everyday practices among Gold Coasters.⁸ Missionaries were also invested in altering the everyday habits of Africans. Although not under colonial control, the proselytizing aims of the missionaries included instilling habits that went in the same direction as the colonial administration.⁹ Yet this did not go uncontested, and many Africans, especially the educated elite, opposed these forays of control over their daily lives and most often voiced their contestations in the colony's newspapers.¹⁰ An analysis of these newspapers reveals that

Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa. Karen Fields, *Revival and Rebellion in Colonial Central Africa*, (Princeton: Princeton university Press, 1985) 31-32. For a definition of indirect rule and more on the specific impact of indirect rule in the Gold Coast see Roger S. Gocking, "Indirect Rule in the Gold Coast: Competition For Office and the Invention of Tradition," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 28, no. 3 (1994): 421-446. In this work Gocking explores the ramifications of indirect rule in the Gold Coast and how it led to the educated elite and chiefs competing for control of tradition in order to secure a place in the colonial system.

⁷ For more on the role of Africans in this sense see: Benjamin Lawrence, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts, *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and clerks: African Employees in the Making of the Colonial State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2006).

⁸ On the colonialist use of modernity in this way, see Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, ed., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 2-3.

⁹ Sandra E. Greene, *West African narratives of slavery: texts from late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ghana*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011); Phyllis Martin, *Catholic Women of Congo-Brazzaville: mothers and sisters in troubled times* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

¹⁰ A discussion of newspapers will come below in section on Sources and Methodology.

habits and practices connected to sanitation, personhood, and food were among the most contested everyday habits in the Gold Coast.

With the turn to legitimate commerce that occurred in the nineteenth century, which led to the rise of cash crop agriculture and therefore wage labour, migration and urbanization were well under way in the Gold Coast by the early twentieth century. As a result, everyday patterns shifted, offering opportunities for various authorities, missionaries, administrators, and chiefs, for example, to renegotiate practices to increase their power and authority. A growing class of educated Africans figured as important go-betweens for the colonial power, and by the twentieth century had already challenged and opposed the colonial administration's attempts to control Gold Coast land and impose taxes.¹¹ As a result, in the nineteenth century, Europeans viewed educated Africans as problematic and used the term "scholars" pejoratively to denote this group which they felt were half-educated Africans who thought they were equal to Europeans.¹² By the twentieth century, the Gold Coast colonial administration took measures to actively reduce the power and influence of educated Africans in the colony who had established a political opposition group called the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society which sought to secure African control of Gold Coast land in opposition to the 1897 Lands Bill.¹³ The colonial government shored up the power of

¹¹ Terence J. Johnson provides a thorough yet brief description of this change in policy and its repercussions in his work, "Protest: tradition and change: An analysis of Southern Gold Coast riots 1890–1920," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 2 (1972): 172–74.

¹² David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 87–89.

¹³ Ibid, 330. There also existed significant tension between the educated African elite and Gold Coast chiefs. This tension between the educated African elites and Gold Coast chiefs circulated around issues of who was better suited and capable of representing the interests of Gold Coasters. In the early twentieth century as the administration came to favour the traditional elite, this friction continued with some educated Africans claiming cooperation with the traditional elite or competing for positions within traditional systems of governance. See for instance, Terence J. Johnson, "Protest: Tradition and Change: An Analysis of Southern Gold Coast Riots 1890-1920," *Economy & Society* 1, no. 2 (1972): 164–193. For

chiefs in the territory through the 1904 Chief's Ordinance. The Ordinance decreed that the Governor would decide who was to be chief in case of a dispute.¹⁴ Furthermore, new colonial directives covertly excluded the educated elite from positions they once held in the colonial administration and medical field, as Africans were increasingly considered not morally responsible or adequately trained for such positions.¹⁵

By the twentieth century the colonial government increased its standards for those seeking positions within the colonial administration or medical profession, and there was little interest in providing Africans with the training and experience they needed to assume such positions.¹⁶ Increasingly, these positions were taken up by Europeans, and by 1902 a position within the West African Medical Service dictated that the applicant had to be European.¹⁷

Colonial administrators and the educated African elite were the two social groups who worked most deliberately, in twentieth century Gold Coast, to control, construct, and otherwise influence the everyday habits and practices of Africans. Actors in both of these groups linked the construction of the present everyday experience in the Gold Coast to visions of the future where their focus lay. Colonial administrators' interest in the everyday included extending British hegemony and ensuring the endurance of the Empire. For educated Africans, especially those with nationalist ideas,¹⁸ everyday habits

more on the competition between educated elites and traditional elites also see, Roger S. Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule* (New York: University Press of America, 1999).

¹⁴ David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 466.

¹⁵ Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 98-100.

¹⁶ Ibid, 98-99.

¹⁷ Ibid, 98.

¹⁸ Casely Hayford was an early Gold Coast nationalist at this time. See his work, *Gold Coast native institutions with thoughts upon a healthy imperial policy for the Gold Coast* (London: Sweet & Maxwell unlimited, 1903; HathiTrust Digital Library, 2010), www.llmcdigital.org. Also see David Kimble, *A*

were to be cultivated to promote the Gold Coast's progress to modern nationhood and to prepare Gold Coast inhabitants for their role as citizens with civic duties because colonialism was only temporary. Although educated African elite narrativized the everyday experience of Africans to demonstrate the shortcomings of colonial rule and the exclusion of Africans from governance, a notion of cooperation underlay their critiques. By 1920 the educated elite became more critical of the colonial government as nationalist sentiments surfaced in organizations such as National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) and the Rate Payers' Association.¹⁹ Between 1900 and 1920, colonial officials and African elites both affirmed their control over Gold Coast life and politics, and everyday practices served to uphold or to challenge their competing claims to authority in the colony.

Historiography and Methodology

Scholars of colonial history are increasingly interested in tracing how power was constituted through everyday material goods and self-representations, such as dress, cuisine, drink, and imported goods.²⁰ Scholars who have analysed the resurgence of

Social History of Ghana, 1850-1928 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). In this work David Kimble examines the growing nationalist sentiments and activities of the Gold Coast educated elite.

¹⁹ Michael R. Doortmont, "Producing a Received View of Gold Coast Society? C.F. Hutchinson's Pen Pictures of Modern Africans and African Celebrities," *History in Africa*, 53 (2006): 484. David Killingray relates in his analysis of the affects of the WWI in the Gold Coast that one the main contentions of the NCBWA was for more educated Africans included in politics and for Africans to have control over the economy. Killingray highlights how after the war economic and political grievances were heightened as Africans felt the colonial government was exploiting them further through such organizations as the Economic Resources Development Committee which involved using the resources of the Gold Coast to help develop the metropole, particularly its recovery from the war. David Killingray, "Repercussions of World War I in the Gold Coast," *Journal of African History*, 19, no.1 (1978): 56-57.

²⁰ For various works on how dress figured in everyday contestations and self-representations under colonial regimes see Jean Allman ed., *Fashioning Africa: Power and Politics of Dress* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2004). For cuisine see, Jonathan Robins, "Colonial Cuisine: Food in British Nigeria," *Cultural Studies* ↔ *Critical Methodologies*, 10, 6 (2010): 451-466; Deborah Neill, discusses

cultural nationalism in postcolonial states have also touched on the significance of everyday practices as a point of political contention.²¹ These studies help us to understand how these colonial or postcolonial African societies responded to political authority and changing norms. Although the study of everyday life has long been the domain of anthropologists, many historians are taking up this theme in order to trace the ordinary experiences of subjected peoples such as workers and women.²² Although Andreas Eckert and Adam Jones warn that an analysis of the everyday should not exclude the elites, as is often done, and in consideration of this, the following study focuses on the emerging Gold Coast elites.²³ With a focus on the Gold Coast elite primarily in urban settings, this study demonstrates how the everyday figured importantly as a site of contestation not only for the subaltern populations, but also for elites. Using colonial reports and diaries, missionary reports and local newspapers, this thesis aims to reveal how the Gold Coast's emerging elites practiced, narrativized, and otherwise influenced everyday experiences and habits as a way to claim greater authority and bolster their position in the colony. Going beyond a single practice or daily

food more generally in, "Finding the "Ideal Diet": Nutrition, Culture, and Dietary Practices in France and French Equatorial Africa, c. 1890s to 1920s," *Food and Foodways* 17, no. 1 (2009): 1-28; For an analysis of alcohol consumption with a specific focus on the Gold Coast see Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times*, 1800, (Portland: Heinemann, 1996); Timothy Burke analyzes the significance of imported goods, *Lifebuoy men, lux women : commodification, consumption, and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe* (Durham : Duke University Press, 1996).

²¹ See Andrew Ivaska *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), also see Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Cultural Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times*, (Portland: Heinemann, 1996).

²² Andreas Eckert and Adam Jones, "Introduction: Historical Writing About Everyday Life," *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 15, no.1, *Everyday Life in Colonial Africa*, (2002): 1-2. James C. Scott's work is an important source regarding the variety of everyday forms of resistance that can be exercised by subjected peoples, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). For further theoretical issues surrounding the study of the everyday see Alf Lüdtke, *History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

²³ Ibid, 12.

commodity in a particular setting, this thesis demonstrates the plethora of activities and opportunities of the everyday that figured in constructions of modernity and bids for power.

Educated African elites were instrumental figures who vocalised their demands for power and inclusion during this period, while also appropriating and questioning European claims to modernity. While many Gold Coast inhabitants challenged colonial controls over everyday habits in some form, most often through noncompliance or avoidance, the educated elite attempted to appropriate colonial constructions of modernity while also protesting the exclusion of Africans from colonial governance. Reading through Gold Coast newspapers produced in the early twentieth century, it becomes evident that educated Africans were concerned with the control of everyday habits. Sanitation, personhood, and food were the prevailing concerns for Gold Coast residents who wrote to the newspapers to protest, discuss, or shape everyday habits associated with these activities. Habits connected to sanitation and sanitation policies, youthful practices associated with personhood, and food consumption and production, are the most prominent topics of the everyday experience found in Gold Coast newspapers, and as such, are the focus of this thesis.

Lacking political representation, the educated elite voiced their opinions on political, social, and economic matters in Gold Coast newspapers, the editors of which trumpeted them as the voice of the people and agents of representation.²⁴ Much of my research relied on Gold Coast newspapers that Africans produced locally, namely *The*

²⁴ Newell, Stephanie Newell, "Articulating Empire: Newspaper Readership in Colonial West Africa," *New Formations* 73, (2011): 33.

Gold Coast Leader (GCL) and *The Gold Coast Nation* (GCN). These newspapers were founded by elite individuals in Gold Coast society. The *Gold Coast Leader* was founded in 1902 by the lawyer J. E. Casely Hayford, and who was known to harbour nationalist sentiments.²⁵ It was published weekly in Cape Coast until 1922.²⁶ *The Gold Coast Nation* was founded in 1912 in Cape Coast, and continued publishing until 1920.²⁷ *The Gold Coast Nation* was associated with the political organization called the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society,²⁸ which materialised in opposition to the 1897 Lands Bill, promoted community solidarity, organized against unfavourable colonial policies and focused specifically on policies affecting land claims and rights.²⁹ Scholars have described the *Gold Coast Nation* as less antagonistic towards the colonial administration since it favoured constructive political cooperation; nevertheless, it remained critical of colonial policies and practices.³⁰

The newspapers in the Gold Coast were not just to relay news of recent events, but also served as an open forum for peoples' opinions,³¹ which provides researchers access to the observations of educated Africans. Stephanie Newell suggests that the relatively small pool of literate Africans and the colonial administration's monitoring of newspaper activity explain the prevalent use of pseudonyms in Gold Coast

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *World Newspaper Archive*, "African Newspapers, 1800-1922," *Readex*, http://infoweb.newsbank.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/iw-search/we/HistArchive?p_product=WHNPX&p_action=publications&p_theme=ahnp&p_nbid=B71M5A MSMTQwNjczMzEyMC41MTI2ODA6MT0xMjoxMzcuMTIyLjguNzZM&p_clear_search=yes&d_refprod=WHNPX&s_category=none&d_collections=WHNPAFRI.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, " 'Untold Difficulties': The Indigenous Press and the Economic Effects of the First World War on Africans in The Gold Coast, 1914-1918," *African Economic History*, no.34 (2006): 50-51.

²⁹ Kimble, *A Political History*, 330.

³⁰ Akurang-Parry, " 'Untold Difficulties'," 50-51.

³¹ Stephanie Newell, "Something to Hide? Anonymity and Pseudonyms in the Colonial West African Press," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 45, no.1 (2010): 9.

newspapers.³² Although most contributors remained anonymous, the opinion pieces are still revealing of African voices and experiences in Gold Coast at the time.

Newspapers assured potential contributors that they did not alter the content of submissions, which they welcomed on a variety of topics. The newspapers relied on reader participation, however, *The Gold Coast Nation*, more discerning than its contemporaries, only printed submissions that were well written, whereas *The Gold Coast Leader* was more flexible and thus allowed some of the less educated to contribute.³³ Besides reports of daily events in the Gold Coast, the newspapers published excerpts of articles from other newspapers in West Africa or England, as well as various colonial policies and reports, perhaps as a way of “culling” opinion from its contributors and readers.³⁴ It is difficult to accurately assess the number of readers, and as editors often asserted, the number of newspapers purchased was not reflective of the number of people who accessed the content of newspapers.³⁵ Editors asked readers not to share their copies of newspapers in order to increase the number of copies sold. Yet reading groups often shared the content of newspapers, and literate friend or family members read newspapers aloud to others.³⁶ Gold Coast newspapers are a valuable entry point to understanding the everyday concerns and opinions of Gold Coast residents who struggled to assert their “rightful place” in Gold Coast society.

³² Newell, “Something to Hide?” 13.

³³ Newell, “Articulating Empire,” 31-35.

³⁴ Ibid, 34-36.

³⁵ Audrey Sitsofe Gdzekpo, “Women’s Engagement With Gold Coast Print Culture from 1857-1957,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Birmingham, 2001), 85-91, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/301605166?accountid=14701>. Misty Bastian also discusses the prominence of newspaper lending in Nigeria, where there existed an expectation by the community for wealthier people to buy newspapers and lend them to others who in turn also passed the material onwards. She also mentions how non-literate people gathered in the marketplace to have the news read to them. Misty Bastian, *Modernity and its Malcontent: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 131-133.

³⁶ Audrey Sitsofe Gdzekpo, “Gold Coast Print Culture,” 85-91.

Organization of the Thesis

In chapter one, the colonial administration's control and monitoring of everyday domestic space and the body surfaces as an issue of contention between colonizers and the colonized over the control of everyday habits. The colonial administration sought to extend and naturalize British hegemony in the Gold Coast by physically demarcating differences between African and European homes through segregation and the monitoring of household activities. Race based scientific explanations and concerns for the spread of disease provided the "modern" justification and "knowledge" needed for the colonial administration to exercise its control over the placement of African homes and the regulation of practices therein, such as water-storage and garbage disposal. Colonial reports on medical and sanitary conditions in the Gold Coast provided insight on the colonial administration's anxieties about European health and the permeability of racial boundaries. Ann Laura Stoler explains how the colonial archive reveals that "...otherwise innocuous practices became iconic indices of a colonial world perceived at risk..."³⁷ For the colonial administration, the household was an important space within which to delineate cultural and racial differences while reminding colonial subjects of British power over their daily lives. Local Africans refuted the administration's sanitation policy as unfair and racist. Using local newspapers, the educated elite exposed colonial sanitation policies that favoured Europeans and discussed the inability of the colonial government to properly ensure the health of Gold Coasters.

³⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, "The Pulse of the Archive," *Ab Imperio*, 3 (2007): 234.

Chapter two examines how competing groups worked to define proper practices of personhood for the educated youth viewed as the future of a modern Gold Coast. As the youth enacted their own conceptions of autonomous personhood through daily practices of work, wealth, marriage and leisure, various elders and authorities sought to entrench their authority as leaders in the Gold Coast by portraying the youth as disobedient and rebellious. Colonial administrators, missionaries, and African elders competed to impose their respective visions of personhood and propriety upon the youth; yet these elders shared a belief that the youth required a supervised transition to personhood, which turned on the construction of “proper” everyday habits. This chapter draws on colonial reports and local newspapers, as well as missionary reports from the Wesleyan Methodist Society (WMS) and the Basel Mission Society (BMS) to show how various groups of elders sought to enforce everyday habits among youths and to what end. Newspaper reports on youth activities, as well as a collection youth’s writings in support of the Red Cross, provide insight on youths’ efforts to manage their own transition to personhood. Everyday habits bound up with the construction of personhood in the Gold Coast caused intergenerational conflict and became a means for elders to assert their moral authority today, in an attempt to try to secure their political and social authority in tomorrow’s Gold Coast.

Chapter three situates food, a central source of sustenance for all colonial inhabitants, in the everyday practices of early colonial Gold Coast. It shows how the educated African elite publicly performed the consumption of food and wrote about the production, importation, access, and quality of food in order to represent themselves as part of a progressive upper class elite in touch with local concerns. The educated elite

used their discussions of food to expose the inadequacies of a colonial government that excluded those who claimed to be most knowledgeable about habits of consumption and production of food in the Gold Coast.

Through everyday habits, authorities and colonial subjects alike proclaimed their place in colonial society and their knowledge of the colony's social realities. Through everyday habits, discussions about them, and efforts to control them, they also defined modernity – and their preferred ways of being modern. Although colonized subjects' efforts to thwart colonial control of everyday practices did not engender immediate political changes in the Gold Coast, everyday habits proved useful to positioning one's place in society. Debates regarding the management of everyday practices in the Gold Coast circulated around distinctions of race, culture, knowledge and modernity. As Pierre Bourdieu argues, such distinctions are portrayed as natural and objective when in fact they are coloured by motivations to secure authority and influence.³⁸

³⁸ Bourdieu, 10.

CHAPTER 1

THE SCOURGE OF SANITATION: SEGREGATION AND INSPECTIONS IN THE GOLD COAST, 1900-1920S

In 1901, Captain David Houston wrote to the Colonial Office refusing a posting in Asante and expressing his preference for a placement along the littoral of the Gold Coast. He listed his reasons for preferring a coastal town, including: sanitation and access to European goods.¹ His remarks not only reflect how the coastal towns were the commercial centers of the colony, but also how Europeans associated sanitation and access to European lifestyles with these coastal urban centers. By the turn of the twentieth century, the coast was well established as the economic hub of the colony and issues of sanitation had gained the attention of the British government and colonial administration. The British government addressed sanitation in the Gold Coast in the late nineteenth century due to negative reports issuing from the colony and circulating in England, and also because of the high death rates among officials.² British administrators implemented sanitation policies in the coastal towns, since the presence of colonial officials and merchants was most pronounced in these areas. By the early twentieth century the colonial elite viewed the educated African elite in the coastal region as petulant and problematic to colonial designs on power and influence, and as a

¹ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office, *Confidential Print, 1834-1966*, Nos. 647 to 654, 1897 June 8 - 1905 March 16, Captain David-Houston to Colonial Office, February 9 1901, 26-27. <http://www.archivesdirect.amdigital.co.uk.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/Contents/DocumentDetails.aspx?documentid=1431293&prevPos=1431293&previous=0&searchrequest=doc&pi=1>.

² Thomas S. Gale, "The Struggle Against Disease in the Gold Coast: Early Attempts At Sanitary Reform," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 16, no.2 (1995): 187.

result these educated Africans experienced exclusion from high-ranking positions in the colony.³ As sanitation policies became more preeminent in the Gold Coast during the early twentieth century, they were fraught with tension. Both the colonial elite and the African elite competed for control of sanitation policies and expressed distinctly differing ideas about their management and implementation.

At this same time, the Gold Coast was also urbanizing rapidly and undergoing economic changes as a result of the growth of palm oil, cocoa farming, and the mining industry.⁴ Unlike other British West African colonies in the early twentieth century, the Gold Coast had several large urban centers that became vibrant centers of contact between colonizers and colonized and which further complicated sanitation efforts.⁵ These urban settings became primary sites of competition between colonizers and colonized over their respective conceptions of space and culture.⁶ Sanitation became a prominent feature of contests over control of space and everyday habits practiced in the Gold Coast. Towns that had a long history as economic and urban centers, such as Cape Coast and Accra, as well as new towns, such as Sekondi, that materialised with the cocoa boom and mining activities of the early twentieth century, were integral to the colonial economy and had the largest populations.⁷ These areas became the main targets

³ Terence J. Johnson, "Protest: Tradition and Change: An Analysis of Southern Gold Coast Riots 1890-1920," *Economy & Society* 1, 2 (1972): 172-173.

⁴ See David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Africa's Urban Past* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999), 5. In this work they highlight how historical studies of urbanization in Africa have determined that urban centers pre-existed colonialism, particularly in the case of West Africa, and while there was an experienced decline in the size of African towns in many parts of Africa by the nineteenth century, West Africa had sizable urban centers.

⁵ Gale, 187-188

⁶ On this point, see Lynn Schler, "Ambiguous Spaces: the Struggle over African Identities and Urban Communities in Colonial Douala, 1914-45," *The Journal of African History*, 44, no.1 (2003): 51-72.

⁷ Emmanuel Akyeampong, "'Wo pe tam won pe ba' ('You like cloth but you don't want children') Urbanization, Individualism and gender Relations in Colonial Ghana c. 1900-39," in *Africa's Urban Past*, eds. David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999), 223-224.

of colonial sanitation and sites for competition over the control of urban and domestic space.

Unlike the interior where a new and more indirect administration was being implemented, the coastal towns experienced a consolidation of British power and indirect rule during the early twentieth century that emphasized social and cultural control over military control. The Gold Coast was not a settler colony with a significant European presence,⁸ and as such the cultivation of social and cultural norms served as devices to secure British power in the colony.⁹

Scholars have explored the ways the British tried to control sanitation in order to uphold their authority and underscore racial differences, while relying on medical practice and theories as its rationale.¹⁰ Building upon these ideas and taking them further into the domestic sphere, this chapter argues that through the physical and discursive constructions of difference that accompanied sanitation policies in early twentieth century Gold Coast towns, British administrators attempted to regulate domestic space as a way of extending and naturalizing British hegemony. Gold Coast sanitation policies kept rigid colonial inequalities in place by regulating distinctions of difference between

⁸ There were 1,344 Europeans living on the coast in 1906 compared to 383 in Ashanti and 33 in the Northern Territories. *Colonial Reports; Gold Coast Report for 1906, No. 543*, (England, Darling & Son, 1907), http://libsysdigi.library.illinois.edu/ilharvest/Africana/Books2011-05/5530214/5530214_1906/5530214_1906_opt.pdf. For more on population statistics of officials in Africa see, A.H.M. Greene, "The Thin White Line: the Size of British Service in Africa," *African Affairs* 79, no.1, (1980): 25-44.

⁹ For more on colonial constructions cultural distinctions of difference see: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); José Rabasa, *Inventing America: Spanish Historiography and the Formation of Eurocentrism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993); Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

¹⁰ Philip D. Curtin "Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa" *The American Historical Review* 90, no.3 (1985): 594-613; Leo Spitzer, "The Mosquito and Segregation in Sierra Leone," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 2, no.1 (1968): 49-61; Raymond E. Dummett, "The Campaign against Malaria and the Expansion of Scientific Medical and Sanitary Services in British West Africa, 1898-1910," *African Historical Studies* 1, no.2 (1968): 153-197.

European and African residences, and using surveillance to control the everyday habits performed in African households. Furthermore, this chapter shows that Africans did not passively accept the main pillars of colonial sanitation, namely: residential segregation and administrative control of the spatial arrangement of households, food and water storage, and garbage disposal. While educated Africans recognized the need for sanitation, they interrogated British officials' imposition of sanitation, segregation, and the surveillance that was part and parcel of these policies. By exposing the shortcomings of colonial era sanitation policies, whether by raising their pens in protest in local newspapers, by refusing to follow policy, or in a number of other ways, Gold Coast Africans contested British control of domestic space.

Early twentieth century newspapers in the Gold Coast figured prominently in the contest over sanitation initiatives as educated Africans confronted segregation and household inspections with written statements or letters to the editor. These newspapers show how the administration worked to prescribe and uphold certain practices and how local people reacted to colonial sanitation interventions. The educated elite expressed their disfavour or support of colonial policies, including sanitation regulation, in the newspapers. As historian Stephanie Newell aptly notes, the readers were also the producers of material, as newspapers invited submissions and responses from readers: Some contributed frequently.¹¹ However, most contributors remained anonymous according to common practice. Anonymity offered authors and letter-writers some protection from colonial authorities at a time when officials perceived Africans to be subversive to the regime. Still, contributors exercised caution when articulating critiques

¹¹ Stephanie Newell, "Articulating Empire: Newspaper Readership In Colonial Africa," *New Formations* 73 (2011): 27-28.

of the administration.¹² Nevertheless, these newspapers functioned as a means for colonial authorities to access the opinions of educated Africans¹³ and the general population they often wrote about.¹⁴

As ideas about sanitation coalesced into official policy, the British administration assumed complete control of the domestic habits of both Africans and Europeans. Medical research in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century encouraged this focus on the domestic sphere. In 1900, knowledge of the mosquito vector as the cause of tropical illnesses forced a reorganization of existing ideas and knowledge about acclimatization, a theory that had pointed to the pressures of a foreign environment as the cause for European physical and mental illness or mortality in the tropics.¹⁵ Warwick Anderson points out that as acclimatization was reoriented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to accommodate new research based on the mosquito vector, colonized people became associated with these vectors due to racial theories and imperial intentions.¹⁶

In the early twentieth century, the mainstay of sanitation policy in the Gold Coast was the mosquito theory, in keeping with this trend in late nineteenth and twentieth century Western medical science. While members of the medical community acknowledged that social and economic factors contributed to the spread of disease, new

¹² Newell, "Articulating Empire," 30-31.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ For further discussions on the retrieval of African voice and everyday experience of Africans see David William Cohen, Stephen F. Miescher and Luise White eds., *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Misty Bastian " 'The Daughter She Will Eat Agousie in the World of the Spirits' Witchcraft Confessions in Missionised Onitsha, Nigeria," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 72, no.1 (2002): 84-111.

¹⁵ Warwick Anderson, "Immunities of Empire: Race, Disease, and Tropical Medicine, 1900-1920," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 70, no.1 (1996): 94-118.

¹⁶ Warwick Anderson, "Immunities of Empire," 110.

science was focused on locating and eliminating bacteria or parasites as causes.¹⁷ Yet the science was tainted with racial ideas that ensured colonial dominance. The discovery that the mosquito was the purveyor of malaria went hand in hand with a belief that adult Africans were resistant to malaria and that only their children were susceptible to the disease.¹⁸ Other theories contended that mosquitoes naturally preferred African blood and therefore targeted African residences,¹⁹ leading to European notions that African households constituted a health hazard and required regulation. The idea of the “native reservoir,” which portrayed colonized subjects and their residences as the point of origin of diseases rather than the environment, was closely linked to the mosquito vector. These scientific theories encouraged administrators to focus sanitation initiatives on the domestic sphere while at the same time offering an opportunity for colonial domination of the African household.

Gold Coast administrators never applied sanitation initiatives in a uniform manner throughout the colony, but directed them at areas with great economic or administrative importance. In these areas, officials applied the new policies progressively but with growing intensity. In the nineteenth century, the British had assumed sanitation responsibilities only gradually and somewhat reluctantly. For instance, their decision to relocate the British headquarters from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877, rather than attend to the Cape Coast’s sanitation needs is evidence of their reluctance to take on the responsibility and cost of sanitation.²⁰ Even with the relocation

¹⁷ Randall M. Packard, *The Myth of Tropical Disease: A Short History of Malaria* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 2007), 109-117.

¹⁸ Philip D. Curtin, “Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa,” *The American Historical Review* 90, no.3 (1985): 598-599

¹⁹ Ibid, 599.

²⁰ Gale, 188.

of the headquarters to Accra, British illness and mortality rates did not decline and officials soon realised that Accra, as well as other towns along the coast, needed sanitation reforms. This prompted the establishment of a Chief Medical Officer for the Gold Coast and a Medical Officer of Health for Accra in 1884.²¹ Notably, these early sanitation initiatives were also some of the first incursions of the colonial government into controlling urban space and the household. After the appointment of these officers, the British enforced the cleaning of the streets, the control of animals and latrines, and they established cemeteries to prevent burials within the home.²² Accra was their primary focus followed by Sekondi and Cape Coast when it came to implementing sanitation reforms on African households.

This pattern continued into the twentieth century as the British made residential racial segregation the centerpiece of urban planning and focused it on the organization of households, beginning, as in the other British West African colonies, in 1901.²³ The implementation of segregation was inconsistent and depended on the willingness and ability of the Governor of a colony to implement this policy. The construction of exclusive European hill stations began in Sierra Leone in 1904, yet the British administration in Gambia did not institute segregation until 1911.²⁴ While there had been some minor sanitation projects in the Gold Coast and support for segregation, it was only loosely applied there, yet the outbreak of plague in the Gold Coast in 1908, followed by an outbreak of yellow fever in 1910, led to heightened enforcement of

²¹ Gale, 187-192.

²² Ibid, 192. For more on colonial control of city and ritual spaces see, John Parker, "The Cultural Politics of Death and Burial in Early Colonial Accra," in *Africa's Urban Past*, eds. David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone (Portland: Heinemann, 1999), 205-221.

²³ Ambe Njoh, "Colonial Philosophies, Urban Space, and Racial Segregation in British and French Colonial Africa," *Journal of Black Studies* 38, no. 4 (2008): 589.

²⁴ Thomas S. Gale, "Segregation in British West Africa (La ségrégation en Afrique occidentale britannique)" *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 20, no.80 (1980): 597-598.

segregation and household inspections in the Gold Coast and throughout all of British West Africa.²⁵ As per segregation regulation, at least 440 yards was to separate Africans and Europeans, European constructions were to be on heightened ridges, and a barrier zone of a quarter mile was to divide African and European areas.²⁶ Similarly, and soon after, an outbreak of plague in Dakar in 1914 led to a sudden implementation of racial segregation in Senegal.²⁷ For the most part, the French did not officially adopt a policy of racial segregation in their West African colonies. Instead, French policies of assimilation formed a cultural bar requiring Africans to prove their wealth and French cultural level before being admitted into European residential areas.²⁸ Although racial segregation was often difficult to implement, costly, and largely resented by African populations, the medical community and the British government openly supported it as the best preventive measure against malaria for Europeans until the 1920s. Thereafter, segregation began to dissipate as it became too problematic to uphold.²⁹ In the Gold Coast, segregation was focused on the dangers of the household and became a large part of the sanitation policy there. It also served as a way to physically and symbolically communicate the importance of British authority in the domestic sphere, thus becoming a lynchpin of British hegemony.

Household inspections and regulations became another mainstay of colonial

²⁵ Gale, "Segregation," 496.

²⁶ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: *Confidential Print: Africa, 1834-1966*, Africa, Confidential Print: Nos. 1003 to 1010, 1892 - 1915 April 7.; "Medical and Sanitary Reports," Secretary of State to Governor, July 8, 1913, p. 26.

<http://www.archivesdirect.amdigital.co.uk.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/Contents/DocumentDetails.aspx?documentid=1431383&prevPos=1431383&previous=0&searchrequest=doc&pi=1>.

²⁷ Raymond F. Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar, Senegal, 1914," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 41, no.2 (1971):143-152. Also see, Maynard W. Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909," *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387-410.

²⁸ Ambe Njoh, "Colonial Philosophies," 582.

²⁹ Gale, "Segregation," 504.

sanitation that increased in intensity during the twentieth century and acted as an important marker of British hegemony by restructuring everyday practices within domestic space, ostensibly to preserve the health of Europeans. By the twentieth century, colonial officials and medical experts alike found African households and the habits therein to be hazardous to Europeans. Segregation, particularly incomplete segregation, was deemed insufficient to mitigate the health hazards that African residences supposedly posed to the health of white colonial populations. Basing policy on Dr. Ronald Ross's research in Sierra Leone in 1899 and 1900, officials in British West Africa opted to attack mosquito larvae rather than to quininize populations, particularly since adult Africans were believed to be immune or resistant to malaria and their residences were determined to be optimal mosquito breeding places.³⁰ Since the native reservoir theory portrayed the African household as the prime place for mosquito breeding, the administration imposed frequent inspections and regulations on African households. Accordingly, the colonial government of the Gold Coast spent a portion of its scant revenue on sanitation projects designed to preserve the health and longevity of colonial officials, mainly by enforcing segregation policies and strictly monitoring African households. These policies inserted notions of British authority and prestige directly into peoples' homes.

Managing Sanitation

The colonial government's desire to limit the cost and responsibility for sanitation led to the introduction of the Towns Council Ordinance. The Ordinance became the cornerstone for the management of sanitation projects in the Gold Coast. It was first

³⁰ Curtin, "Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa," 597-600.

applied to Accra in 1898, then Sekondi in 1904 followed by Cape Coast in 1906, and extended in other areas throughout the colony in the twentieth century. The Ordinance targeted the three coastal towns due to their administrative and economic importance, as well as the large number of Europeans that resided there. The mining districts of Obuasi and Tarkwa were also significant areas, yet these were exempt from the Ordinance and sanitation was instead the responsibility of the mining companies there.³¹ These administrative approaches to sanitation were considered necessary for the administration to offset the rising costs related to sanitation projects, with the Towns Council Ordinance also acting as an attempt to quiet calls for political representation and participation emanating from the educated African elite.

The educated elite had pushed for municipal government in the late nineteenth century, hoping that it would bring heightened sanitation, participation, and representation; yet the Towns Council Ordinance only ensured that the colonial Public Works Department or Sanitary Committee no longer oversaw the funding of sanitation. Instead, this task was passed on to the municipalities.³² Many Africans recognized that this Ordinance empowered the British administration to an unprecedented degree and protested the extension of the Towns Council Ordinance to Sekondi and Cape Coast. People complained about the unrepresentative nature of municipal councils that were made up of nominees rather than elected officials, and dominated by Europeans with the District Commissioner as council president. The Gold Coast African elite commented

³¹ Raymond E. Dummett, "Disease and Mortality Among Gold Miners of Ghana: Colonial Government and Mining Company Attitudes and Policies, 1900-1938," *Social Sciences and Medicine* 37, no.2 (1993): 213-232.

³² Roger S. Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule* (New York: University Press of America, 1999), 135-136.

that the Ordinance would deprive chiefs of all powers, leaving the British to retain ultimate control.³³

The Towns Council Ordinance was problematic, as it failed to consider African concerns and opinions regarding the management and implementation of sanitation, while ensuring Africans inherited the responsibility of paying for sanitation projects. Both the educated African elite and the chiefs agreed that sanitation was a problem in coastal towns, but viewed the Towns Council Ordinance as an ineffective and unfair body for the management of sanitation due to its economic exploitation of Africans for sanitation projects that primarily benefitted Europeans while also neglecting to properly provide for political representation and participation. They openly sent petitions and deputations to the Legislative Council and the colonial government arguing against the Ordinance's implementation in these towns. They stated that the experience of the Towns Council Ordinance in Accra had led to the loss of homes among Africans due to over taxation. They also complained of the lack of representation in council and the mismanagement of funds for badly needed sanitation projects in areas where Africans lived.³⁴ When these protests failed, the women in Cape Coast reportedly hooted at Governor Rodger and his wife as they left for Accra, and the British moved to intimidate the population and, to mitigate further protests, they mobilized the army along the coast.³⁵

Meanwhile, the British battled against chiefs who called for a return to the system of using asafos, which were organized companies of men used before

³³ World Newspaper Archive, *Gold Coast Leader*, August 26 1905, p. 2-3, <http://www.crl.edu/collaborative-digitization/world-newspaper-archive/african-newspapers>.

³⁴ *Gold Coast Leader*, March 25 1905, 1-2.

³⁵ *Gold Coast Leader* Sept 16 1905, 4.

colonization and whose obligations were to protect the city and perform community work including sanitation. The British argued that the towns were too “detribalized”³⁶ for the old system to work. For good measure they added that the old system likely used slave labour and was therefore unprogressive, unlike the newly designed municipal order.³⁷ Evidently unconcerned with African opinion, the colonial government proceeded with the Towns Council Ordinances which gave control of sanitation to European elites while reducing its burden of cost.

The Town Councils had difficulty managing the various areas under their jurisdiction, and the taxes they accrued filled the colony’s coffers. Although the British government determined the allocation of funds for sanitation projects, the responsibility for their execution fell to the Town Councils.³⁸ British administrators designed sanitation policies with the protection of British colonials in mind, and, unsurprisingly, much of the money went to implementing segregation and the monitoring of African homes.

Segregation to resolve issues of disorder and contagion

The administration’s use of segregation to spatially demarcate the European household as a safe site compared to the African household attempted to reinforce colonial claims to cultural superiority. The administration argued that segregation would result in better European health and cut spending on officials’ sick leaves, thereby freeing up funds for

³⁶ This notion was based on the idea that traditionally systems that were based on lineage or systems of origin could not work since there were too many people who were not native to the area. For more on these tensions see, Roger S. Gocking, “Indirect Rule in the Gold Coast: Competition for Office and the Invention of Tradition,” *Canadian Journal of Africa Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 28, no.2 (1994): 421-446; David Kimble, *The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

³⁷ *Gold Coast Leader*, “Governor’s Reply,” March 25 1905, 3.

³⁸ *Gold Coast Leader*, October 12 1907, 4.

improvements to colonial governance and infrastructure.³⁹ The purpose of segregation was to distance Europeans from the disorder of the African household. As Mary Douglas shows in her analysis of social concepts of uncleanness, purity, and pollution, ideas about dirt and contagion often emanate from concerns about challenges to social order and the desire to control and categorize social relationships.⁴⁰ This intent, whether conscious or not, surfaces in early reports of interactions between the British and Africans, and was not confined to the coastal regions. In the Northern Territories, before the official annexation of this area as a protectorate, a report on sanitary conditions sent by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry P. Northcott refers to the improvements to sanitation in the area following the arrival of the British and states that: "...the abolition of the pestilential smells natural to towns under the native regime is an improvement that cannot fail to be appreciated by Europeans resident in their vicinity."⁴¹ The adoption of residential segregation as a means of distancing Europeans from the supposed contagion of African households was an attempt to assuage anxieties of potential breaches of colonial social order.

The portrayal of the African landscape as pathological and in need of order and sanitation extended to include African use and management of space. Jean and John L. Comaroff have written that nineteenth century British reformers in Britain equated social disorder with disease, that the social deviant's use of space was deemed wasteful and was considered to be filthy, and that these ideas were transferred to South Africa,

³⁹ Dummett, "Campaign Against Malaria," 170.

⁴⁰ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York; Praeger Publishers, 1970), 2-5

⁴¹ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print :Africa 1834-1966*, Nos. 580 to 588 , 1897-1901, "Gold Coast and Northern Territories, Further Correspondence," 184.

whereby Africans were cast as social deviants requiring reform.⁴² This is evident in early perceptions of African coastal towns in the Gold Coast, which presented African habits and households as the cause of disorder and filth. J.D. McCarthy, the first Chief Medical Officer in the Gold Coast, described his arrival in Accra in 1882 as an encounter with putrid smells resulting from the congestion of pigs in the streets accompanied by animal and human waste. He cited the control of pigs and the habit of burying the dead within the household as urgent matters requiring attention from colonial authorities.⁴³ Equating the African household with required colonial regulation survived into the twentieth century. In a dispatch sent to the Secretary of State in 1909, Governor Rodger appended a report of inspection of Sekondi-Essikado, which argued that further segregation required, particularly as many unauthorized African houses were built: “without consideration having been given to the need of providing adequate space for the construction of kitchens and outhouses, and this evil has been accentuated by the subsequent addition of numerous unauthorized and insanitary sheds and lean-to buildings.”⁴⁴ Accordingly, the reorganization and sanitization of towns involved the redesigning of African households based on European precepts in order to press notions of British cultural dominance.

Officials were important figures for communicating difference and British superiority, and as such their compliance with segregation policies was especially

⁴² Jean and John L. Comaroff, “Home-Made Hegemony: Modernity, Domesticity, and Colonialism,” in *African Encounters With Domesticity*, Karen Transberg Hansen ed., (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 53-54.

⁴³ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print, Africa 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 453, 454, 456 and 458 to 460, 1893-1894 “Dispatch from Governor Sir W Brandford Griffith Forwarding A Memorial From Merchants, Agents, and Traders of the Gold Coast Colony With His Observations and Secretary of State’s Reply,” 70-71

⁴⁴ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print*, Nos. 932 to 933, 935 to 936 and 938 to 940, 1909-1910; “Medical and Sanitary Matters,” December 11, 1910, 99-101.

important. Officials received specific instructions to uphold colonial distinctions of difference which segregation signified. While recognizing that contact with Africans was necessary, the colonial administration persistently advised avoidance of the African household, especially for officials on tours of inspection that often required interacting with Africans in their homes. The African household was considered the likely cause for officials who became sick after a tour of the districts, since they were known to rest in African residences during their travels. Medical authorities fed widely held beliefs that African households posed a danger to the health of Europeans. A medical officer identified an African's household as the cause of an official's taking ill and returning to England in 1907. The medical conclusion prompted the Colonial Secretary's Office to issue a letter to the Governor of the Gold Coast, urging him to instruct officials on tour to avoid African households as places of rest, and to seek out European dwellings instead. If this was not possible then the official was to procure a tent and sleep outside at a distance from African residences, preferably on a hill.⁴⁵ These instructions highlight the importance colonial administrators placed on distinctions of difference in the private sphere and their fear that colonial officials might subvert the colonial order.⁴⁶

After the outbreaks of 1908 and 1910, the administration took the opportunity to reassert ideas about the dangers of the African households and the importance of

⁴⁵ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print: Africa, 1834-1966*. Nos. 932 to 933, 935 to 936 and 938 to 940, 1909-1910, 1907, "Medical and Sanitary Matters," Enclosure 10, No. 191, 262-263.

⁴⁶ While inter-racial sex is not explicitly stated in the colonial records in connection with medical concerns, Ann Stoler and Carina Ray have discussed how the policing of sexual relations was part of colonial anxieties and aims to control the domestic sphere and uphold racial and cultural distinctions of difference, yet this discussion is outside the scope of this chapter. See, Ann Stoler "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20-th Century Colonial Cultures," *American Ethnologist*, 16, no.4 (1989): 634-660 and Carina E. Ray, "'The White Wife Problem': Sex, Race and the Contested Politics of Repatriation to Interwar British West Africa," *Gender & History*, 21, no. 3 (2009):628-646.

residential segregation. The Secretary of State for the colonies sent instructions to the Governor of the Gold Coast to plan the construction of more segregated residences for officials as well as segregated rest houses for touring officials.⁴⁷ This pressed the urgency for officials, the primary representatives of colonial difference, to be segregated. However, Governor High Clifford reminded the colonial administration that complete segregation could not be practiced due to the fact that colonial officials were highly dependent on their domestic servants. As a result regulations were passed to separate servants' quarters from European residences and to prohibit African children from entering the premises of European residences.⁴⁸ The regulation of servants' quarters tacitly acknowledged the flaws in colonial segregation policies as it was understood that the European quarter could not have a complete absence of Africans in the segregated area due to the perceived need for servants. Nevertheless, the strict regulations emphasized the dangerous and disorderly nature of African households and the need to sustain racial distinctions of difference.

In the post-plague atmosphere of the Gold Coast, the administration expanded residential segregation to include all Europeans rather than just officials. There had been consistent calls from officials for increased segregation before the epidemics struck,⁴⁹ yet the outbreak of plague and yellow fever provided the administration with the impetus to force compliance. However, the attempt to extend residential segregation to include Europeans who were not colonial officials detracted from rationalizations that

⁴⁷ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print: Africa, 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 1003 to 1010, 1892 - 1915 April 7 ; "Medical and Sanitary Reports," Secretary of State to the Governor, July 8, 1913, 25-27.

⁴⁸ *Gold Coast Nation*, March 18 1915, 871.

⁴⁹ *The Colonial Report for the Gold Coast, 1903, No. 426*, London: Darling & Sons, 1904, p. 35.
http://libsysdigi.library.illinois.edu/ilharvest/Africana/Books2011-05/5530214/5530214_1903/5530214_1906_opt.pdf.

segregation was specifically directed at preserving the health of officials. Instead, the application of residential segregation policies among previously non-compliant Europeans was an effort to underscore cultural differences in the domestic sphere. Meanwhile the non-compliance to segregation policies among segments of the European population who were not officials exposed cracks in British hegemonic control, and thus efforts to compel these non-officials to conform to segregation was an attempt to push the image of British hegemony.

Instead of leading to a reconsideration and redirection of sanitation efforts, the medical community's response to the outbreak of plague and yellow fever encouraged the administration's stricter reinforcement of residential segregation. The denial of the building permit for the construction of the Wesleyan Girls' Boarding School is a case in point. The Senior Sanitary Officer refused to allow the construction of the school not only because resident European missionaries planned to house African girls there, but also because of the missionaries' intent to build within the segregation area for Europeans.⁵⁰ Faced with the permit denial, Reverend W.R. Griffin argued that cohabitation was necessary for missionization, and pointed to the colonial government's increasing disruption of missionary work by imposing segregation.⁵¹ The case of the Wesleyan school for girls exemplifies the hardening of compulsory segregation rules.

Imposing segregation beyond the ranks of colonial administration proved to be problematic and the administration was unable to make all Europeans practice residential segregation. As Ann Stoler relates in her analysis of the anxieties which

⁵⁰ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print: Africa, 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 1003 to 1010, 1892 – 1915; "Medical and Sanitary Measure," Governor to Secretary of State, July 31, 1913, 75-77.

⁵¹ Ibid, 133-134.

colonial administrations experienced in their attempt to enforce European hegemony, colonial administrations were preoccupied with the activities of Europeans who were not as easily controlled and monitored as officials.⁵² Even Governor Hugh Clifford himself made comments that showed his lack of support for segregation. He remarked that the increased pressure to force compliance with segregation was difficult due to the expenses involved, the planning, and the resulting congestion.⁵³ While efforts to ensure segregation were instituted, Governor Hugh Clifford stated that for the most part many Europeans, including missionaries and merchants, were unwilling to follow the rules. He argued that,

[N]o mining company or trading firm can, I submit, be properly called upon to accommodate its servants in quarters removed to a distance of at least a quarter of a mile from any native dwelling, to abandon buildings upon which money has been spent, and to erect new ones in their place, and, further, to allow the interests of their shareholders to be jeopardised, in order to secure to their employees a partial and necessarily defective measure of immunity from a particular class of disease.⁵⁴

Such remarks serve as an example of the fractures that existed among the European population over segregation initiatives. By juxtaposing the dangers of African households with the safety and cleanliness of the European households, segregation as colonial policy served to demonstrate British control and authority. Europeans' resistance to moving to segregated areas was clearly perceived as subverting the boundaries of social, racial and cultural difference that colonial policies upheld. Furthermore, Europeans' dismissal of segregation policy as unimportant revealed that

⁵² Ann Stoler, "Pulse of the Archive," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2007): 250.

⁵³ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print :Africa 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 1003 to 1010, 1892 – 1915; "Medical and Sanitary Matters," Secretary of State to the Governor, July 8, 1913, 25-28.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

not all white populations uniformly accepted or believed that segregation made sense scientifically, medically, administratively, or economically. However, colonial officials relied on segregation to uphold racial difference in the colonial setting, much as they relied on the control and surveillance of African households.

Building differences in the household

Through sanitation policies, the British imposed reconstructions of the African household and thus established their dominance of the domestic sphere. The British instituted colonial construction projects in order to rectify the apparent “disorder” of African households and to further impose residential segregation. In 1901 Governor Nathan launched a sanitation program that involved the destruction of many African houses in order to create a “segregated area” for Europeans.⁵⁵ The colonial government cited the infectious diseases outbreaks in 1908 and 1910 to justify its further control of African households and the enforcement of residential segregation. The event of plague in 1908 allowed for the passing of The Infectious Diseases Ordinance, which authorized a medical officer to force inhabitants of a household into quarantine, force disinfections, and force the destruction of a dwelling.⁵⁶ Both epidemics prompted the destruction of African residences and the subsequent relocation of the inhabitants. Colonial authorities then compelled Africans to reconstruct residences according to colonial designs and on prescribed sites, which often facilitated segregation initiatives. The colonial administration denied building permits to Africans who wanted to rebuild on the site of

⁵⁵ Raymond E. Dummett, “The Campaign against Malaria and the Expansion of Scientific Medical and Sanitary Services in British West Africa, 1898-1910,” *African Historical Studies* 1, no. 2 (1968): 170.

⁵⁶ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print: Africa, 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 899 and 901 to 908, 1907 November 2 - 1909 January 29 “Outbreak of Bubonic Plague on the Gold Coast, correspondence,” 80-83.

their former residences.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the administration instituted building regulations based on a European concept of housing that denigrated African conceptions of domestic space. In 1910, colonial authorities disallowed the former system of compound living⁵⁸ and stipulated that reconstructed households had to have a main living area, with separate buildings for the kitchen, latrine, and bathroom.⁵⁹ Using sanitation as rationale, the new policy enforced a colonial vision of household space while implicitly denying the cultural legitimacy of African construction.⁶⁰ While these actions were undertaken in the name of sanitation, these projects covertly aided the colonial government's residential segregation initiatives, and were part of the construction of British hegemony through control of the African household.

Segregation is not sanitation: opposition to segregation

The British had cast segregation initiatives, whether covertly or overtly, as a matter of sanitation. Through sanitation policies, colonial officials discursively and physically dismissed African spatial organization, demarcated the African household as disorderly and unsafe, and brought the construction and placement of houses under British control. However, elite Africans recognized colonial plans to dominate the African household and refuted segregation as a sanitation initiative. In the pages of African newspapers in

⁵⁷ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print :Africa, 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 976 to 984, 1907 November 30 - 1913 August 26 : "Medical and Sanitary Matters," Governor to the Secretary of State, December 14 1911, p. 5-7.

⁵⁸ Compound living arrangements included several buildings as main living areas. For more on compound living ad its cultural significance see, Pamela Feldman Savelsberg, "Cooking Inside: Kinship and gender in Bangangté idioms of marriage and procreation," *American Ethnologist* 22, no.3: (1995) 483-501.

⁵⁹ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print :Africa, 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 932 to 933, 935 to 936 and 938 to 940 , 1909-1910, p. 385.

⁶⁰ For more on the connection between how place and buildings play an important role in contests over cultural and social dominance see: Dominique Malaquais, "Building in the Name of Gold: Architecture, resistance, and the Christian Faith in the Bamileke Highlands of Western Cameroon," *African Studies Review* 42, no.1 (1999): 49-78; Sara Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

Gold Coast towns, the African elite criticized British control over domestic space, as the British dictated the destruction of African households and conceived reconstruction plans that conveyed British cultural authority. The educated African elite sent a petition that argued against using The Infectious Disease Ordinance to justify the wanton destruction of African homes and the subsequent relocation of Africans.⁶¹ The African elite refuted the British argument that the destruction of African homes was based on sanitation measures and concerns for the spread of disease. They attempted to expose British aims to exert control over the African household. Africans wrote that even those houses that were well built and ventilated were destroyed, and that the temporary relocation huts for Africans were placed among the swamps, which were high-risk areas for malaria.⁶² Frustration over British relocation projects also incited criticism for British reconstruction efforts that disinvested Africans of the agency to rebuild using African spatial designs and materials. The head chief of the Gas argued against these limitations placed on the people and their households. He argued against the denial of permits for rebuilding on the former site of their residences, and also insisted that colonial compensation was insufficient for the reconstruction of houses according to colonial designs.⁶³ African elites recognized that colonial formulations of the household were not only central to implementing segregation and colonial designs, but was also part of a discourse that delegitimized the African constructions of the domestic sphere to support European claims to knowledge and dominance.

⁶¹ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print :Africa, 1834-1966, Confidential Print: Nos. 932 to 933, 935 to 936 and 938 to 940*, 1909-1910, Governor to Secretary of State, December 14, 1911, p. 5-6.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

Similarly, the African elites unmasked segregation initiatives as part of a colonial sanitation discourse that benefitted Europeans rather than Africans and portrayed the former as superior. In 1904, African letter writers from Sekondi complained that sanitation improvements targeted the European area while the African residential quarter was merely the location of overfilled dustbins.⁶⁴ Local newspapers had a long running commentary showing how colonial sanitation projects primarily benefitted Europeans. Africans recognized the unequal application of sanitation improvements almost as soon as the administration began to apply these policies as revealed in an early issue of the *Gold Coast Leader*. In 1902, a correspondent complained of the poor sanitary conditions of Cape Coast and suggested that the increased presence of Europeans should warrant enough concern from the colonial government to motivate an official clean-up.⁶⁵ Evidently, the African elite recognized the need for sanitation improvements in the towns and the one sided nature of colonial sanitation policies.

Gold Coast Africans understood that European health, rather than clean and orderly conditions for all, was the main concern of those implementing sanitation and segregation policies, and that accordingly, little money remained for the care of African health and residential quarters. As the years went by, Africans wrote more openly about the unequal domestic arrangements the colonial government devised for Europeans and Africans at Africans' expense. In 1915, an article describing the extent of segregation in Sierre Leone was printed in the *Gold Coast Nation* to bolster opinion against segregation as a sanitation initiative in the Gold Coast, in this article it stated that the colonial official "... is sure of a well built, well arranged bungalow, erected on the best

⁶⁴ *Gold Coast Leader*, April 24 1904, 2.

⁶⁵ *Gold Coast Leader*, June 28 1902, 1.

possible site, at the native's expense; and at the maximum of cost. He is sure of having none but white neighbours."⁶⁶ Even as late as the 1920s, contributors to the *Gold Coast Leader* pointed to how European areas underwent sanitary improvements such as the installation of a sewage system, while similar improvements were not undertaken in African areas.⁶⁷ While, Africans clearly wanted better sanitation in the towns, the continued criticisms of segregation in the pages of Gold Coast newspapers demonstrate that the educated African elite were well aware that the colonial government used segregation as a sanitation scheme to dominate public and private spheres in the colonial setting.

Household inspections: regulating water, regulating household activities

While segregation marked the African household as a site of danger to be avoided, the British also used household inspections as a corollary of sanitation initiatives in order to regulate and dictate household activities that demarcated distinctions of difference between colonizer and colonized. The issue of access to and storage and disposal of water highlighted social inequalities and colonial intrusions into the everyday lives of Africans. Africans had to cede to frequent household inspections of water storage because, in the minds of colonial officials, standing water provided an ideal mosquito breeding site. K. David Patterson's analysis of health conditions in Accra in the twentieth century states that ponds were the primary sources for water collection for Africans, and only Europeans and a few wealthy Africans possessed metal tanks for

⁶⁶ *Gold Coast Nation*, March 18 1915, 867.

⁶⁷ *Gold Coast Leader*, September, 24 1921, 4-5.

rain-water storage until 1915 when the Accra water supply was constructed.⁶⁸ Patterson also notes that most people had to wait in long lines to use standpipes for the collection of water.⁶⁹ Africans planned for the frequent water shortages in the colony by daily collecting and storing water for household activities.

The administration used household inspections as a means for ensuring conformity to colonial control over practices within the household. While colonial authorities claimed that household inspections curtailed the spread of mosquitoes, water became their point of entry to take control of the African domestic sphere. Women were fined for storing standing water and many Africans received fines and summonses after household inspections. Household inspections and ensuing fines and court summonses added to colonial revenue at the same time that they shored up British authority. The newspapers often reported on the unfairness of the fines that targeted women for the improper storage of water. Writers insisted that a woman could be fined for storing water as well as for dumping water outside.⁷⁰

The contradictions in colonial sanitation policy affected all strata of African society. Dr. Logan Taylor, who was a specialist in tropical medicine and proponent of Dr. Ross' theories on the mosquito and mosquito eradication, toured Cape Coast and Sekondi to assess and help plan Gold Coast sanitation policies.⁷¹ He commented that the inspectors even spoiled the water that wealthy Africans stored in metal rainwater tanks.⁷² His comments show that, through the regulation of water storage, colonial officials

⁶⁸ K.D. Patterson, "Health in Urban Ghana: The Case of Accra 1900-1940," *Social Science & Medicine. Part B: Medical Anthropology* 13, no.4 (1979): 253.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 254.

⁷⁰ See for example *Gold Coast Leader*, August 2 1902, p. 4.

⁷¹ Dummett, 167-168.

⁷² For examples see: *Gold Coast Leader*, January 31 1903; June 20 1903.

controlled the inner-workings of African households, regardless of their economic or social status.

The struggle over water storage in African households revealed the tensions between colonizer and colonized. The subject of contaminated water featured regularly in local newspapers. Africans complained about officials putting carbolic acid or kerosene in water suspected of having mosquito larvae and thus spoiling their water supply, yet the colonial government defended this practice as an important part of the mosquito eradication project.⁷³ Discussions about it revealed a growing distrust of the administration and suspicion of those who conducted the inspections. According to some, there were quotas for fines and inspectors sometimes tampered with water in order to meet their quotas.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the attack on the storage of water in African homes forced compliance with government regulations of the domestic sphere and ignored the criticisms emanating from educated Africans.

For the most part, people seemed to comply with the regulations imposed by the government; however, some deemed compliance to certain rules to be unsanitary and unhealthy, and as a result people adapted their habits in an effort to still meet sanitation requirements. Yet inspectors issued fines even when women buried their garbage which government waste workers did.⁷⁵ It became clear that compliance with colonial policy trumped sanitation in importance. What mattered to Gold Coast colonial officials in the early 20th century was not so much cleanliness, perhaps, as Africans' consistent and unquestioning obedience of colonial authorities who intruded into their daily lives at home.

⁷³ *Gold Coast Leader*, January 31 1903, 4.

⁷⁴ *Gold Coast Leader*, February 23 1912, p.2.

⁷⁵ *Gold Coast Leader*, January 31 1903, p.1; August 2 1902, p.4; February 17, 1912, p. 4.

The problem with household inspections

Gold Coasters critiqued the colonial administration's use of sanitation legislation to sanction colonial surveillance of African households and control of African everyday habits. The Towns Ordinance of 1892 and the Amendment of 1903, which was also published in the *Gold Coast Leader*, listed the extent of rule that officials held over African households during inspections. As per the ordinance, officials could order the removal of material deemed as waste, could provide the preferred times for the disposal of waste, could order the destruction of any animals on the premise that were designated a health hazard, and could issue fines and court summons for non-compliance.⁷⁶ This ordinance legalized colonial interference with African households, transferred power over the African domestic sphere to British administrators and their intermediaries, and limited African agency to resist control of their daily habits. For instance, colonial authorities ordered Africans to use municipal dustbins for kitchen garbage, yet many Africans viewed these dustbins as unsanitary sites since they were often overflowing. Despite these views, most people complied under threat of receiving a fine or a court summons.⁷⁷ Compliant or not, people soon took up their pens to question the purpose and utility of the Ordinance as a sanitation measure. One person wrote to protest the Ordinance's order to store food outside in a box, and stated that storing food outside was

⁷⁶ Ibid, February 4 1905; & War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print :Africa, 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 932 to 933, 935 to 936 and 938 to 940 , 1909-1910, Enclosure 3 in No 71. At a Meeting of the Executive Council, held at Government House, Accra, on Saturday, the 6th day of June, 1908, 102-103

⁷⁷ *Gold Coast Leader*, January 31 1903, October 31 1908, December 12 1908.

more sanitary.⁷⁸ Such remarks found throughout Gold Coast newspapers the broad reach of The Ordinance when it came to shaping and changing peoples' everyday habits.

The experience of plague also revealed the contentious relationship between colonizer and colonized, and the mistrust that many Gold Coasters had for colonial authorities. The prominent medical official Mr. Simpson stated in his investigation as to the causes of plague that when plague struck the Gold Coast Africans kept it secret among themselves and that these, predominantly lower class Africans, deliberately avoided colonial medicine and officials.⁷⁹ As a result, the administration rendered illegal the failure to inform authorities about persons who were ill or suspected of illness within the household or any known household, and keeping such knowledge secret would result in severe fines.⁸⁰ The administration's increasing use of legislation to exert and claim control over the household acted as a means for assuring official knowledge of the private activities of colonial subjects in order to limit the administration's anxieties about potential subversion or gaps in knowledge.⁸¹

Colonial regimenting of African habits in the name of sanitation was certainly suspect among Africans. Using the African press, literate Africans critiqued the implementation of segregation and sanitation policies and pointed out their inconsistencies. In so doing, they subverted colonial claims to authority. These Africans highlighted the more urgent matters of sanitation that affected health, and argued that the

⁷⁸ *Gold Coast Leader*, March 23 1912, p.2.

⁷⁹ War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, Confidential Print: Nos. 1003 to 1010 , 1892 - 1915 "Outbreak of Bubonic Plague on the Gold Coast, correspondence" 53. For more on African distrust of colonial medicine see Luise White, "Cars Out of Place: Vampires, Technology, and Labor in East and Central Africa," *Representations*, 43,(1993): 27-50, DOI: 10.2307/2928731.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 27.

⁸¹ Ann Stoler, "Pulse of the Archive," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2007): 247-248; Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony, In *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds. (Berkeley: University of California, 1997; California Scholarship Online, 2012), DOI: 10.1525/california/9780520205406.001.0001.

focus on eradicating mosquitoes was a waste of resources. In the *Gold Coast Leader*, one African contributor wrote that household inspection of water was a useless practice, since the street drains were visibly full of water, weeds, and garbage that propagated mosquito breeding.⁸² The unstated question was that if colonial officials were serious about mosquito eradication, why did they not focus more on street drains rather than putting the emphasis on house inspections?

The incidence of plague demonstrated to many Africans that colonial sanitation policies were ineffective at improving the health of city-dwellers. As a result, Gold Coast urbanites attempted to steer the medical community toward a focus on matters more pressing than the mosquito as a way of truly improving general health and well-being in the colony. A correspondent from the coastal town of Axim argued that if rats caused the plague as medical expert Mr. Simpson had indicated, then surely this was the suspect to pursue and eliminate from the household, not the mosquito.⁸³ Yet the colonial government continued the mosquito eradication objective, and criticisms of the government persisted and were more direct. For instance, a correspondent for the *Gold Coast Nation* wrote that although authorities knew that water pumps needed fixing, “Chasing imaginary mosquitoes seems to absorb all the time and attention of the Sanitary Inspectors in Cape Coast.”⁸⁴ These criticisms had little impact on the administration, and sanitary inspections prevailed as a mode of policy implementation and, certainly, as an instrument of British control over Africans and their environment. This was so, even when other forms of sanitary measures, many of which Africans

⁸² *Gold Coast Leader*, February 4 1905, 1.

⁸³ *Gold Coast Leader*, November 18 1911, 5.

⁸⁴ *Gold Coast Nation*, March 20 1913, 255.

suggested in their newspaper discussions, could have proved more effective at promoting sanitation and reducing the spread of mosquito-borne illnesses.

The focus on the eradication of mosquitoes was not the only criticism that Africans had of colonial sanitation. They also contested how unevenly sanitation policies were applied to Africans compared to Europeans, and so the educated elite channelled their displeasure at the unfair application of sanitation rules through Gold Coast newspapers. The discriminatory lack of sanitation improvements in African residential areas underscored not only colonial neglect African quarters in Gold Coast towns; it also perpetuated the perception that colonial sanitation was not actually intended for the improvement of health but for the domination of African households. Many Africans complained that dustbins were placed only in front of African households, and since these were not emptied regularly garbage was strewn everywhere, including on their property.⁸⁵

Africans' discussion of the unequal implementation of sanitation measures also revealed that sanitation policies often exploited Africans economically. Contributors complained of how prisoners emptied latrines in African households, which were then slapped with fines if latrines failed cleanliness inspections; however, European residents had Kroo boys empty their latrines, these were workers from Liberia who often worked with colonial agents and were obviously trusted more than prisoners, and notably, Europeans did not receive fines, even if their latrines were dirty.⁸⁶ People knew that Europeans living in segregated areas escaped fines and court summonses over the infractions of sanitation protocols. In the 18 March 1915 issue of *The Gold Coast*

⁸⁵ *Gold Coast Leader*, July 12 1902, 2.

⁸⁶ *Gold Coast Leader*, January 31, 1903, p.1.

Nation, a piece was published entitled, “Rules For Residents in the Segregation Area.”

The piece was a reprint of an official document that outlined European residents’ responsibilities when it came to sanitation in the household and its likely purpose was to make Africans aware of the unequal and discriminatory application of household sanitation rules. In this piece it states that while Europeans had to follow protocols regarding the elimination of standing water and garbage, as well as the cleaning of the yard and servants’ quarters, their hired labourers bore responsibility for any failure to meet sanitation standards.⁸⁷ Publications in Gold Coast newspapers about the uneven implementation of sanitation measures conveyed Africans’ understanding that sanitation was centered on household operations as a means of demarcating and upholding colonial boundaries between Europeans and Africans.

Conclusion

A close examination of sanitation initiatives in the Gold Coast brings to light the centrality of the household in colonial configurations of cultural dominance. With the household as its central feature, the administration used sanitation to highlight dichotomies of domestic space to form distinctions of difference between colonizer and colonized. The administrative and economic importance of coastal cities combined with the paucity of British officials meant that distinctions of cultural difference were important strategies to maintain colonial control.⁸⁸ Thus, the administration collaborated

⁸⁷ *Gold Coast Nation*, March 18 1915, p.871.

⁸⁸ Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, “Between Metropole and Colony, in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California, 1997; California Scholarship Online, 2012) DOI: 10.1525/california/9780520205406.001.0001; Ann Stoler “Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20-th Century Colonial Cultures,” *American Ethnologist*, 16, 4 (1989): 634-

with the medical community to frame the African household as a place of danger and disorder in contrast to the safe and orderly colonial residence. Such distinctions served to justify segregation as a way to demarcate British dominance and superiority, which in turn supported colonial intrusions into the African household in order to monitor and control African everyday habits. Both segregation and household inspections aimed to portray the colonial household as free from disease, and spatially separate and therefore protected from harmful intrusions, and, in contrast, to present African households as purveyors of disorder, dirt, and disease. Segregation served as a spatial representation encoding difference and denying colonial subjects access to colonial culture, whereas household inspections of African residences acted as a reminder of colonial dominance as authorities regulated and reoriented activities within the African household. However, as their critiques of the administration's sanitation, health, and segregation policies reveal, many colonial subjects recognized these colonial strategies for what they were. Within these critiques was an acknowledgement that the drive for sanitation was actually an extension of British hegemony into the domestic sphere.

660; Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize : The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

CHAPTER 2

THE FORGING OF HABITS AMONG GOLD COAST YOUTH AND CONTESTS OF MODERNITY AND PERSONHOOD

Colonial administrators, missionaries, and African elites, with varying degrees of authority and influence, competed to preserve, and in some cases enhance, their position and privilege within existing and emerging frameworks of power by seeking to define and control the personhood of Gold Coast youth. These disparate social groups had something in common as elders in early twentieth century Gold Coast; however, they differed in their perspectives on what the Gold Coast should be and what it should become, and they competed to establish their conception of modernity by attempting to exercise control over the youth's transition to adulthood. Gold Coast elders, whether African or Europeans, also believed the youth to be the colony's future, who could sustain or dismantle existing social, economic, and political systems. As such, youth took center stage in discussions of education, civilization, and governance among missionaries, colonial administrators, and African elites. These various groups of elders shared the notion that the control of education was central to configurations of power. As a way of negotiating their own status, elders sought to control the youth's practice of personhood by defining their rights and obligations as they became adults. Elders sought to limit youth's independent claims to personhood, labeling such actions as disobedient and in need of adult supervision. Missionaries, administrators, traditional authorities and educated African elders all perceived the transition from youth to adulthood to be a

process that required adult supervision, particularly in the arenas of education, work, marriage, and leisure. However, youth met these attempts at control with resistance and articulated their own views of modernity and personhood through their educational and occupational choices, conjugal relations, and leisure activities.

Personhood in the Gold Coast had been undergoing transformation before the twentieth century, as colonial institutions, education and imports disrupted pre-existing social and political systems.¹ In the early twentieth century, the various elder groups in the Gold Coast were specifically critical of Gold Coast youths' habits that were connected to notions of personhood. Thus, elders were concerned with the education, work, accumulation, marriage and leisure activities of youths. As youths experimented with new habits and practices that connected to and impacted their transition to personhood, Gold Coast elders viewed this as disrupting their control of this important process, which was the cement for much of their power in Gold Coast society.

However, as various elder groups attempted to reinforce pre-existing forms of personhood, youth practices revealed how they faced competing definitions of personhood. For the Akan, the dominant group in the southern and interior part of the Gold Coast,² the transition to personhood began at birth³ and included taking on the collective responsibilities of marriage, parenthood, lineage obligations, and the sharing

¹ Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Cultural Change: A Social History of Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Heinemann: Portsmouth, 1996), 1-16.

² For an in depth discussion of the dominance of Akan culture and its assumption as the standard of "local custom" in the Gold Coast see Roger S. Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule* (New York: University Press of America, 1999).

³ "Akan Philosophy of the Person", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/akan-person/>>.

of wealth.⁴ Therefore, for many Gold Coasters the issue of education, work, accumulation, marriage and leisure were important elements to personhood. As in many other parts in Africa, personhood was a process practiced through a series of events and everyday activities that continued throughout adulthood and was conferred through communal assent.⁵ While the process of personhood varied according to the individual, personhood involved fostering communalism and avoiding what Ajume Wingo calls the “social death” of ostracism.⁶ The interference of others, in particular elders, permeated the transition to personhood for youths. Yet as youths made deliberate choices to carve out their own conception of personhood, they were conscious of the need for public acceptance which led them to build upon existing societal norms.

Many youths were introduced to alternative conceptions of personhood through the Western education they received from missionary agents. Mission education promoted specifically Western concepts of personhood that emphasized the individual and its connection to the state as well as the “self-made” individual,⁷ rather than communal freedoms and obligations.⁸ Mission education promoted gendered delineations of the private and public spheres, monogamy, and a patriarchal family structure. For Europeans at the time, personhood meant individual autonomy and began

⁴ Stephern Miescher, “The Making of Presbyterian Teachers: Masculinities and Programs of Education in Colonial Ghana,” in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, Lisa A. Lindsay and Stephen Miescher, eds. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2003), 90.

⁵ John L. and Jean Comaroff, “On Personhood: An Anthropological Perspective from Africa,” *Social Identities*, 7, no.2 (2001): 271. Kwasi Wiredu’s work focuses specifically on the Akan definition of personhood and how personhood is measure by degrees and is a process whereby the attainment of higher personhood is achieved through responsibility, morality, and rationality, and which can be assessed by one’s success economically and contributions to the welfare of the community at large as well as one’s lineage. “Akan Philosophy of the Person”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/akan-person/>>.

⁶ Ajume Wingo, “The Odyssey of Human Rights: a reply to Souleymane Bachir Diagne,” *Transition*, 102 (2009): 125-129.

⁷ Comaroff and Comaroff, “On Personhood”, 267.

⁸ Wingo, 134.

once the person reached the age of adulthood, married, and had a family.⁹ Both African and European elder groups shared concerns regarding the education, work, marriage, and leisure of youths which, when taken together, amounted to a prevailing concern for the personhood of youths. The educated youths navigated and, at times, strategically merged the various notions of personhood that coexisted in early colonial Gold Coast. In so doing, youths created a new valid form of personhood that responded to the competing demands of Gold Coast society.

Scholars have begun to examine how colonized youths used education, migration, accumulation, consumption, and performance to protect their autonomy from the meddling of elders and authorities.¹⁰ Building upon this body of work, this chapter examines how education, work, marriage, and leisure emerged as intersecting sites within which the transition to personhood was contested. Using missionary reports from the two leading missions involved in education in the Gold Coast, the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society and the Basel Mission Society, as well as newspaper articles and editorials from the educated African elite, and colonial documents, this chapter shows how, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, elders attempted to control the educated youth's transition to personhood. Missionaries, African elite, traditional chiefs and territorial administrators all used narratives of youthful

⁹ Ibid, 271-272.

¹⁰ Emmanuel Akyeampong discusses how the use of alcohol among youths disturbed pre-existing norms which held elders with exclusive rights to alcohol consumption, and as the non-elite consumed alcohol they made claims to autonomy and prestige. *Drink, Power and Cultural Change: A Social History of Ghana*. Staying within Ghana, Nathan Plageman in his work *Highlife Saturday Night: Popular Music & Social Change in Urban Ghana*, touches on how clothing and participation in bands was a means of making a claim to increased status. For examples outside of Ghana, see Phyllis Martin's work *Leisure in Colonial Brazzaville*, where she touches on many of these topics, as her work is considered the leading piece on the subject in terms of colonial Africa. In her piece, *Working With Gender: Wage Labor and Social Change in Southwestern Nigeria*, Lisa A. Lindsay gives a brief discussion of how migration among the Yoruba population was increasingly valued for its benefits of enlightenment, and how the need to acquire money was linked and used to define masculinity.

disobedience to underscore the youth's need of firm guidance. Whether European or African, elders viewed education, work, marriage, and leisure as points of entry to control the public and personal habits of youths, which were connected to personhood, in order to maintain or promote a prescribed social order.

Educating the youth

Education only gradually became an administrative priority in colonial Gold Coast. Not until 1925 did colonial officials take full control of what had, until then, had a very heterogeneous mix of mission, African, and colonial schooling. Initially missionaries were at the forefront of education in the Gold Coast from the nineteenth century until the First World War.¹¹ At the turn of the twentieth century, due to the British defeat of Asante forces after decades of war, missionaries expanded their efforts to spread Christianity, education, and other modes of European cultural practice in the interior.¹² The coastal region of the Gold Coast was where formal education initiatives first began in the nineteenth century and was where many received their education. Education in the interior regions, such as Asante, did not begin until the twentieth century. Due to government interference on efforts to educate in the Northern Territories, this area had the lowest number of schools and levels of education throughout the colonial years.¹³ Access to secondary education was also increasing during the early twentieth century.

¹¹ Bob W. White, "Talk about School: Education and the colonial project in France and British Africa (1860-1960)," *Comparative Education* 32, no.1 (1996): 12-13.

¹² Philip Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana* (University of Chicago Press, 1965), 112.

¹³ R.B. Bening, "Colonial Control and the Provision of Education in the Northern Ghana 1908-1951," *Universitas*, 5, no.2 (1976): 58-63.

Significantly, as education increased, it became more heterogeneous. Schooling differed according to denomination and source of funding. Many missionaries accepted government grants-in-aid in the twentieth century as increased education in places created a strain on mission resources.¹⁴ As a result of these grants government involvement in education also increased.¹⁵ Schools founded by the government, where locals resisted mission efforts, did not offer religious instruction.¹⁶ Local African elites, too, established schools for African youths, particularly secondary schools such as the Mfantipim School, although these often were transferred to missionary control due to an inability to sustain funding for these schools.¹⁷ Thus in early Gold Coast, an assortment of adults were involved with the education of youths in order to extend their particular agenda.

The colonial administration's involvement in education was limited as the priority was to minimize expenditure in colonies, and therefore missionaries played the leading role. This differed from the French administration's approach to education in West Africa. French authorities maintained control over education in order to tailor it to meet the employment needs of the colony, and therefore limited the number of students accordingly.¹⁸ In the Gold Coast, after the experience of opposition to British colonial initiatives from educated Africans in the nineteenth century, the colonial government sought to assert more control over education with the aim of creating labourers for

¹⁴ Stephen J. Ball, "Imperialism, Social Control and the Colonial Curriculum in Africa," *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 15, no.3 (1983): 246.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ C.K. Graham, *The History of Education in Ghana* (Tema: Ghana Pub. Co, 1976), 75; Ball, 245.

¹⁷ Foster, 102.

¹⁸ Bob W. White, "Talk about School: Education and the colonial project in France and British Africa (1860-1960)," *Comparative Education* 32, no.1 (1996): 11-13.

agriculture and industry rather than producing high minded Africans.¹⁹ With the Education Ordinances of 1882, the colonial government introduced a Board of Education, which in turn provided oversight over the umbrella of local boards that missionaries dominated. This administrative apparatus was intended to aid in the distribution of government grants to schools and ensure that those receiving government grants met government curriculum criteria. These schools, known as Assisted Schools, received grants on condition that there was English language training, arithmetic and ten hours of manual labour training; and in 1898, this was revised to include mandatory teaching of drawing, physical exercise, and industrial training.²⁰ Assisted schools had to remain open to people of all beliefs systems and were not to offer religious instruction to children whose parents refused it.²¹

Meanwhile, as more primary and secondary schools emerged along the coast and parts of the interior due to a growing interest expressed in education emanating from locals,²² the colonial administration's plan to the subordinate educated Africans became increasingly difficult as there was sustained demand for clerks and teachers.²³ However, in Accra in 1909, the government established the first technical school to train labourers for government workshops.²⁴ The increasing Africanization of Basel mission operations and education efforts during the First World War exacerbated tensions over the education of youths. Africanization was accelerated due to the colonial government's suspicion that European Basel missionaries could be German spies: many European

¹⁹ Ball, 245.

²⁰ Foster, 83

²¹ Foster, 81-83.

²² Ibid, 86.

²³ Ball, 244; Foster, 133.

²⁴ Graham, 78.

Basel missionaries were detained or expelled.²⁵ However, the culmination of government control of education occurred in 1925 after successive reports and commissions such as: the Colonial Office Advisory Committee on Education of 1923, the *Memorandum on Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa* in 1925, and the Phelps-Stokes Commission Report of 1925, all of which outlined the educational needs of Africans, emphasised agricultural and manual skills training, and a reinforced traditional governance by designing the specific curriculum for the sons of chiefs.²⁶ Tensions over the education of youth peaked in the period just before the colonial government's regulation of education in the colony officially began. In the years leading up to 1925, the administration, missionaries, chiefs, and African elites struggled to assert their leadership over the expansion of education initiatives in the colony, and thus sought to control the habits of youths.

While the government implemented schemes to train future African labourers for work in the trades or agricultural sector, it also involved itself directly in the everyday practice of the youth's transition to adulthood. This was part and parcel of the colonial administration's vision to preserve the political structures of empire. This was evident in Lady Clifford's (Governor Hugh Clifford's wife) essay competition for school children held in 1918. The essay contest offered winners a prize and the inclusion of their piece in a published book to be sold as a Red Cross Society fundraiser. The book, entitled *Our Days on the Gold Coast*, included descriptions of an average day in participants' daily lives, with the remaining sections dedicated to the thoughts and activities of

²⁵Graham, 74. The Basel missionary archives also show this, see *In-and-Out Correspondence*, Reverend Wenton's 1916 report in Abokorbi, D 3, Reel 121.

²⁶Ball, 247-250.

schoolchildren up to sixteen years of age. The competition invited schoolboys to answer the question: “What work do I wish to do in the world when I am a man, and why?” Schoolgirls were asked to explain “why educated girls ought to be able to keep house, clean and cook, better than uneducated girls.”²⁷ These pointed questions reveal the implied Western categorisations of adulthood that were part and parcel of European education efforts in the Gold Coast. Both government education and mission education promoted these categorisations and reinforced Western gender expectations. The essay competition also clearly marked the specific age at which adulthood should be achieved and after a definite break with youth.

In general, Lady Clifford’s project is representative of the administration’s conceptions of youth and personhood. It was one small part of British colonials’ efforts to have African youth envision a future in the colonial system, and promote the timeless endurance of empire.²⁸ Stephen J. Ball notes in his analysis of British colonial education in Africa that the government practice of awarding prizes to well accomplished students during school inspections was a means of inculcating ideas of individualism among the youth.²⁹ Lady Clifford’s essay competition was another manifestation of the government practice of having students compete individually to demonstrate success and progress, which contrasted with local conceptions of communalism and personhood. Lady Clifford’s essay competition also showed the colonial government’s increased interest in

²⁷ Lady Clifford C.B.E., *Our Days on the Gold Coast: in Ashanti, in the Northern Territories, and the British sphere of occupation in Togoland*. London: John Murray, 1919, p. 180, http://openlibrary.org/books/OL7114103M/Our_days_on_the_Gold_Coast.

²⁸ Richard Waller examines the various reasons for state interest in regulating youth behaviour and how this was intended to secure the state’s agendas and future, “Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History* 47 (2006): 77-92, DOI: 10.1017/S0021853705001672.

²⁹ Ball, 259-260.

the education of colonial schoolchildren and how this was linked to its desire to direct youthful conceptions of personhood.

For missionaries the primary purpose of mission education in the Gold Coast was proselytization. Missionaries used the schooling system to gain converts and inculcate Christian social and family values—important aspects to their conception of personhood. For missionaries, education served as preparation for marriage. Girls’ training was meant to create young domestic Christian wives for labouring Christianised men, thus propagating Christianity through the raising of families.³⁰ Missionary authorities upheld pre-marital gender segregation in every setting of domestic mission life. For instance, at the Basel mission, women “cateresses” were to pass meals to unmarried male seminary students through a fence.³¹ Thus, the policing of youth self-discipline and conjugal relations was at the forefront of standards of morality that missionaries sought to instil in students. The premise of mission education was the “civilizing” of colonized people, and as a result there was particular emphasis placed on inculcating habits of discipline and obedience. The Basel Missionary, D. E. Akwa captured this in a 1916 report in which he stated: “Knowing that sowing habit we reap a character, and such a character sown by this habit, we find our young men and women.”³²

³⁰ Ulrike Sill, ““Girls With Chic Hats”: The Basel Mission’s Girl’s Education as a Road to Affluence and Privilege,” *Sécurité Sociale Et Développement = Soziale Sicherheit Und Entwicklung*, ed. Anne Mayor Claudia Roth and Droz, Yvan, (2005): 241. Plageman, *Highlife*, 8. To see a similar case study of female education to create Christian wives in Nigeria see LaRay Denzer, “Domestic Science Training in Colonial Yorubaland, Nigeria,” in *African Encounters with Domesticity*, Karen Transberg Hansen ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 116-139. Similarly Phyllis Martin discusses this in her work *Catholic women of Congo-Brazzaville: mothers and sisters in troubled times* (Indiana University Press, 2009).

³¹ Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Archive, London, West Africa, “West African Correspondence”, *Gold Coast Chairman Correspondence 1919*, Box 770, No. 1403, October 3, 1919.

³² Basel Missionary Society Archives, *In-and-Out Correspondence, 1915-1917*, D.E. Akwa, “Report for 1916” Abetifi, February, 22 1917, D 3, Reel 121.

Yet while the various missionary bodies shared similar values regarding the role of education in the Gold Coast, the form which mission education took varied according to denomination and location. The Wesleyan Methodist Society and the Basel Mission Society were the most actively engaged in the education of youths during this time, but had differing approaches to the education of colonized youths. The Basel Mission Society schools were more concentrated in the interior regions of the colony, and the Wesleyan schools dominated along the coastal region. Although the uniforms and daily activities at schools differentiated the educated youth from the uneducated, in the case of Basel mission schools, school children were uprooted from their villages and families and lived amidst the Christian community and also favoured boarding schools.³³ Basel mission education was also noted for having focused more on technical training with plantations and shops for students to work, which helped sustain the mission station.³⁴ Whereas, Wesleyan mission school education that taught such subjects as English reading and writing skills, students remained in villages and towns, had limited agricultural and technical training, and, before World War I, employed more local Africans as teachers.³⁵

For the most part, missionaries set up schools according to calls from Africans for education.³⁶ This was the case in Cape Coast where parents requested a Girls' Training Institute early in 1900.³⁷ Such requests were avidly embraced by missionaries

³³Stephan Miescher, *Making Men in Ghana*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 62.

³⁴ Foster, 87-88.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 89.

³⁷ Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Archive, *General Correspondence 1900-1901*, Box 766, No. 1342, "Report on the scheme for the formation of a girls' school at Cape Coast."

as a signpost of the success of their endeavours.³⁸ Notably, as mission schools extended to new regions, tension emerged as denominations competed for congregants and pupils. This provided options for youths who could decide where they went to school. Occasionally, when reporting a decline in school enrollment, a missionary would admit to losing students to a competing mission: this was the case for the Basel missionary C.E. Martinson who reported that some students had left to enroll in the Wesleyan's mission school.³⁹ The competition for students and congregants was an important component of missionary work, which inevitably also expanded missionary education efforts in the colony during this period.

Many pre-existing authorities, such as chiefs and parents, sought to contain the influence of education in order to secure their control over the labour of youths and youth personhood. Chiefs in the interior regions perceived education as a threat to their authority. This led some chiefs to resist the introduction of mission education. Chiefs argued that people cited their conversion to Christianity as a reason for not responding to chiefly demands for communal labour.⁴⁰ Underlying this friction was tension between the educated elites and chiefs who competed to carve out their political significance and representation in the colony.⁴¹ However, many Africans wanted education as it was considered advantageous for social mobility, and by 1907, most of the resistance to education had declined in the Asante region of the Gold Coast.⁴² While realizing the

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Basel Missionary Society Archives, *In-and Out Correspondence*, C.E. Martinson, February, 18 1916, D 3, Reel 121.

⁴⁰ WMS, *Gold Coast Miscellaneous, 1907-1908*, Box 767, No. 1349, H.A. Riggall to Reverend W. Perkins, Wesleyan Mission House Kumasi, November 18, 1907.

⁴¹ Foster, 92-93.

⁴² Foster, 127.

strong appeal of education for youths and its formal support, chiefs struggled to insert themselves as relevant actors in the education of youths.

Meanwhile, missionaries also had to contend with parents who, although in favour of education, often interrupted or ceased the schooling of their children. Missionaries generally expressed exasperation over the lack of church attendance in the cocoa districts, and more specifically, lamented parents' removal of their sons from school to labour on farms. Missionaries framed this as Africans' desire for wealth over salvation and pointed to their preference to make money as a mark of African backwardness and the need for a continued missionization education efforts.⁴³ Missionaries also pressed parents to allow their girls to attend school.⁴⁴ For traditional authorities, the benefits of education seemed unclear, instead, it seemed to represent a possible loss of control over the labour of youths, which would in turn, diminish chiefly power and authority.

In contrast to traditional authorities, the educated elite expressed much interest in the education of youth. And thus, claimed an active and important role in the formation of a modern Gold Coast and thereby secured their place as forward thinkers and individuals with significant social influence. In so doing, the educated elite attempted to maintain their place as important brokers of tradition and modernity. Educated Africans such as Mensah Sarbah and Casely Hayford published accounts of local history and institutions during the early twentieth century as a way of demonstrating the

⁴³ BMS, *In-and-Out Correspondence and 1915 Annual Reports*, "Half-Year Report of Geo. P. Akwa, Native Pastor at Otumi, Kyebi Western Circuit, through the Superintending Missionary the Rev. K. Schoenleber to the Committee of the Basel Evangelical Mission Society, Basel, Switzerland, 1915," D3, Reel 121.

⁴⁴ Claire Robertson, "The Nature and Effects of Differential Access to Education in Ga Society," *Africa*, 47, no.2 (1977): 212-216.

compatibility of traditional governance with their own conceptions of modernity and progress. While these adults were not entirely in agreement on all points about the youth, or politics in general, they did share the belief that education was the platform for the transition to personhood and for the development of a modern Gold Coast. The educated elite responded to increased educational opportunities by presenting themselves as knowledgeable and experienced representatives of youth interests in a modern Gold Coast.

Educated Africans wrote to the newspapers urging readers to donate and to support local education since it was the community's responsibility to educate the youth and thus ensure the progress of the Gold Coast.⁴⁵ Prominent educated Africans pooled their resources to establish schools. By 1910, all four secondary schools in the Gold Coast had been established by local African elites.⁴⁶ To shore up their position as important role models and leaders in the formation of the youth, educated elites were critical of prevalent parental practices and urged for parents to send young boys and girls to school. Writing to the local newspaper, one editorialist to the *Gold Coast Leader* expressed concern that parents were jeopardizing the future of the colony by taking their sons out of school early because of fears that their son would become too proud or go mad.⁴⁷ Similar to the missionaries, the educated elite positioned themselves as surrogate parents and leaders for the youth, thus establishing themselves as important figures for controlling the youth's transition to adulthood.

⁴⁵ *Gold Coast Leader*, April 25 1903, p.3.

⁴⁶ Foster, p. 115.

⁴⁷ *Gold Coast Leader*, March 28 1903, p. 4.

For the love of money: youth migration

As education expanded so too did the cash economy, and accordingly youths migrated for both school and work. Migration was soon part and parcel of the youths' conception of personhood as the move for education and work offered opportunity to increase one's status and wealth and establish social networks with peers. This began with education. Missionaries commented on the diversity of students in schools. In 1901, Wesleyan missionary Edgar C. Barton wrote that the girls' school in Cape Coast was very popular and that girls were coming from areas such as Accra, Axim and Tarquah for education.⁴⁸ This persisted throughout the years. Reverend C.W. Armstrong wrote from Aburi in 1922 that many students were not from the area.⁴⁹ Often migration for education was a commonly shared experience for youths.

More importantly, many youth migrated to the coast in search of work. The coast held allure for the young and educated because it represented the potential to accumulate the wealth needed to begin the process of negotiating marriage.⁵⁰ Upon return to villages, young men demonstrated their wealth and began marriage processes.⁵¹ Girls are recorded as being less likely to return to home villages as migration outside of education

⁴⁸ Wesleyan Methodist Mission, *Gold Coast General Correspondence 1900-1901*, Box 776, no. 1342, Edgar Barton to Mr. Burkins, January 2, 1901.

⁴⁹ WMS, *Gold Coast General Correspondence*, Box 770, no. 1415, Rev. C. W. Armstrong, August 14, 1922.

⁵⁰ Marriage was an important component for the transition to personhood, which was a process that was normally regulated by parents and elders. This included visits, consultation, and gifts or money. For more on this process of marriage see Victoria B. Tashjan and Jean Allman, "Marrying and Marriage on a shifting terrain: reconfiguration of Power and Authority in Early colonial Asante," in *Women in African Colonial Histories*. Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Nathan Plageman also gives a good explanation of how accumulation and music was used by young men in claiming status and as a means of circumscribing the authority of parents and elders in *Highlife*, 35-37.

⁵¹ Emmanuel Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Cultural Change: A Social History of Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times*, 37.

was considered a means of avoiding marriage or lineage demands on their labour.⁵² The control of labour was central to the disfavour over youth migration. The position of elders was threatened due to these migrations as they could not exert the same control over the activities of youths. For youths, migration was a means to independently assert their claims to personhood, while still building off of pre-existing notions of personhood.

The colonial administration was not inclined to deter migration if it was related to labour needed at mines, railways, or on farms. However, colonial administrators sought to limit the number of clerks that secondary schools produced in order to prevent students from claiming to be over educated and unsuited to demands of manual labour.⁵³ In 1904, Governor Nathan stressed the need for labourers when he argued that the problem with the educated youth was that they all wanted to be doctors, lawyers or ministers, which he called “overstocked” positions.⁵⁴ Although the Accra Technical School, opened in 1909, guaranteed graduates positions with the government as labourers, the educated youth still migrated to the coast in search of jobs.⁵⁵ Despite the colonial government’s promotion of technical training, many youths continued to seek employment as clerks, teachers, or in the ministry. Taking up Gold Coast elders’ portrayal of them as important actors in the future, educated youth forged their own, new definitions of personhood and expressed them through their occupational choices.

This was particularly problematic for traditional leaders whose status and position was reflected in the demands and control over youth labour. Young men and

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Robertson, 210.

⁵⁴ *Gold Coast Leader*, October 29 1904, (Supplement II), 6.

⁵⁵ Graham, 78

women moved to the coasts to seek opportunities to earn money, and were able to escape lineage obligations and demands on their labour, thus destabilizing established social systems.⁵⁶ Young graduates continued to view clerkship as the preferred occupational path to personhood.⁵⁷ Coastal employment offered a shortcut to gaining status as Big Men or Women, as this designation was based on one's accumulation and generous redistribution of goods and dependents.⁵⁸ This was especially problematic for elders in the interior, as many youths had to relocate to coastal regions to find positions as clerks in merchant shops, and in so doing, were able to escape the "traditional" bonds and obligations of lineage authority. In 1919, the Wesleyan missionary E. Horler reported that some parents were reluctant to send their children to school for fear that once they received an education they would move to the coast to become a clerk.⁵⁹ Indeed, Horler continued, the area was visibly becoming "depopulated of the youngmen (sic)."⁶⁰

As youths migrated to the coast for labour, missionaries were also potentially losing converts to other denominations, and more importantly, control over the activities of youths. Missionaries portrayed youth migration for employment as a symptom of greed to justify keeping them under mission oversight. One Wesleyan missionary wrote in 1903 that some of their best teachers were quitting to become clerks since merchants

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Foster, 133.

⁵⁸ Emmanuel Akyeampong, "'Wo pe tam won pe ba' ('You like cloth but you don't want children') Urbanization, Individualism and gender Relations in Colonial Ghana c. 1900-39," in *Africa's Urban Past*, David M. Anderson and Richard Rathbone, eds. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999), 223.

⁵⁹ WMS, *Gold Coast General Correspondence 1919-1920*, Box 770, no. 1414, November 12 1919.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

offered higher wages.⁶¹ Another missionary insisted that students viewed education as only a means for accumulating wealth and satisfying their greed rather than for personal improvement.⁶² This criticism was a topic in the newspapers as well as among the educated elite. One writer to the *Gold Coast Leader* stated that contact with Western civilization was not benefitting the young, since educated young men only sought to acquire wealth as clerks with no thought for the future of the Gold Coast.⁶³ The material and social autonomy of youths compromised elders' control of young, educated Gold Coasters, undoubtedly the reason behind many of the scathing comments about youthful greed. Interestingly, African elders often found themselves in competition with colonial and mission authorities, all of whom sought, as they did, to direct the professional undertakings of post secondary educated youth.

The Youth Gone Wrong With Consumption and Accumulation

Another critique that Gold Coast elders shared, be they African notables or mission personnel, was the youthful practice of spending money on alcohol. Historian Emmanuel Akyeampong demonstrates that the drinking habits of youth challenged traditional authorities who had previously restricted its consumption to those wielding prestige and influence such as elders and Big Men.⁶⁴ In fact, the exclusivity of alcohol use among elders was previously used to ensure their control over certain rites of passage such as

⁶¹ WMS, *Gold Coast Chairman Correspondence 1903-1904*, Box 767, no. 1352, Accra, November 19, 1903.

⁶² WMS, *Gold Coast General Correspondence 1919-1920*, Box 770, no. 1414, Aburi, January 31 1920.

⁶³ *Gold Coast Leader*, April 23 1910, p. 4-5.

⁶⁴ Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Change*, 1-16.

naming rituals, marriage and death rites.⁶⁵ Even with increased access to alcohol and the youth's adoption of its recreational consumption, alcohol did not lose its significance as a symbol of prestige and spirituality.⁶⁶ Elders viewed casual consumption of alcohol as the youth's defiance of the authority of elders. Even with Christianization alcohol retained its symbolic value as medium for denoting personhood as its consumption reflected social and political status. For instance, missionaries despairingly remarked that Christian congregants continued to practice the habit of drinking at funerals.⁶⁷ The youth did not seek to dismantle the symbolic function of alcohol and instead consumed it as a means of claiming status and as a marker of autonomously controlling their movement through personhood.

Similarly to traditional leaders and the educated elite, missionaries, too, urged government intervention to control alcohol consumption. A Wesleyan missionary wrote to the Governor warning that alcohol consumption was a serious problem for African societies in the Gold Coast.⁶⁸ However, the government profited from the sale of alcohol, and while the administration conceded that educated youth were drinking alcohol, administrators denied both an overall increase in its consumption and also its link to crime.⁶⁹ Instead the government argued that it was not its responsibility to curb drinking and placed the burden back on missionaries by stating "that the habits of the people can only be effectively moulded, in this as in other matters, not by legislative

⁶⁵ Ibid, 31-38.

⁶⁶ Nugent, 143-144.

⁶⁷ BMS, *In-and-Out Correspondence*, "Annual Report of Rev. James Birikorang at Kyebi, Through Rev. K. Schoenliberman," D 3, Reel 121.

⁶⁸ WMS, *Gold Coast Chairman 1917-1919*, Box 770, No. 1401, April 26, 1918, Letter from Cape Coast Castle.

⁶⁹ WMS, *Gold Coast Miscellaneous/Chairman 1917-1918*, Box 769, No. 140, Letter from Secretary of State Addressing Issue of Liquor Traffic.

enactments, but by the force of public opinion, stimulated by education and religion.”⁷⁰

The push for government intervention on the issue of youth’s alcohol consumption was one more way in which elders portrayed youth as requiring adult direction and oversight.

Although the effort to pass official restrictions on drinking in the Gold Coast failed, missionaries continued to report on the problem of youthful disobedience caused by alcohol consumption. A Basel missionary wrote that “...nearly all the youngmen (sic) acquired the drinking habit and in most cases disturbed the peace on the station...”⁷¹

Similarly, in the Akim circuit, a missionary complained that the scholars in the area were detrimental to his work and called them, “drunkards, disobedient, and rascals in town.”⁷²

The educated elites also saw the prevalence of alcohol consumption among youths as detrimental to designs for Gold Coast modernity and evidence for the need for adult intervention. This elicited criticism from adults who labeled these youthful acts of consumption as profligate demonstrations of immorality and bad judgment. The *Scrutineer*⁷³ in the *Gold Coast Leader* wrote an article titled, “Our Young Fops-What is Amiss With Them?” that expressed concern over the youth’s lack of consideration for the whole community, which negated their ability to achieve personhood. The author remarked on the proclivity of young people to spend their money on clothing and alcohol as a means of demonstrating their wealth and worldliness, which led him to doubt their ability to one day rule the country and maintain it for succeeding

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ BMS, “Half Year Report by Geo. P. Akwa,” D3, Reel 121.

⁷² BMS, George P. Akwa, “Yearly Report of George. P. Akwa, Pastor at Asamangese to the Committee of the Evangelical Missionary Society, Basel, Switzerland, 1916,” Series D3, Reel 121.

⁷³ Stephanie Newell discusses the role of pseudonyms as a prevalent form in colonial press as a way of hiding one’s identity from authorities and as an indicator of one’s position on a subject. See Stephanie Newell, “Something to Hide? Anonymity and Pseudonyms in the Colonial West African Press,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 45, no.1 (2010): 9-22.

generations.⁷⁴ Notably, these criticisms reveal the potency of the youth's consumption of alcohol in claiming their own sense of personhood.

Youth also expressed themselves through material culture. Scholars have explored how young Africans became consumers of fashion and music to demarcate new claims of status.⁷⁵ As young people acquired material symbols of prestige on their own, they challenged social hierarchies and performed a new sense of personhood.⁷⁶ Again, elders strongly reproved such activities that they viewed as further evidence of the youth's weaknesses. Yet youthful expressions of status through the display of wealth built off of already established customs for demonstrating Big Man status.⁷⁷ According to T.C. McCaskie's analysis of accumulation in pre-colonial Asante, accumulation was an indicator of status which the state once had strict control of "...in order to both mould the idea of wealth in its own image and to shape the processes of accumulation to its own end."⁷⁸ The various elders' concerns over the youth's accumulation and displays of wealth was very much in line with this idea of controlling claims to status among youths and the potential challenge these demonstrations posed to their authority.

Missionaries were well aware that ostentatious behavior was a way to claim a higher social status yet they disparaged displays of wealth among their congregants. One Basel missionary commented that while the open-air preaching drew a crowd, he felt

⁷⁴ *Gold Coast Leader*, July 14 1913, 5-6.

⁷⁵ Phyllis Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville*, discusses how clothing was used to disturb colonial hierarchies of status, and Nathan Plageman, *Highlife*. Also see *Fashioning Africa: Power and Politics of Dress*, ed. Jean Allman, (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2004).

⁷⁶ Emmanuel Akyeampong's, *Drink, Power and Change*, outlines how the consumption of alcohol among youths was a claim to status and authority in colonial Ghana.

⁷⁷ For an in depth discussion of the process of becoming a Big Man in pre-colonial Asante see T.C. McCaskie, *State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42-43.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 37.

that people attended mostly “to show their clothes and singing with brass instruments.”⁷⁹ Increasingly, educated youth, particularly those from areas with a longer history of education, fell into ill repute for being the ones to show off wealth and challenge established codes of behaviour. Samuel Kumi of the Basel Mission clearly identified the educated youth as an impediment to his work. He remarked that:

The chief drawback at Oda is the scattered abroad of our Christians among the heathen population especially among the so called civilized scholars at the coast who are neither Christians nor heathens; there some of them are entangled with the worldly fashions, and are exposed to many temptations which most of them cannot resist.⁸⁰

While educated youth used their independently acquired financial means to climb the social ladder in colonial Gold Coast, missionaries, along with other adults, were particularly apt to disparage youthful displays of wealth as evidence of their selfish desires and weaknesses -- tell tale signs of their lack of personhood.

Although young women faced the same accusations of baseless materialism as men did, missionaries framed the “greed” of women as threatening to their purity and respectability. Missionaries viewed the pursuit of wealth and autonomy as symptoms of a woman’s moral weakness, corruptibility, and inadequacy as a wife. Women’s relative financial independence in traditional Asante marriage challenged European patriarchal portrayals of domestic order in which wives served as homemakers and husbands as bread-winners. One missionary working in the Addah circuit reported that the wife of the evangelist John Tatiglo had “preferred to become a petty trader to becoming a sensible caretaker of her own home. She has fallen into Satan’s trap. She has contracted

⁷⁹ BMS, D.E.Akwa, Abetifi, 15, February 1916, D 3, Reel 121.

⁸⁰ BMS, Samuel Kumi, “Half Year Report,” Akem, 31, December, 1916,”D 3, Reel 121.

debts and become a helpless harlot on top.”⁸¹ Missionaries emphasized the proper behavior of women as mothers whom children would emulate and learn morals. However, missionaries disparaged how some educated Christian parents adopted the habit of over dressing their children in fine clothes and making false claims to status. Missionaries cast this as further proof of the misguidance many parents provided children, and the need to stem and reform notions of accumulation among the youth in the Gold Coast.⁸²

Elders were particularly accusatory of young women who challenged and modified the normative forms of behaviour to define their own paths to personhood. Because of the pivotal role women occupied in the cocoa-farming economy of the Gold Coast, African male elders perceived their self-assertion as particularly threatening.⁸³ While historically marriage was understood as the merging of two families, Jean Allman and Victoria Tahsjan have noted that in the early twentieth century, marital relations were “rewritten” as Native Courts supported husbands’ increased demands on female labour.⁸⁴

Others feared that the education of young girls led them astray from their conventional role as laboring helpmates for husbands.⁸⁵ However, the educated elite

⁸¹ BMS, “Half Year Report of the Mission Work Done in the Addah Circuit, from January-June 1916,” D 3, Reel 121.

⁸² BMS, “The Annual report of Mampong Congregation pre-1915, through the station President of the Home Committee of the Basel Missionary Society,” D 3, Reel 120.

⁸³ Jean Allman, “Marrying and Marriage,” *Women in African Colonial Histories*, Susan Geiger, Nakanyike Musisi and Jean Allman, eds. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

⁸⁴ Jean Allman “Marrying and Marriage,” 237-239

⁸⁵ Men could demand labour from dependents, which included wives and other female relatives such as nieces. A woman’s labour was also prized since it could be pawned to pay off debts, although this was illicit under the British administration. Chiefs could also make demands on female labour to work as porters. Beverly Grier, “Pawns, Porters, and Petty Traders: Women in the Transition to Cash-Crop Agriculture in Colonial Ghana,” in *Pawnship, Slavery, and Colonialism in Africa*, Paul E. Lovejoy and

framed such criticisms as concern for the progress of the country. One writer to the *Gold Coast Leader* blamed both the schools and parents for failing to create modern and useful women for Gold Coast men. He was of the opinion that the schools were “...not only to make smart Drawing Room ladies of them, but first class kitchen maids as well; their future happiness and their ability to make “Happy Homes” should be the main part of their training.”⁸⁶

Traditional authorities and educated elites both contrived that the accumulation and consumption of material goods, such as fashion, destabilized the role of women in marriage.⁸⁷ In particular, the prevailing criticism was that educated young girls had ideas that they did not have to work, and instead of being a useful helpmate that contributed to the status of their husband they depleted their husband’s wealth due to demands for goods. More importantly, educated girls proved less willing to relinquish control of their labour and marriage practices to their elders, and sought to establish their own status through accumulation. One contributor to the *Gold Coast Leader* was convinced that the problem of divorce among Gold Coasters derived from women’s refusal to work coupled with their demand for money or other material goods from their husbands.⁸⁸ In the *Gold Coast Leader*, European men were said to play on the weakness of educated girls’ and their desire for “fineries” by inviting them to un-chaperoned teas.⁸⁹

Toyin Falola eds. (Trenton: African World Press, 2003), 311-314. This was further entrenched by the spread of cocoa farming, as women travelled with husbands and women lost access to their own land that had afforded them some income. For more on this see, Jean Allman’s full chapter “Marrying and Marriage.”

⁸⁶ *Gold Coast Leader*, November 11 1905, 2.

⁸⁷ For a discussion of the perceived threat this posed to the accumulation and position of young men in Tanzania see Andrew Ivaska’s *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁸⁸ *GCL* March 4 1916, p. 6-7.

⁸⁹ *GCN*, December 9 1915, p. 1172.

Interestingly, the article specified that illiterate women did not fall prey to this illicit behaviour. The piece articulated a widely held assumption that educated girls developed a taste for European goods, which rendered them to exploitation and degeneracy.⁹⁰

The Gold Coast press hinted at the dangers of girls' unsupervised courtships and marriage arrangements and suggested that strict parental control was necessary to ensure that young women courted the right men in socially acceptable ways. Prominent trading families fostered relationships between young educated girls and Europeans in the nineteenth century, in view of establishing economic ties. However, such practices tapered off in the twentieth century due to changing economic circumstances and the consolidation of colonial rule with its requisite racial segregation and social hierarchies.⁹¹ Gold Coast elders understood education as awakening a desire among young, marriageable women for European consumerism and that this potentially compromised female propriety and the status of men.

Yet educationists insisted that the education of girls was integral to the progress of a modern Gold Coast. Some educated elites argued that the "modern home" required training and therefore girls should be sent to mission schools or training institutes.⁹² This focus on girls was due to the belief that they would cultivate proper habits among the new youth. Elders who believed in education for both sexes expected that well-behaved, marriageable girls would serve as an antidote to poor parenting, which they viewed as one of the causes of youthful rebelliousness. A person wrote to the *Gold Coast Leader*

⁹⁰ For information on the policing of inter-racial couples in the Gold Coast during the colonial era please see: Carrina E. Ray, "The 'White Wife Problem': Sex, Race and the Contested Politics of Repatriation," *Gender & History*, 21, no.3 (2009): 628-646.

⁹¹ Sill, "Chic Hats", 241-243.

⁹² *GCN*, July 27 1916, p. 1426.

editor and insisted that more interest had to be paid to girls' education due to their imminent position as mothers of the next generation of youth.⁹³ The parents that did send their girls to school did so with the presumption that this would increase their chances of upward social mobility because they would ideally marry a Christian man with prestige and wealth.⁹⁴ Missionaries and "modernizers" both set new standards for young women as wives and mothers that placed greater emphasis on domesticity. Yet they both shared concerns that educated young women were as apt as educated young men to rebel against the codes of proper behavior.

Youths and their marriage

Adult concerns over the accumulation strategies of youth were inextricably linked to their desire to regulate marriage, a prominent feature of personhood for both young men and women. Marriage was a contentious issue that placed youths in conflict with colonial administrators, missionaries, and matrilineal authorities all of whom had a stake in trying to control it. Various social reformers and missionaries waged conflicts over which marriage rites should prevail in the Gold Coast. Missionaries pressured the educated youth to enter Christian marriages and propagate the faith by raising Christian children. However, some educated young men favoured customary marriages since this offered them more power over their wives' labour while making it easier to divorce, despite the fact that customary marriage was a lengthy process that required substantial

⁹³ *GCL*, May 21 1904, p.2.

⁹⁴ Sill, "Girls With Chic Hats," p. 249.

financial investment from grooms-to-be.⁹⁵ Other young men chose to marry according to Christian custom in order to avoid the large sums associated with bridewealth and to increase their standing within their church congregation. Even so, families often pressured the couple to have extravagant wedding ceremonies as proof of prestige and wealth.⁹⁶ Although their elders attempted to assert control during this liminal transition to adulthood, educated youth navigated these competing social pressures by pursuing the marriage option best suited to their socio-economic situation.

The colonial government attempted to assert its control over marriage in the Gold Coast through legislation. In 1884 the government passed the Marriage Ordinance, which ensured government control through the requirement of monogamy, official marriage licenses, and payments for the registration and ordination of marriages and official divorce proceedings.⁹⁷ However, an Ordinance Marriage was disallowed if the couple or person was already married according to “native custom.”⁹⁸ Under the Marriage Ordinance, in the event of a divorce the wife received one-third of the estate and so too the children, with the remaining one-third for the matrilineal kin.⁹⁹ However, this coexisted with pre-existing marriage forms that emphasized matrilineal obligations, polygamy, and payments for adultery, as well as various degrees of conjugal relations that many Europeans categorized as concubinage.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Gocking, 96-97.

⁹⁷ Miescher, 135.

⁹⁸ Gocking, 88-89.

⁹⁹ Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, *“I Will Not Eat Stone” A Women’s History of Colonial Asante* (Heinemann: Portsmouth, 2000), 105.

¹⁰⁰ Allman, “Marrying and Marriage,” 239-242.

Although elders waxed eloquent about proper marriage practices in Gold Coast newspapers, the youth employed their own strategies in marriage to assert their independence, often by refusing to have their marriage ordained with certificates. Religious and traditional authorities viewed this as yet another mode of youthful defiance. George P. Akwa reported on the severity of the situation:

There is a general complaint among the Congregation that no body likes the marriage under the Ordinance, that we scarcely get lawful marriage among the couples. Those who refuse to abide in the rule are suspended from the Lord's Supper. Almost all our young-men are excluded from the Lord's Supper and generally all prefer to be suspended than to have lawful marriage under the Ordinance.¹⁰¹

Similarly, pastors attempted to control courtship and marriage by threatening those married unlawfully with exclusion from the congregation.¹⁰² Some mission agents attempted to underline the distinctions between customary and Christian marriage by emphasizing the peacefulness and happiness of those who married according to Christian precepts. Geo P. Akwa praised those who married according to Christian doctrine and stated that: "The usual quarreling among native couples is seldom seen among the Christians..."¹⁰³ According to missionaries the youth's disregard for the Marriage Ordinance was evidence of their unreadiness to enter marriage without the guidance of the church.

In an effort to reassert control over marriage practices, some adults accused youths of wasting their newly acquired wealth in ostentatious courtships and weddings

¹⁰¹ BMS, "George P. Akwa, "Yearly Report for Asmangkese 1916", D 3, Reel 121.

¹⁰² BMS, "Annual Report of Reverend James Birikorang at Kyebi Through Revered K. Schoenlibernn," D3, Reel 121.

¹⁰³ BMS, Geo P. Akwa, "Half Year Report," Otumi, D 3, Reel 121.

and argued that parents must provide oversight in marriage arrangements and “stricter control over young persons of either sex in the economy of the home.”¹⁰⁴ Mission agents considered elaborate Christian weddings as evidence of moral turpitude and the need for mission guidance. The Basel missionary L. Richter expressed such a judgment of Abokobi youths in 1916 stating: “In spite of the poverty of the people in general, there is a growing love of finery which is displayed at confirmations and weddings.”¹⁰⁵ In contrast, missionaries praised young couples who kept their marriage ceremonies simple.¹⁰⁶ The missions promised that modest Christian marriages would prevent the youth from taking on debt, thus protecting them from themselves. Despite the misgivings of their elders and mission efforts to portray the ideal Christian wedding as relatively austere, a majority of young educated men used the arrangement and celebration of marriage as an occasion to display their wealth. Faced with their declining importance in Gold Coast marriage practices, adults emphasized the extravagant performances of wealth by youths as a way to regain some of their relevance.

Missionaries, traditional authorities and elders, and young men hotly contested polygamous marriage. Stephen Miescher has shown in his analysis of masculinity that educated young men tended to blend Christian and polygamous marriage practices.¹⁰⁷ For missionaries, polygamy clearly went against church doctrine and its continuing practice confirmed the need for mission guidance in the personal lives of young people. Mission reports lamented that, despite mission education, “learned men” tended to be those in polygamous marriages, and viewed the latter as evidence of young African

¹⁰⁴ *GCN*, June 11 1914, p. 619-620.

¹⁰⁵ BMS, L. Richter, “Annual Report for Abokobi 1916,” January 18, 1917, D3, Reel 122.

¹⁰⁶ BMS, C.E. Martinson, “Annual Report,” February 18 1916, D3, Reel 121.

¹⁰⁷ Miescher, 143-152.

men's inherent disobedience, weakness, and inability to fully assimilate Christian doctrine.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, missionaries explained congregational decline as a feature of youths' inability to commit to Christianity, fully convert, and relinquish customary practices, including polygamy, that were incompatible with it. Henry Ofosu Reynolds, a Basel mission agent, recorded the lack of loyalty among the young people of Anum and stated that the number of congregants tended to fluctuate due to the number of young married men who mistreated their wives and abandoned them.¹⁰⁹ These mission reports did not consider why men left their wives, yet claimed to know the reasons for marital separation. The clear remedy, for church authorities, was increased supervision of courtship and marriage.

The topic of youth marriage arrangements filled the pages of newspapers as Africans debated the uses and abuses of each form of marriage and its connotations for the future of the Gold Coast. Youths were central to these debates as they mediated marriages and conjugal relations within their experience of colonialism. Traditional authorities and social reformers described youthful disobedience, particularly among young women as future mothers and purveyors of social respectability, as threatening to prevailing structures of control.¹¹⁰ Amidst a proliferation of articles disparaging the practices of youths in dressing up, dancing, swearing, smoking and drinking, one contributor to the *Gold Coast Nation* wrote that young girls should not marry due to

¹⁰⁸ BMS, "Half- Yearly Report of Dan. Awere, Akyem-Kwabin Begoro," 1916, D 3, Reel 121.

¹⁰⁹ BMS, "Annual Report of Henry Ofosu Reynolds, Anum," D 3, Reel 121.

¹¹⁰ Phyllis Martin, *Catholic Women of Cong-Brazzaville*, 43-44; Ann Stoler also gives a general view of how women were situated as the purveyors of respectability in "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20-th Century Colonial Cultures," *American Ethnologist*, 16, no. 4 (1989): 634-660.

pressure from parents or for money, but rather to seek a good name.¹¹¹ Such a statement was meant to discourage young girls from enjoying these leisure activities or fraternizing with young men who did so. It also urged girls to actively uphold established forms of respectability. Advocates of Christian marriage drew a link between youthful leisure activities and “native customs” of courtship: both led to increased levels of familiarity and even pre-marital intimacy between couples. One concerned Gold Coaster wrote that young men and women were seen drinking convivially in the streets together and warns that the former system of courtship was no longer considered proper and invited social disgrace.¹¹² In this case, the author was rejecting the possibility of alternative forms. Nevertheless, the topic of marriage was inextricably linked to the recreational activities of youths which was understood to be the arena of courtship.

Christian elders were especially invested in preventing premarital sexual relations and perceived their occurrence as confirmation of the threats youths posed to harmonious and Christian social structures and institutions. Missionaries considered educated youths to be most prone to such acts of immorality and thus in need of greater surveillance. Reverend James Birikorang at Kyebi wrote in his report that he had to exclude several girls due to secret sexual relations with young men, while also noting that the young scholars “...do a great deal of mischief to the young girls.”¹¹³ News of sexual misconduct also offered an opportunity for missions to define respectability and personhood by excluding denounced offenders from church services. This served as a public statement of the couple’s impropriety and the church’s authority over such

¹¹¹ *GCN*, March 20 1913, p. 258.

¹¹² *GCN*, December 31 1914.

¹¹³ BMS, “Half Year Report of the Rev. James Birikorang at Kyebi-Through the Rev. K. Schoenleber”, D 3, Reel 121.

matters. However, one Basel missionary complained that youths in his area in general evaded church discipline since even those with lax morals were accepted into the Wesleyan Church.¹¹⁴ By changing denominations when faced with exclusion, youths made their own public statement about the porous nature of church discipline and authority. Such actions of defiance perpetuated narratives and perceptions of youth disobedience among church leaders.

Youth leisure and misconduct

Concerns over youth behavior extended to include youth leisure activities. Leisure was particularly threatening to the authority of elders as it was a site where youths could perform and adopt new notions of personhood as a group. The intermingling of young men and women during informal leisure activities troubled elders who sought to define respectability, to uphold their authority over educational and religious institutions and to control labour and marriage practices.

Scholars of leisure have remarked on the colonial state's interest in organizing leisure activities as a means to control the use of space and to define proper uses of time by limiting time for reflection and shaping activities of self-organization.¹¹⁵ Laura Fair has examined how the state attempted to organize sports in colonial Zanzibar as part of an effort to create an obedient working class.¹¹⁶ The colonial administration viewed

¹¹⁴ BMS, "Yearly Report of George P. Akwa, Pastor At Asamangkese," (1915) D 3, Reel 121.

¹¹⁵ Charles Ambler and Emmanuel Akyeampong, "Leisure in African History: An Introduction," *International Journal of African and Historical Studies* 35, no.1: (2002), 7-9.

¹¹⁶ Laura Fair, "Football and Leisure in Urban Colonial Zanzibar," in *Leisure in Urban Africa*, Paul Tiyambe and Cassandra Rachel Veney eds. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003), 127.

leisure as a means of imparting notions of time and obedience. Colonial authorities in the Gold Coast used annual events of Empire Day celebrations to publicly acknowledge the passage of time and to assess levels of discipline among youth in the colony. During Empire Day celebrations, colonial press waxed eloquent about school children parading through the streets and singing songs in praise of Britannia, with a privileged few being selected to unfurl the flag.¹¹⁷ Empire Day celebrations were designed to feature school children as spectators and participants.¹¹⁸

A popular leisure activity that colonial authorities, and missionaries alike, were particularly in favour of during the early part of the twentieth century was the Gold Coast Boys Scouts movement which was introduced after the first decade of the twentieth century. The Gold Coast Boys Scouts movement was considered an extension of colonial mission education values that cultivated obedience, self-discipline, and a loyal body of colonized subjects.¹¹⁹ Lady Clifford expresses this in *Our Days* when commenting on the segment of the book dedicated to the Boy Scouts Movement. For Lady Clifford, the Boy Scouts was an important movement for uniting the various peoples in the Gold Coast, cultivating obedience, and creating a segment of young gentlemen.¹²⁰ In connection with this, Mike A. Ribeiro, a thirteen-year old boy from Winnebah wrote that being a Boy Scout was important for a boy where education was limited. As a Boy Scout he could learn courage, patriotism, and build character.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ GCN, May 13 1915, p.933.

¹¹⁸ Plageman, *Highlife*, p.40.

¹¹⁹ Timothy H. Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scouts movement in British Colonial Africa* (Ohio University Press: Athens, 2004), 6-13.

¹²⁰ *Our Days*, 196.

¹²¹ *Our Days*, 286-287.

Colonial agents endorsed these pass-times to ensure that certain values were transmitted to youths and that examples of approved forms of leisure abounded.

Notably, Akan ideas about leisure collide with notions personhood. Those who over indulge in leisure were considered unproductive and not adult.¹²² Gold Coast newspapers reveal that educated adults pressured young men and women to get involved in literary and social clubs within which they were to read on and discuss current events. The educated elites promoted these clubs as civilizing tools and as especially important for the youth. An advertisement in the *Gold Coast Nation* prompted all young men to join the Youngmen's Reform Club in Appam, by way of recruiting them to participate in the advancement of the country.¹²³ The educated elite who promoted the club connected the condition of youths to the future state of the country, and the role of the educated elders as important social reformers and progressives. The advertisement illustrates the a belief, among the educated elite who organized and provided oversight for these clubs, that they were the ones to shape the activities of youth as the pioneers of the Gold Coast's future. The appeal of these clubs for some of its members may have been edification; however, they also offered prestige due to their close links to the newspapers that were the mouthpieces of the social clubs. For example, S.H. Brew's speech at the Reading Room of the Native Club in Accra on 30 January 1915 was published in the *Gold Coast Nation*.¹²⁴ Club members were of various ethnic backgrounds and gained

¹²² Ambler and Akyeampong, "Leisure in African History," 7.

¹²³ *GCN*, May 13 1915, p. 936

¹²⁴ *GCN*, August 19 1915, p. 1036. Stephanie Newell also discusses the role of these literary societies in connection with creating elite or semi-elite status among Gold Coasters in the 1920s and 1930s in "Entering the Territory of Elites in Colonial Ghana," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and the Making of the Self*, Karin Barber, ed. (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2006), 211-235.

influence and prestige over the decades; however, at this early stage of the twentieth century, clubs formed and dissolved frequently.

Young men and women participated in them, separately, in an attempt to distinguish themselves from their peers and gain social status. All members were educated and had to have some wealth due to the strict dress requirements and membership fees.¹²⁵ Among the activities that members participated in was ballroom dancing and giving lectures on politics and other matters deemed important.¹²⁶ These clubs upheld the importance of educated elders as they sponsored events, organized the activities, and founded such clubs.¹²⁷ Elders viewed club membership as an appropriate leisure activity for youth, in part due to the clubs' intellectual agenda. The clubs also provided elders with a way to supervise the activities of the youth who joined.

Yet some acts of leisure stood in contrast to approved norms of leisure that elders pointed to as respectable and modern. Elders intensely monitored loitering on town streets where youths congregated, formed new social networks and took up dubious pastimes such as smoking, drinking, gambling, and dancing.¹²⁸ Streets were the public spaces where youths could perform and disseminate new modes of personhood, the arena in which to challenge and display their autonomy. Adults were persuaded that all the loitering would lead to ruin. As one contributor to the *Gold Coast Leader* wrote, young men and women were seen "roaming" the streets where there was potential for

¹²⁵ Plageman, *Highlife*, 72-76.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Stephanie Newell, "Entering the Territory of Elites," 211-213.

¹²⁸ This was a common trend in discourses about youths in cities. For a case in Congo-Brazzaville see Phyllis Martin's *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville*, and Andrew Burton, "Urchins, Loafers and the Cult of the Cowboy: Urbanization and Delinquency in Dar es Salaam," *Journal of African History* 42 (2001): 199-216.

disgraceful acts to occur.¹²⁹ These recreational practices of youth in the streets caused adults to fear for the degeneracy of authority over youths and their personhood.

Social reformers believed that carousing in the streets would lead to inappropriate sexual interactions between youths. Adults tried to establish new codes of conduct and appropriate hours of interaction when the youth would be in the public eye. Many elders suggested curfews, especially for young women. For example, the *Scrutineer* wrote that: “I am of the opinion that girls should be disallowed from selling in the streets bread, cake, and all other things after six o’clock in the evening. Those who may be in quest of these eatables may enquire for them from homes were (sic) they are known to be produced.”¹³⁰

Missionaries also noticed that youths often chose leisure activities, such as drinking or visiting friends over Sunday church service.¹³¹ Missionaries deplored the educated youth for their irregular attendance and lack of punctuality, and considered this further evidence of the youth’s defiance and general lack of self-discipline.¹³² Mission agents also policed the youths in the streets in an effort to shape proper recreational activities at appropriate times; however, they were more inclined to blame the parents for a lack of supervision. One mission agent reported that in Abetifi he consistently found Christian children playing outside during the night, and he had to forcibly bring them home where the parents confessed they had no control of the children.¹³³

¹²⁹ *GCL*, March 14 1903, 2.

¹³⁰ *GCL*, September 12 1903, 3.

¹³¹ *GCL*, April 23 1910, 4.

¹³² BMS, William Quartey, “La District Annual Report 1916,” Reel 121.

¹³³ BMS, *In-and –Out Correspondence*, D.E. Akwa “Report for 1916, Abetifi,” February 22 1917, D 3, Reel 122.

Adults cloaked real or imagined concerns of sexual behaviour among youths with accusations that the youth were failing to observe appropriate times for leisure and socialization. One author who touched on this issue wrote an article stating that it was a fact that youths on the streets were exchanging love letters and that, “In some of the towns of the Colony it is not unusual to meet young unmarried ladies out in the streets up to an unconscionably late hour of the night when they should have been in bed long before, and when their day should have been over at eight o’clock.”¹³⁴ Elders motivated by the desire to maintain control over institutions and norms cast the youth’s behaviour and negligence to adhere to prescribed forms of leisure and time as disobedience.

Notably, the street was where youths were able to organize and communicate new habits linked to their conception of personhood not only through their actions but also through their choice of fashion. These concerns extended to the youth’s manner of dress. One contributor from Axim expressed real exasperation over the sight of boys and girls dancing together in the streets dressed in all kinds of silks and attending church in these same costumes.¹³⁵ Another contributor wrote that new modes of dress, including wearing silks, showed a disregard for all institutions in the Gold Coast.¹³⁶ Youths wearing silks and dancing were often considered to be part of the Odanu dance group, or were associating themselves with this group, which was considered a rebellious and ostentatious group, and many wrote to the papers calling for such dancing groups to be banned.¹³⁷ One person under the pseudonym “Man on the Street” complained that youths were adopting too much European fashion, and as a result youths could not

¹³⁴ *GCN*, June 18 1914, 623.

¹³⁵ *GCL*, June 17 1911, 2.

¹³⁶ *GCN*, January 8 1914, 504.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

properly greet African elders. He explained that only with African dress could a proper greeting to an African elder be enacted which included the moving of cloth from one shoulder to the next.¹³⁸ Fashion denoted inclusion in groups and activities that elders were excluded from, which led many elders to imagine the youth's degradation and the degeneration of established norms of personhood.

Conclusion

Religious and traditional authorities as well as the Gold Coast educated elite dismissed as disobedience the youth's attempts to acquire autonomy and embark upon their own paths to personhood. Markers of personhood included work, wealth, marriage and leisure. The youths asserted their autonomy through the invention of new norms of behaviour as a part of their experience of colonial order. Colonial and mission education distinguished them as unique and important projections of the future. Meanwhile, adults sought to reinforce their dominant status, authority, and privilege by denying the legitimacy of alternative frameworks of personhood that the youths constructed and enacted. In their commentaries and letters, adults figured educated youths to be immoral, weak, and undiscerning, implying that they required adult supervision without which they could not become upstanding leaders of tomorrow's Gold Coast. This invariably led to intergenerational conflict over everyday habits and expectations.

Although the youth may have had little official political clout at this time, the narratives that painted the youth as bearing these negative attributes gestured towards

¹³⁸ *GCN*, December 31 1914, p. 791.

the potential political and socio-economic strength of an educated youth. With one eye on these youthful contenders for power, elders criticized, moralized, and otherwise tried to dictate how and when youths could migrate, marry, take up employment, spend their leisure time, and wear their clothes. Subsequent generations of Gold Coast youths continued to assert their political significance in the coming decades and youth defiance became an issue that required legislation and reform to stomp out. During the early decades of the twentieth century, a variety of elders with varying degrees of power and influence, more than administrative officials, were the ones preoccupied with the behavior of youth in an effort to shape everyday habits in the Gold Coast.

CHAPTER 3

FOOD AND THE MAKING OF AN AFRICAN ELITE IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY GOLD COAST

While sanitation and education were major concerns for early twentieth century Gold Coasters, food also dominated local concerns. During the early decades of the twentieth century, as the increasing pressure of colonialism transformed economic and social relations in the Gold Coast, everyday food habits were inevitably altered. While the educated elite had opposed the Lands Bill in the nineteenth century, thus demonstrating to colonial administrators that they were a political force to be reckoned with, food related issues served as a secondary site for contesting colonial governance and European claims to the exclusivity of modernity.

In early twentieth century Gold Coast, the colonial administrative infrastructure was expanding and limiting the participation of African elites. The colonial government favoured European firms,¹ which meant that African merchants faced mounting competition. New regulations limited African participation in the colonial administration and medical field.² The educated elite's political influence during this period

¹ Michael R. Doortmont, "Producing a Received View of Gold Coast Society? C.F. Hutchinson's Pen Pictures of Modern Africans and African Celebrities," *History in Africa*, 53, (2006): 483, DOI: 10.1353/hia.2006.0010.

² David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928*, (London: Oxford University Press) 97-101.

increasingly waned in comparison to that of the traditional chiefs.³ Believing that the educated elite merely sought to mimic Europeans, colonial administrators insisted that Gold Coast elite were not in touch with ordinary Africans and had little understanding of local opinions.⁴ To contradict this, the educated elite used knowledge of food related issues in the colony to position themselves as brokers of modernity between Africans and colonial administrators. Gold Coast elite used food to express their criticisms of the colonial government as well as their aspirations for a future, modern Gold Coast in which they would wield social, political, and economic power.

The study of food is often connected to identity,⁵ yet "...it can also be used to get ahead within a community and sometimes to reach across other communities and invoke common interests," as Erica Peters suggests in her study of food and drink in nineteenth century Vietnam.⁶ As national sentiment burgeoned in intellectual milieus of early twentieth century Gold Coast, educated elite appropriated Western definitions of

³ Kimble, 389-391. For more on the issue of tensions between chiefs and the educated elite see Roger S. Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule* (New York: University Press of America, 1999).

. Gocking discusses how in the early twentieth century the chiefs and educated elite competed for colonial favour as political representatives of Gold Coasters.

⁴ Kimble, 390-391.

⁵ Jeffrey Pilcher's work *Que vivan los tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*, is a foundational piece that looks at the significance of food in maintaining and building on identity in the colonial setting. There is a growing body of work in terms of studying food in Africa outside of the framework of deprivation and more towards a history of consumption. One of the most important is Jeremy Rich's work on food in colonial Gabon which describes how food, and especially imported food, was used to demarcate racial and class identities, see *A Workman Is Worthy of His Meat: Food and Colonialism in the Gabon Estuary*. For a discussion of how the taste of food figured in notions of identity in the colonial setting see Melissa Graboyes' work, "Chappati complaints and biriani cravings: the aesthetics of food in colonial Zanzibari Institutions," *Journal of African Studies* 5, no.2 (2011): 313-328, DOI:10.1080/17531055.2011.571391. For work on how the colonial power used food practices to demarcate identities of difference between colonizer and colonized, and how notions of nutrition figured in these constructions see Deborah Neill's work, "Finding the 'Ideal Diet': Nutrition, Culture, and Dietary Practices in France and French Equatorial Africa, c. 1890s to 1920s," *Food and Foodways* 17, no. 1 (2009): 1-28.

⁶ Erica J. Peters, *Appetites and Aspirations in Vietnam: Food and Drink in the long nineteenth-century* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littleford Press, 2012), xiv.

modernity even as they increasingly rejected colonialism. Through food consumption practices, the educated elite of the Gold Coast constructed themselves as an upper class defining what the Gold Coast should be. At the same time, they critiqued colonial food policies, in the spheres of agriculture, importation, access, and quality, as a way of showing that they were better suited to regulate Gold Coast society's "progress" to modernity. Although the educated elite did not yet have the intention of overthrowing the colonial government, they aimed to assert themselves as important, knowledgeable, and progressive social, economic, and political actors in the progress of the Gold Coast.

Although the educated elite were not a homogenous group with identical notions of modernity, they collectively used food consumption to demarcate their position in Gold Coast society, and inserted themselves into discussions about the production, importation, access, and quality of food, which filled the pages of Gold Coast newspapers. Through these writings, African elite portrayed themselves as prestigious modernizers of African society who were in touch with the everyday experiences of the colonized. The *Gold Coast Leader* and the *Gold Coast Nation* were two prominent newspapers that Africans used to give voice to their political views and cultural practices. The *Gold Coast Leader* was founded in 1902, and had prominent elites such as J.E. Casely Hayford, a lawyer and nationalist, as its founder and editor.⁷ The *Gold Coast Nation* was founded in 1912 and was considered the official voice of the Gold Coast Aborigines' Rights Protection Society,⁸ and expressed a more cooperative,

⁷ Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, "“Untold Difficulties:” The Indigenous Press and the Economic Effects of the First World War on Africans in The Gold Coast, 1914-1918,” p. 50-51.

⁸ Ibid. This was a society founded in the nineteenth century by educated elites. It was originally formed to combat the Lands Bill, and continued to work as a political group with the aim of exercising a prominent role in Gold Coast politics and mitigating the negative effects of colonialism. Also see David Kimble, *A Political History*.

although sometimes still critical, attitude towards the colonial government. Both newspapers relied on reader's contributions and provided an opportunity for the educated to express their views on various issues. However, the *Gold Coast Leader* was less discriminating when it came to accepting submissions, and encouraged a wide range of opinions including those of the newly educated. In contrast, the *Gold Coast Nation* presented itself as more prestigious and only accepted contributions with well articulated arguments.⁹ In the local newspapers, food became a means for the educated inhabitants of the Gold Coast to define and represent themselves, and to make demands on the colonial administration.

Banquets, picnics, and tea: a performance of prestige

Consumption, as Sidney Mintz has argued, "is at the same time a form of self-identity and of communication."¹⁰ In early twentieth century Gold Coast, dining was a public performance of social identity and reflected, to a certain extent, the workings of political power.¹¹ For elite Gold Coasters, consumption and dining was a declarative act of ideals, knowledge, and prestige manifesting a cohesive upper class that could direct the progress of the Gold Coast. Although the colonial government increasingly favoured

⁹ Stephanie Newell, "Articulating Empire: Newspaper Readership in Colonial West Africa," *New Formations*, 73, (2011): 31-32.

¹⁰ Sidney Mintz, *Tasting food, tasting freedom: Excursions into eating, culture, and the past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 13-14. This also builds on Pierre Bourdieu's work about the performance of cultural capital that is learned as in manners or taste, *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Richard Nice, trans. (London: Routledge, 1984).

¹¹ Here I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's work *A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Richard Nice, trans. (London: Routledge, 1984). He proposes that aristocratic culture is based on false claims of objectivity in order to have socially constructed claims of cultural taste and desired truths seem objective and gain legitimacy in order to ensure increased opportunities to gain capital for the aristocratic group meanwhile limiting its accessibility to outsiders, 100-101, and 174-180.

traditional chiefs as representatives of local Africans, a growing number of African elites with varying levels of education and income worked to assert their position within the social and political framework of the colony by declaring their influence and achievements at the colony's periodic public dining events. Local newspapers often featured the news of banquets, teas, or picnics were often in the first two pages, and sometimes included detailed coverage of the speeches given and list of attendees at the most prestigious events. Although the newspapers predominantly focused on local banquets and events, news of important banquets that the local Governor attended outside of the Gold Coast was also published.¹²

Public dining in the Gold Coast revealed the "Who's Who" of Gold Coast elite. Groups, associations, and clubs all organized dining outings exclusively for their members ranging from black tie events to casual picnicking. Thus public dining became a marker of shared identity and status, with members who both appropriated and built on British cultural ideas regarding modernity.¹³ Many of these membership groups, such as the Free Masons and Free Gardeners,¹⁴ had a long history in the Gold Coast. The educated elite encouraged educated youth to participate in such groups. Newspapers in the colony presented the dining activities of these groups as the practice of a prominent and enduring elite.

¹² *GCL*, November 24 1906, 1-2., at a banquet with Lord Curzon Governor Slater addressed the issue of tolls on Gold Coast roads; Lord Kitchener's speech at a banquet regarding the soldiers at the front (WWI), *GCN*, November 26 1914, 762.,

¹³ Stephan Newell, *Literary Culture in Colonial Ghana: 'How to play the game of life'* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002), 39.

¹⁴ Augustus Casely-Hayford and Richard Rathbone, "Politics, Families and Freemasonry in the Colonial Gold Coast," in *People and Empires in African History: Essays in Memory of Michael Crowder* (London: Longman Group, 1992), 146-147.

The groups' elaborate dining activities included casual, yet public, consumption such as picnicking. For instance, in 1902, the *Gold Coast Leader* reported that the junior level Free Gardeners picnicked and held a tea party.¹⁵ Belonging to an exclusive recreational group did not provide the only opportunity for having one's consumption activities published. Gold Coast editors also published brief accounts of church or school outings for tea or picnics.¹⁶ These reports of tea and picnicking complemented the visibility of these exclusive groups that were often seen publicly dining. Building on the practices of exclusive clubs and dining that colonial officials had, the educated African elite used dress, membership to intellectual social groups, dances, and English language knowledge, to mark their importance as modern individuals.¹⁷

Fees and social codes restricted membership in these social groups,¹⁸ and their members used a variety of everyday symbols, including dining, to differentiate themselves as an upper class elite. Members wore European dress and bought a plethora of imported goods.¹⁹ In fact, the exclusive dining clubs were so popular and desirable that some people attempted to fraudulently claim membership in them. For example, the Boy Scouts often went on picnics and paraded through town in their uniforms.²⁰ However, some people procured and wore Boy Scout uniforms, although they were not officially members of the organization, in the hope of increasing their prestige.²¹ In his diary report, the Assistant District Commissioner, W. Hansen wrote that while on a tour

¹⁵ *GCL*, August 9 1902, 1.

¹⁶ For instance, *GCN*, May 9 1912, p.2, reported a picnic held by the Wesleyans in Appam, or in the *GCL*, October 31, 1908 issue it was reported that the Wesleyan School members went for picnic.

¹⁷ Nathan Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night: Popular Music and Social Change in Urban Ghana*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2013), 72-74.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 73-74.

¹⁹ Plageman, *Highlife Saturday Night*, 36-37.

²⁰ See for instance the *GCN* article about the local Boy Scout's picnic, March 25, 1915, p. 879.

²¹ Timothy H. Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 24.

of inspection in Swerdu he found a Boy Scout imposter in uniform, who was too old to be a Boy Scout and who did not know the Boy Scout drills.²² The appeal and prominence of these social clubs grew, and by the 1920s and 1930s became more accessible to the various social classes.²³ Participants in recreation clubs held banquets to honour members, to discuss important political issues and to exchange knowledge on various subjects such as literary texts and current events.²⁴ Exclusive dining became one way in which the Gold Coast upper class portrayed themselves to be prominent representatives of a modernizing African society.

African elite's published lists of attendees, and accounts of activities and speeches accompanying dining outings and events created a public record of various individuals' attainment of prestige, political involvement or religiosity. Banquets were often held to honour elite individuals' accomplishments that benefitted the whole community. For instance, the *Gold Coast Leader* described a banquet attended by sixty persons at the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Mount Pleasant in 1905 in honour of R. M. Acquah's to show: "appreciation of his untiring services rendered in connection with the recent repairs of their beautiful little chapel."²⁵

Banquets heralded a move away from the past and towards the future as these events were held to mark moments of progress.²⁶ Banquets were also held to mark retirement after a long career, and were lauded as contributing to the progress of the

²² Thora Williamson, *Gold Coast Diaries: Chronicles of Political Officers in West Africa, 1900-1919*, Anthony Kirk-Greene, ed. (London: Radcliffe Press, 2000), 108.

²³ Stephanie Newell, "Entering the Territory of Elites: Literary Activity in Colonial Ghana," in *Africa's Hidden histories: Everyday Literacy and Making the Self*, ed. Karin Barber, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 214-215.

²⁴ Newell, "Entering the Territory of Elites," 219.

²⁵ *GCL*, April 19 1905, p.2

²⁶ Plageman, *Highlife*, 74.

Gold Coast. One person reporting on a banquet in honour of services given by Hon. J. Mensah Sarbah, Barrister-at Law, stated that the event “deserves the thanks of the race...it affords a pleasant opportunity to inspire and foster in the rising generation a strong and healthy desire to emulate the worthy examples of their compatriots in their honest endeavour to dedicate their lives to the well being of their country and race.”²⁷ The elite used banquets to proclaim the contribution of Africans to the progress and civilization of the Gold Coast, thus dismantling European portrayals of Europeans as sole bearers of modernity and progress.

Production, Paternalism and Particularism

Colonial administrators employed a paternalistic rhetoric of civilization and progress to lend credence to their initiatives in the colony. Europeans cited rationality, science and technology, and European economic and government systems as pillars of European modernity. Although a universalistic language was employed to justify the colonial presence, colonizers claimed to be the sole purveyors of modernity and civilization in the colonial setting as a way of ensuring their control over the exploitation of resources and people in the colony, while also appeasing metropolitan humanitarians. The universalistic “civilizing mission” became practical policy through the implementation of scientific agriculture in the Gold Coast, where agronomists were concerned with increasing cocoa yields and meat production.²⁸

²⁷ *GCL*, August 28 1909, *Editorial Notes*, p.2.

²⁸ Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 2-3.

Colonial administrators and agronomists used the term “scientific agriculture” to distinguish European methods of agriculture from African methods. For the colonial administration, agricultural production was of critical importance, especially by 1910 as the Gold Coast became the primary producer of cocoa.²⁹ Agricultural policies undermined African knowledge and portrayed African farmers as children in need of a knowledgeable paternalistic overseer. As one European expert named A.E. Kitson remarked after a nineteen month tour and inspection of the geography of the Gold Coast to assess its potential for development, he pointed to “native indifference and carelessness” as inhibiting the progress and development of the Gold Coast.³⁰ Colonial administrators often stated that Africans preferred not to work as labourers and farmers due to their lack of reason and their childlike emulation of Europeans.³¹

While colonial policies depicted Africans as inherently backward and irrational, they showcased European knowledge of agriculture as modern and progressive. Although European experts had little training in tropical environments, the Department of Agriculture’s primary focus from 1905-1920 was to teach local farmers how to “properly” farm cocoa.³² According to agronomists, cocoa farmers needed to institute such techniques as: “pegging; neat rows and clean weeding; ditching, open, uniformly

²⁹ Claire C. Robertson, *Sharing the Same Bowl: socioeconomic history of women and class in Accra, Ghana* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1984), 32.

³⁰ A.E. Kitson, “The Gold Coast Some Considerations of its Structure, People and Natural History,” *The Geographical Journal* 48, no.5 (1916): 378.

³¹ *Ibid*, 304-305.

³² R.H. Green and S.H. Hymer, “Cocoa in the Gold Coast: A Study in the Relations Between African Farmers and Agricultural Experts,” *The Journal of Economic History* 26, no. 3 (1966): 306.

dry fields; and so forth.”³³ Yet many cocoa farmers did not adopt the methods proposed by colonial experts as they preferred to minimize labour costs.³⁴

Although the majority of food production occurred in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, the colonial government’s agricultural policy focused on the cocoa producing regions of the Gold Coast to the south. The colonial government viewed the Northern Territories as a source of labour and many of the men migrated to work as miners,³⁵ as labourers on farms³⁶, as launderers, gardeners or in other paid occupations.³⁷ At this time, cocoa farms were being widely established and there was significant demands for labour. Depending on the size of the farm, work on cocoa farms depended on the availability of family labour; however, larger farms had to employ additional help.³⁸ The *abusa* worker was used on large farms, and was the caretaker who was usually hired to help clear land and care for new farms before they were profitable and supervised the farm and worked throughout the year.³⁹ As the *abusa* worker this person received a third of the profits from the farm, and could grow their own food on the land,

³³ Ibid, 308.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kimble, 40-42.

³⁶ Men from the Northern Territories were especially important in the twentieth century as farm labourers as there was an increasing number of cocoa farmers in need of labour. (See Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, “Transformations in the Feminization of Unfree Domestic Labor: A Study of *Abaawa* or Prepubescent Female Servitude in Modern Ghana,” *International Labor & Working Class History*, 78, no.1 (2010): 37-38). Adding to this pressure was the fact that some men found themselves pawning their daughter or nieces to access cash in order to buy land. Women were also used as sources of labour for transporting cocoa and worked as porters. Beverly Grier’s work elaborates on the issue of female labour in connection with cocoa farms, see “Pawns, Porters, and Petty Traders: Women in the Transition to Cash-crop Agriculture in Colonial Ghana, in *Pawnship, Slavery, and Colonialism in Africa*, eds. Paul E. Lovejoy and Toyin Falola (Trenton: African World Press, 2003). In some cases, and especially by the 1920s, wives divorced their husbands and set up their own cocoa farms, which led farmers to increasingly rely on hired labour. (See, Jean Allman’s work that explores the ensuing “gender chaos” that resulted from the spread of the cocoa industry, “Making Mothers: Missionaries, Medical Officers and Women’s Work in Colonial Asante, 1914-1945,” *History Workshop* 38, (1994): 23-47.

³⁷ Akurang-Parry, “Unfree Domestic Labor,” 37.

³⁸ Inez Sutton, “Labour in Commercial Agriculture in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *The Journal of African History*, 24, no. 4 (1983): 472-473.

³⁹ Ibid.

while all other workers were paid wages and hired on a casual basis according to the labour needed for the farm work.⁴⁰ Although local authorities in the Northern Territories did work toward making food production a priority, notably experimenting with local cattle production, the colonial administration did not provide much support. An over-emphasis on cocoa to the detriment of food-crops in the Northern Territories soon led to food shortages throughout the colony.⁴¹ Tolls on trade routes and the lack of infrastructure to transport food from the Northern Territories to the south further exacerbated food supply issues in the Gold Coast.⁴² Lacking an agricultural policy focused on food production and an infrastructure for its distribution, Gold Coast populations soon became dependent on imported foods.⁴³ While the colonial government was critical of African farmers focusing too much on cocoa production, the colonial government was guilty of the same.

Acting as the colony's paternalistic overseer, the colonial government designed agricultural shows as didactic tools to promote the European "science" of farming and to encourage Africans to cultivate certain cash crops such as coffee, cotton, cocoa, and rice. At a meeting in 1905 about the upcoming Agricultural Exhibition, the Governor of the Gold Coast stated that the exhibition's purpose was to encourage scientific farming and the use of machinery, as well as the adoption of export crops such as coffee, and the

⁴⁰ Ibid. For more on cocoa farming and labour needs see Polly Hill's work, which has served as the basis for many other studies on cocoa farming in the Gold Coast, *Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

⁴¹ Inez Sutton, "Colonial Agricultural Policy: The Non-Development of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 22, no. 4, (1989): 642-643.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ A similar dependency on imported food became prominent in French colonial Gabon, a territory, like the Gold Coast, lacked an agricultural policy focused on food as well infrastructure to facilitate its distribution. Jeremy Rich, *A Workman is Worthy of His Meat :Food and colonialism in the Gabon Estuary* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2007), 46.

display of farm animals that could be improved for consumption in the colony.⁴⁴

Colonial administrators made disparaging remarks at this meeting about the laziness of African farmers. Through their commentary on the Agricultural Exhibition, which took up several pages of the local newspaper the *Gold Coast Leader*, the educated elite assumed the role of representing and defending local farmers against the pejorative claims of the colonial administration. For example, the prominent African political figure Mr. Hutton-Mills argued that it was the high cost of start-up and labour required by colonial-style farming, not laziness, that prevented Africans from undertaking it. Furthermore, most farmers could not possibly afford the scientific training or the machinery associated with European scientific farming. Hutton-Mills also challenged the statement that Africans were mimicking Europeans by choosing to be lawyers rather than farmers. He insisted that while some Africans became lawyers for reasons of prestige, they also viewed practicing law as a way to protect themselves and their lands from exploitation.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, colonial administrators and scientific experts remained convinced that the African farmer was inherently backwards, lazy, or irrational. The 1915 colonial draft report for the Gold Coast showed an increase in agricultural production. Yet the report revealed the government's ongoing distrust for African farmers' judgment, as well as fears that African farmers would overextend themselves and prove unable to tend to the farms adequately.⁴⁶ The report also expressed disfavour for the African practice of leaving young farms or plots untended or untreated when signs of disease emerged.

⁴⁴ *Gold Coast Leader*, February 4, 1905, "Agricultural Exhibition: Supplement 1 & 2," p. 5-6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Gold Coast Nation*, September 30 1915, 1094-1095.

Africans intentionally left diseased crops untended in order to encourage resistance to disease. Planting food crops intermittently with cocoa, as African planters often did, usually contained the spread of disease. Still, European agronomists did not understand or accept these practices as effective against agricultural disease.⁴⁷ Instead, colonial administrators described African farming as providing:

....no attention after planting, [which]has engendered in the native farmer a deep-seated reluctance to interfere in any way with the course of nature until the fruit is ripe for him to gather. The field is thus left open for insect and fungoid parasites and the most absorbing and most difficult task of the Agricultural Department is that of persuading the cultivators, especially the cocoa-growers, of the importance of keeping their plantations clean, and using such simple measures of culture and sanitation as may preclude the possibility of disease spreading and becoming a serious menace to the industry.⁴⁸

The 1915 agricultural report outlined a plan to improve production through the establishment of an agricultural station in the Western Province to train local farmers to tend to their crops.⁴⁹ However, according to the *Gold Coast Nation*, which printed government instructions about how to plant cocoa, local farmers refused to follow instructions or to take advice from agricultural experts.⁵⁰ By publishing this material the editors demonstrated their knowledge of events and discourses pertaining to cocoa and food production in the colony. Notably, these publications inspired debate about the topic of government interference in agriculture and what constituted modern agricultural method.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Green and Hymer, 309.

⁴⁸ *Annual Report of the Colonies, Gold Coast, 1916*, 26

⁴⁹ *Gold Coast Nation*, September 30 1915, 1094-1095.

⁵⁰ *GCN*, May 4 1916, "Agricultural Report", 1331.

⁵¹ Stephanie Newell writes that often the editors published excerpts from other newspapers from within Africa or outside, as well as reports in order to have readers write in and pursue the topic. Stephanie

As debates about how to improve agricultural production persisted, some educated elites agreed with the colonial government that there was indeed a need for improving agricultural practices using scientific methods. In 1907, the *Gold Coast Leader* reprinted an article from a nineteenth century newspaper titled “The Dignity of Manual Labour.” The article, originally printed in 1892, expressed views aligned with the current colonial government when it stated that the young needed to take positions as labourers and adopt “labour saving” agricultural appliances in order to ensure a healthy supply of food for local consumption.⁵² Whether in the production of food or export crops, some local educated African elites considered the application of scientific methods as the modern and therefore correct way to pursue agriculture in the colony. Yet those who agreed with the government only did so partially. One writer to the *Gold Coast Leader* agreed that there were too many young men working as clerks and farming should be encouraged as a profession. Yet the writer expressed doubt as to the usefulness of agricultural exhibitions, and suggested that the only way for scientific agriculture to become popular in the Gold Coast was to increase its accessibility by lowering the cost of training.⁵³

Importing Dependency

Discussions circulated in the Gold Coast about the prevalence of imported food, which many considered symptomatic of the problems with agricultural production. In speaking

Newell, “Articulating Empire: Newspaper Readership in Colonial West Africa,” *New Formations*, 73, (2011): 31-35.

⁵² *GCL*, October 12 1907, p. 3

⁵³ *GCL*, March 23 1912, “Wanted An Agricultural School,” 4.

out against the reliance on imported foods, the educated elite formulated a critique of the colonial government and constructed their own nationalist agenda of modernization. Although R.H. Green and S.H. Hymer have argued that the Gold Coast population was not dependent upon imported food,⁵⁴ the colonial administration and educated Africans pointed to imported food as evidence of the need for intervention. Similar to French colonial Gabon, populations in the coastal towns of the Gold Coast were able to access imported food more easily than those in the interior regions, and adopted tastes for foreign foods.⁵⁵ However, both colonial states had agricultural food policies that left these regions dependent on faraway food production and trade.⁵⁶

Educated elites contested colonial narratives that associated African consumption of tinned food with their failure to understand the importance of food crop farming. This association was likely coloured by the perceived Europeanness of tinned food, the consumption of which was a marker of an expatriate colonial experience and attempts to maintain an uncorrupted European identity as in French West Africa where cultural boundaries were most pronounced.⁵⁷ In the Gold Coast, Europeans relied on imported tinned food in an attempt to maintain a “British” diet as much as possible. Tinned food figured as the material cultural practice of the British upper class in colonial Africa.

Sylvia Leith-Ross, a colonial administrator’s wife in Nigeria, described in her journal

⁵⁴ Hymer and Green, 314.

⁵⁵ For more information on the role of imported food in colonial Gabon see Rich, *A Workman’s Worthy of His Meat*.

⁵⁶ For colonial Gabon see Rich, *A Workman is Worthy of His Meat*, p. 106. For the Gold Coast see Inez Sutton’s work “Colonial Agricultural Policy: The Non-Development of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 22, 4 (1989): 642-643.

⁵⁷ See Jeremy Rich, *A Workman is Worthy of His Meat :Food and colonialism in the Gabon Estuary* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2007). Also for a French colonial perspective see, Susan Freidberg, “French Beans for the masses: A modern historical geography of food in Burkina Faso,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 29, no. 3 (2003): 445-463; Deborah Neill, “Finding the “Ideal Diet”: Nutrition, Culture, and Dietary Practices in France and French Equatorial Africa, c. 1890s to 1920s,” *Food and Foodways* 17, no. 1 (2009): 1-28.

the British colonialists' meticulous pursuit of standards of dining in order to distinguish themselves from local Nigerians. Practices included donning proper dining attire⁵⁸ and eating so lavishly that it resulted in a "holocaust of tins."⁵⁹ Similarly, a European clerk named Robert Lancaster, wrote a piece describing the living conditions of European clerks in the Gold Coast. In his account he remarked that Europeans should expect to live with other European clerks, have a full staff of African servants, including a cook, and that "dinner is served, as much like the English dinner as the climate allows."⁶⁰ Such consumption practices served as an assertion of British identity, as well as the wealth, prestige and power of Britain. Unlike in Britain, tinned food was expensive in the colonies and was in constant demand.⁶¹ Yet Europeans did consume local foods such as palm-oil chop, after altering it to meet their taste preferences was a way of making it decidedly British and less African.⁶² Colonial narratives regarding Africans' dependence on imported food for sustenance were likely tinged with a desire to preserve tinned food as an exclusive symbol of British identity and prestige.

Colonial officials argued that local Africans relied on imported food due to greed and lack of foresight and conveyed this notion in their reports. For example, a 1917 government report on the state of the cocoa industry argued that: "...the increasing shortage of foodstuffs," was due to "the population formerly employed in raising them

⁵⁸ Sylvia Leith-Ross, *Stepping-Stones: Memoirs of Colonial Nigeria 1907-1960*, Michael Crowder ed. (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1983), 69.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 48.

⁶⁰ *GCL*, May 2 1903, 4

⁶¹ Leith-Ross, 48.

⁶² Jonathan Robins, "Colonial Cuisine: Food in British Nigeria," *Cultural Studies* ↔ *Critical Methodologies*, 10, 6 (2010): 459-460.

devoting themselves to the planting of cocoa,” and living off of tinned food.⁶³ The report suggested increased control and supervision of cocoa farmers as a way of addressing this negligence on the part of local farmers.⁶⁴ Thus, the government cited food shortages and the consumption of imported food as justification for its stricter control of production in the colony. The colonial government desired to profit from colonial subjects turned consumers of imported manufactured products. Yet at the same time, colonial officials cast the consumption of tinned food as proof of the inability of Gold Coast Africans to care for themselves and their lack of progress. For both colonial administrators and educated African elites, African populations’ consumption of tinned food demonstrated their dependency.

African elites engaged colonial administrators in conversations about the population’s dependency on imported food, inverted the colonial narrative of African farmers’ neglect of food cultivation, and used it to expose the colonial government’s inadequacies. In a *Gold Coast Leader* article entitled “Following Father’s Footsteps: II: Our Father’s Duty,” the author, a Mr. J.D.H., used the image of a failed father to represent the colonial government. J.D.H. criticized the government for promoting British ways and creating a dependency on imports rather than teaching the people how to use the land to produce necessities such as milk and meat.⁶⁵ As the cost of imported food items increased, so too did critiques of the government. One angry contributor pointed out that in the past African representatives recommended acquiring more cattle

⁶³ Confidential Print: Africa, War and Colonial Department and Colonial Office: Africa, *Confidential Print: Africa, 1834-1966*, Confidential Print: Nos. 1038 to 1047, 1912-1917, West African Land Committee, “The Cocoa Industry in The Gold Coast and in Ashanti: History and Progress of the Industry,” 97.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *GCL*, March 23 1909, p. 3

to produce fresh milk and to serve as transportation, but former Governor Nathan had rejected this idea because lorries were becoming more popular.⁶⁶ The government was unconcerned with provisioning local people with food, the author wrote, but this was neglectful. He urged that cattle should be found to produce milk and a stimulus given to sugar farmers.⁶⁷ In newspaper writings, the educated elite proposed solutions to the problem of farmers' dependency on imported foods.

Gold Coast intellectuals found it important to participate in discussions about the production of food in order to influence the meanings food would take on in the colony.⁶⁸ Significantly, they cast the production and consumption of local food with a nationalist tone. African elites contended that the Gold Coast's dependency on the colonial power was tied to its reliance on imported goods, and especially imported food. The author of the article "Our Commercial Status," in the *Gold Coast Nation* argued that Gold Coasters should keep colony revenue within the community by becoming more self-sufficient and not buying imported foods and products, which solely benefitted Europe's economy.⁶⁹ Promoting economic independence, he portrayed local produce as profitable to the community, unlike British imported food. He stated that British breakfast required several articles, many of which were expensive imports: "This means 3d. of what you get for the produce you sell to the European must go back to him alone instead of a part of it going to the native *bodo* seller...."⁷⁰ Invoking the connection

⁶⁶ *GCL*, August 22 1914, p.6

⁶⁷ *GCL*, August 22 1914, p.6

⁶⁸ This is in line with Sidney Mintz's study of the diffusion of sugar in society. He states that those who control society and the food item also dictate the values and meanings given to that item. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York : Penguin Books, 1986), 4-5.

⁶⁹ *GCN*, July 23 1914, "Our Commercial Status," p. 653.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

between the community and the value of local produce, the author attempted to persuade others of the crucial importance of self-sufficiency and economic independence.

Many educated elites felt that progress would only come once they were liberated from their dependency on imported food, and thus the colonial power too. In the *Gold Coast Nation*, one author questioned why they had to import butter when there were cows in the Gold Coast, and furthermore, why they had to import processed cocoa when the Gold Coast was the leading cocoa producer.⁷¹ Positioning himself as a fictional king, the author encouraged the cultivation of food crops so that tinned food could be avoided.⁷² Imported food showed the ways in which colonialism rendered people vulnerable and dependent. One author commented that the embargo of sugar to the colony in 1919 would only expand to include other imported foods; it was necessary for them to learn how to provide for themselves.⁷³ Many of the educated elites rejected imported food in the hope of taking control of agricultural production and the modernization of the Gold Coast.

Access Denied: Inaction

The production of food was invariably tied to concerns of food shortages in the colony. The educated elite sought to identify the prevailing issues affecting the accessibility of food in order to expose the shortcomings of the government and local leaders. This shored up their self-representation as more knowledgeable and in touch with the everyday experiences of the general public than colonial administrators. In writing about

⁷¹ *GCN*, July 13 1916, "If I were A King," 1408.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *GCL*, March 8 1919, "Embargo on Importation of Sugar," 2.

the accessibility of certain foods, the educated elite also attempted to convey their expectations of leaders and their aspirations for the Gold Coast.

First, many reported the threat or occurrence of shortages in the colony, reports which only increased with the onset of the First World War.⁷⁴ Gold Coast recruits were used in the 1914 campaign in Togoland and Cameroon, and with the proliferation of submarine warfare and large losses of men in Europe, the British government used more West African recruits in the East African campaign.⁷⁵ Early recruitment efforts relied on chiefs in the Northern Territories to supply men,⁷⁶ which invariably reduced the number of farmers and farm labourers. During the war, the availability of shipment space on steamships was greatly reduced, which led to increased economic pressure on West African colonies, such as the Gold Coast, to supply food and labour for locals and recruits.⁷⁷ In some places such as Sierra Leone, high living costs and wartime food shortages resulted in riots.⁷⁸ Although in the Gold Coast riots associated with the war were based on recruitment initiatives,⁷⁹ food shortages and the high cost of living was a prevailing concern that the educated elite attempted to address. While some viewed farmers' neglect of food crop farming as the cause of shortages, others cited the inaction of government and local leaders as preventing access to food and drink. Discussing the issue in the local newspapers, the educated elite claimed to speak for the people by

⁷⁴ *GCL*, August 29 1903, p. 4; March 14 1903, p. 4; May 15 1915, p. 2. For more on the general economic effects of WWI on Gold Coasters see, David Killingray, "Repercussions of World War I in the Gold Coast," *Journal of African History*, 19, no. 1 (1978): 39-59.

⁷⁵ Kwaben O. Akurang-Parry, "African Agency and Cultural initiatives in the British imperial military and labour recruitment drives in the Gold Coast (colonial Ghana) during the First World War," *African Identities*, 4, no. 2 (2006): 215.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ David Killingray, "Repercussions," 44-45.

⁷⁸ Ismail Rashid, "Epidemics and Resistance in Colonial Sierra Leone during the First World War," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 43, no. 3 (2011): 415-439.

⁷⁹ Akurang-Parry, "African Agency", 215.

accusing the colonial government or local leaders of inaction when it came to food and water shortages.

The educated elite highlighted the colonial government's failure to deal with various interruptions of the food trade. In 1902, reports that the West African Frontier Force's "soldiers of the King"⁸⁰ robbed and beat men and women traders who claimed payment for their wares,⁸¹ the editor of the *Gold Coast Leader* called the people to unite and take political action. The call to action reflected the long running frustration with the government's unwillingness to put a stop to its soldiers' disorderly acts and its interference with local trade. For Gold Coasters, the soldiers' acts of violence against traders recalled the events of 1901 when the regiment in Ashanti revolted and marched to Cape Coast to demand better pay.⁸² The beatings and thievery of market traders' goods in 1902 provided yet more evidence of the government's inability to properly manage the regiment.

The West African Frontier Force's violence against women traders of produce threatened people's access to food. In December 1902, due to the news of these incidences of violence and theft, it was reported that traders would no longer travel to Cape Coast to sell their foodstuffs.⁸³ Yet the West African Frontier Forces were not the sole perpetrators of attacks on travelling female traders. In the 25 May 1912 issue of the *Gold Coast Leader*, a correspondent from Aburi complained that the sanitation crew,

⁸⁰ The West African Frontier Force was the colonial army force used to expand and protect the borders of the territory from competing colonial powers. In the early twentieth century, it was also used in cities and towns as a police force. S.C. Ukpabi, "The Origins of the West African Frontier Force," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 3 (1966): 17.

⁸¹ *GCL, Editor's Notes*, November 2 1902, p.2.

⁸² Kimble, 325 and f.n. 7.

⁸³ *GCL, Elmina*, December 26 1902, p. 2.

including its headman, were attacking women, which was causing food shortages.⁸⁴ The ensuing food shortages in the area forced people to ask what the authorities planned to do about the violence that threatened the regular supply of food.⁸⁵

In many parts of the Gold Coast, concerns over access to food were exacerbated by recurring shortages of good drinking water. Many educated African elites wrote to the papers expressing their disappointment about the colonial government's lack of response when it came to access to water. From Sekondi, one person wrote to the *Gold Coast Leader* to remind the government of its duties: "Sekondi is every day growing and the town is on the limit of its supply of water. Scarcity of water is the general complaint. The Government ought to provide the town with public tanks."⁸⁶ Another frustrated contributor from Elmina wrote to the paper to suggest that the tanks of stored water kept at the government headquarters should be given to the people. The correspondent argued that this should be done "by sheer Christian charity," and that it would only be rational for the old stored water to be used in order to collect fresh water from the rain that would soon come.⁸⁷ As the shortage of water persisted, others became more vociferous in their demands and even offered political solutions. Those who preferred a less subtle mode of attack accused the government of outright cruelty, and insisted that the government should work with local chiefs to find a solution to the problem of water scarcity.⁸⁸ These suggestions and critiques indicated how the educated Gold Coasters thought a government should function.

⁸⁴ *GCL*, May 25, 1912, *Aburi*, 3.

⁸⁵ *GCL*, May 30, 1903, 1

⁸⁶ *GCL*, December 6, 1902, 2

⁸⁷ *GCL*, February 4, 1905, 5.

⁸⁸ *GCL*, February 10, 1906, 2.

Access Denied: Interference

The educated elite knew that food shortages, water scarcity and government unresponsiveness were not the only means of exercising power over the colonized. They recognized that colonial officials erected barriers of exclusion to demarcate access to food and to uphold colonial inequalities. Writing to the newspapers, the educated elite reacted against administrative practices that altered the accessibility of food in the colony while also revealing how the colonial government used food to demarcate social distinctions of difference.

The educated African elite vehemently reacted against colonial policies and projects that restricted Africans' access to food while increasing its availability to Europeans. To highlight these inequalities, they reported that colonial officials claimed to invest in colonial projects to enhance agricultural production and food consumption; but in practice such schemes only benefitted Europeans. One *Gold Coast Leader* correspondent expressed pleasure over the news that the Botanical Gardens in Aburi was being closed: Although the station was built and funded with African money, only Europeans were allowed to purchase vegetables from there.⁸⁹ Another correspondent wrote in 1906 that the government was going to invest in a cold storage in Sekundi and expressed his hope that Europeans would not be the sole benefactors thereof. Africans, especially miners, could use the cold storage in order to preserve fresh food which was increasingly difficult for them to acquire.⁹⁰ Identifying the mines as a site requiring

⁸⁹ *GCL*, July 19, 1902, 3.

⁹⁰ *GCL*, April 7 1906, 2.

increased access to food, the correspondent revealed the far-reaching extent of colonial control of food and its preservation. As Kolma Tsey and Stephanie D. Short have shown with their analysis of railway construction workers in early twentieth century Gold Coast, European workers had access to cold storage food, quinine, and longer breaks while African workers often faced food shortages.⁹¹ Violence sometimes erupted over unequal access to food, as in the railway workers riot in 1900.⁹² The educated elite turned to the newspapers to expose, on behalf of ordinary colonial subjects, unfair treatment related to food access.

In the newspapers, Africans also communicated their distrust of the government and commented on the blatant disregard various authorities had for community well-being. The educated elite identified the colonial government's policing and legislating of the activities of market women as colonial interference, which indirectly affected the accessibility of food for Gold Coasters and served as a reminder of the administration's control of foodways. The colonial government was able to restrict and monitor women in markets by imposing strict codes of cleanliness and conduct within the markets.⁹³ Market women faced fines or court summonses whenever accused of committing the slightest infraction. Reporting on the severity of the policing of market women, an editorialist wrote that a market woman received a fine due to having a crying baby and because there was water in her stall. The same day, a woman received a fine for tasting

⁹¹ Komla Tsey and Stephanie D. Short, "From Headloading to the Iron Horse: The Unequal Health Consequences of Railway Construction and Expansion in the Gold Coast, 1899-1920," *Social Science & Medicine*, 4, no. 5 (1995): 613-618, DOI: 10.1016/0277-9536(95)80005-5.

⁹² Ibid, 617.

⁹³ Gracia Clark, *Onions Are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women* (Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1994), 112.

sugar cane.⁹⁴ While the educated elite agreed that some of these market rules were necessary, they often defended market women and reported on how the injustices they faced invariably affected the availability and cost of foodstuffs in a given area. In Cape Coast, women were being forced to use new market sheds that were expensive to rent or they faced fines.⁹⁵ Contributors to the newspapers also remarked on the widespread exploitation of women in the colony who were forced to obey the whims and aims of the government. A correspondent from the area of Tarkwa reported that although the women were recently forbidden from selling bread at the train station in the area, the government had reversed its decision and told women to sell food at the station in order to assist with the trade in Ashanti.⁹⁶ Through these policy shifts, the colonial government reminded inhabitants that they controlled the distribution of food in the colony.

Access Restricted: High Costs

Gold Coast elite viewed the high cost of food as a shared burden for all segments of African society. Urban dwellers were exasperated over food shortages, limited access, and the cost of food in the Gold Coast. “Condensed Milk cannot be had in town for love or money,” an article in the *Gold Coast Nation* proclaimed.⁹⁷ Educated Gold Coasters wrote to the newspapers about the high cost of food that both determined and reflected unequal access to food. At first, many of the educated elite believed the problem of the

⁹⁴ *GCL*, April 23 1904, 2.

⁹⁵ *GCL*, “One Thing and Another,” January 21, 1905, 2.

⁹⁶ *GCL*, May 21 1904, *Tarkwa*, 1.

⁹⁷ *GCN*, April 11 1912.

high cost of food stemmed from farmers not cultivating food crops.⁹⁸ However, the educated elite began to hold the colonial government responsible and pressed it to rectify the problem of high food costs and low wages. The First World War caused the price of imports to increase substantially, yet the colonial government attempted to set prices for local produce.⁹⁹ This limited the buying power of farmers and traders of local produce, while the merchants of imported items, who were primarily European, made substantial profits.¹⁰⁰ Discussing the cost of food in the colony, the educated elite emphasized how the colonial government's policies favoured Europeans and discriminated against Africans.

In the newspapers, Gold Coast literati decried the high cost of food as well as the new colonial rules that threatened to raise prices even more. In the *Gold Coast Nation*, a contributor reported on the extension of colonial market rules to Quittah. While the author acknowledged this as a positive improvement for the area, he also expressed indignation over the power the District Commissioner wielded over market rents. The District Commissioner rented market stalls to the highest bidder, and such a practice would only increase the cost of foodstuffs.¹⁰¹ Another contributor stated that the new regulations on the sale of food showed how out of touch the colonial government was with everyday life. In 1915, girls who sold cooked food on streets were threatened with the maximum fine for hawking if they did not obtain a license. The cost of a license to sell prepared food on the streets was announced to be two shillings and six pence; but

⁹⁸ GCL, March 14 1903, & August 29 1903.

⁹⁹ Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, "Untold Difficulties": The Indigenous Press and the Economic Effects of the First World War on Africans in the Gold Coast, 1914-1918," *African Economic History*, 34 (2006): 59.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ GCN, July 8 1915, 996.

the cost suddenly increased to ten shillings for women.¹⁰² According to the *Gold Coast Nation* commentator, this revealed the exploitative nature of colonial governance.

Furthermore, clerks who were bachelors and relied on prepared food for their daily meals would feel the increase most acutely.¹⁰³ Clerks already faced economic hardships due to stagnant wages and the increased cost of imported items that they depended upon to convey their social standing as clerks.¹⁰⁴ By exposing the detriment these new rules posed to the everyday experience of Gold Coasters, the educated elite underscored how removed the colonial government was from the experience of local Africans.

Food price controls emerged as a particularly contentious topic in Gold Coast newspapers because intellectuals considered them to be emblematic of the inequality that persisted in the colony as well as a display of colonial dominance writ large. The *Gold Coast Leader* reported on the government fixing prices for local produce and commented that:

Officialdom has taken to regulating food in Coomassie. We fail to see the necessity for this regulation but our little tin gods¹⁰⁵ on the Gold Coast, Ashanti, and the Northern Territories are never so happy as when showing off their power and authority.

The author predicted that farmers and traders would not come to the city to sell their goods, which would lead to a punitive expedition.¹⁰⁶ Evidently, the educated elite felt

¹⁰² Women were historically the sellers of cooked food in West Africa, including in the Gold Coast. James McCann, *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine*, (Athens: Ohio University, 2009), 128-129.

¹⁰³ *GCL*, February 20 1915, *Seccondee* p. 3

¹⁰⁴ Kimble, 45-47.

¹⁰⁵ The author is referring to the behaviour of colonial administrators, such as District Officers, who exercise power without regard for the consequences this may have for the people, and instead only pursue acts that may further their own career or prestige.

¹⁰⁶ *GCL*, October 19 1912, p. 4.

that these government initiatives were an abuse of power rather than an improvement of everyday conditions for Africans. The actions that farmers took to resist colonial price regulations exacerbated food shortages. During the First World War price control measures proved particularly harmful, underwrote unequal treatment of Africans and led the educated elite to increase their criticism of the colonial administration. In the Obuasi region, farmers refused to sell their produce at the government stated price, a protest action that, according to some, caused famine like conditions. *Gold Coast Leader* writers demanded to know why government regulations did not force European merchant houses to lower their prices and targeted only African farmers.¹⁰⁷

Frustration over high food costs only increased as the effects of the First World War were felt.¹⁰⁸ Due to recruitment for the army, especially in the Northern Territories where most farm labour was found, farmers faced labour shortages which led to increased costs passed to the consumer.¹⁰⁹ Exacerbating frustrations at this time, many Africans took on increasing work burdens and positions of authority due to many European who had formerly held these positions going off to participate in the war, yet increased work burdens did not result in increased pay.¹¹⁰

People wrote to the newspapers urging the government to fulfill its responsibilities toward the people rather than protect big merchant companies and a general distrust of merchants pervaded the newspapers during the war. *Gold Coast*

¹⁰⁷ *GCL*, July 14 1917, p.2.

¹⁰⁸ This was a general trend in Africa which caused political protest among populations. Jeremy Rich's exploration of the adaptation of imported food to Gabonese diets demonstrates how imported food during the First World War was a site of contestation between colonizers and colonized. Jeremy Rich, *A Workman Is Worthy of His Meat*, 2007.

¹⁰⁹ Clark, 116-117.

¹¹⁰ Killingray, 45-53.

Nation contributors vociferously criticized merchants for using the circumstance of war to economically exploit Africans. For example, in 1915, after the Germans torpedoed the steamship *Falaba*¹¹¹ as it traveled from Liverpool towards West Africa, the price of imported food suddenly spiked excessively, in the opinion of some Gold Coast intellectuals, causing people to panic.¹¹² One writer for the *Gold Coast Nation* urged the government to prevent merchants and traders taking advantage of the people in the wake of the *Falaba* sinking.¹¹³ Others protested the increased duties being levied on imports during the war. The firing of numerous clerks in April 1915 was perceived as another way that merchant houses kept more of the wartime profits for themselves.¹¹⁴ Such remarks associating labour, food and rising costs¹¹⁵ suggest that many Gold Coasters believed that merchants and government agents conspired to economically exploit Africans.

Food Quality and Inequality

The accessibility and quality of food, particularly meat and drink, was another arena in which the educated elite criticized the inability of the colonial government to attend to Gold Coasters' everyday concerns. Acting as representatives of the people, educated Africans pressured the government, through their newspaper writings, to address the accessibility and quality of meat in the colony. This was particularly important to Gold

¹¹¹ *GCL, Reuters News*, April 10 1915, p.2.

¹¹² *GCN*, May 13 1915, p. 932.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *GCN*, April 1 1915.

¹¹⁵ *GCL*, July 24-31, 1920, p.2.

Coasters who were subject to the highest prices for meat in West Africa.¹¹⁶ Since the Gold Coast lacked a local supply of meat, cattle had to be imported from French West Africa and imported tinned meat became an alternative source.¹¹⁷ The colonial government began to invest in creating and improving local livestock only after 1919 when the dependency on imports figured undeniably as an economic weakness of the colony.¹¹⁸ The educated elite criticized the government for being unable to ensure the safety of meat that was imported or produced in the colony, and inferred that the government did not prioritize the health of the population.

In the Gold Coast, merchants and butchers easily circumvented government initiatives concerning food quality, and as a result Gold Coasters were exposed to health risks. In 1902, amongst discussions of new government regulations on butchery, one contributor reported that all people who intended to slaughter an animal had to pay a fee and that government agents were to circulate and inspect the work of Hausa butchers.¹¹⁹ This aimed to prevent diseased animals from being slaughtered and sold for human consumption.¹²⁰ The author approved such measures, but doubted the government's ability to enforce them, adding that Hausa butchers routinely killed diseased animals before the inspector's arrival.¹²¹

The educated elite referred to the colonial government's ineptitude at properly regulating food quality in the Gold Coast. In the *Gold Coast Leader* one person

¹¹⁶ K. David Patterson, "Veterinary Department and the Animal Industry in the Gold Coast, 1909-1955," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 13, no. 3 (1980): 489.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 459.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 483.

¹¹⁹ Hausa, a group from Northern Nigeria lived in the Gold Coast and through their networks of trade came to dominate the trade of butchery.

¹²⁰ *GCL*, August 2 1902, p.2

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

complained that, “Sanitary duties in connection with Food and Drink are neglected almost completely. There is practically no inspection of food in the colony.”¹²² One contributor writing about the area of Tarkwa attacked both the butchers and Sanitary Inspectors whose responsibility it was to ensure the safety of food in the colony, and made it clear that he suspected the latter of colluding with the former. Butchers circumvented regulations by killing unhealthy animals outside of the slaughterhouse, and sanitary officers were known to approve this practice.¹²³ According to the educated elite, the government fell short of ensuring a healthy supply of food for the people assumedly because it had no interest in doing so.

Writing to the newspapers out of frustration over the government’s failure to sanction merchants who sold spoiled food in their shops, Gold Coasters threatened to expose merchants, derided the administration for its neglect, and demanded that it meet its obligations. In 1913, one person agreed with a fellow contributor from Accra that a government agent should inspect the food and liquor for sale in merchant shops. To support the urgency of this plea the author stated, “....we have reason to suspect that a certain notable firm is in the habit of playing such an infernal trick of adulterating liquor (Jamaican Rum) and it behooves the Government to be at their wit’s end to trace it up.”¹²⁴ Others highlighted the risk that merchants’ “tricks” posed to Europeans as well as to Africans. One person argued that the problem of adulterated food and drink was rampant in the towns of the colony and that this affected Africans as well as Europeans

¹²² *GCL*, May 10, 1913, p. 4.

¹²³ *GCL*, August 9 1913, 2.

¹²⁴ *GCL*, June 28 1913, 3.

who were likely to buy the spoiled goods.¹²⁵ By highlighting how ubiquitous adulterated food and drink were in the colony, the educated elite showed themselves to be concerned about the health and safety of the colony's inhabitants while exposing the colonial government's neglect of the same.

Many Gold Coasters were aware of the increasing pressure governments faced to responsibly regulate food quality. The advent of the Chicago meat packing scandal in 1906 that exposed the insanitary conditions and adulteration practices of the meat packing industry sparked an international response from governments, such as the United States and Britain, to ensure the quality of manufactured food.¹²⁶ This scandal emerged after the publication of Upton Sinclair's novel titled *The Jungle*.¹²⁷ This event was published in newspapers all around the world, including in the Gold Coast. An excerpt from the *Manchester Weekly* describing the charges the meat packing company faced and was printed in the *Gold Coast Leader*.¹²⁸

Some educated Africans used this news to encourage people to refrain from consuming imported food and instead eat local produce: "We call special attention of our readers to the abominable filth and horrors discussed in Chicago packing houses. Dried herring is a luxury and baked cassava a delicacy in comparison to this Chicago

¹²⁵ *GCL*, June 201903, 3.

¹²⁶ Derek J. Oddy, "Food Quality in London and the Rise of the Public Analysts, 1870-1930," In *Food and the City in Europe Since 1800*, eds. Paul J. Atkins, Peter Lummel, and Derek J. Oddy (Hampshire: Ashgate Publication Group, 2007), 97.

¹²⁷ This novel exposed the unsanitary practices, adulteration of food, and the plight of immigrant workers in the meat packing industry. This resulted in a U.S. government investigation that confirmed some of the claims made in the novel. Phil Lyon and David Kinney, "Convenience and choice for consumers: the domestic acceptability of canned food between the 1870s and 1930s," *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37, no. 2 (2013), 130-133, doi: 10.1111/j.1470-6431.2012.01103.x.

¹²⁸ *GCL*, June 23 1906, "Food Horrors, Chicago Packers, Fearful Charges," 6.

damnation.”¹²⁹ Knowing the health risks and high costs associated with tinned food, others emphasized and encouraged a return to local produce. One person stated that: “... many articles of native diet are more nutritious besides being more economical than imported ones and it is not wise to discard the former for the latter.”¹³⁰ Widespread concerns about the dangers of tinned food nourished a general distrust for a colonial government that did little to mitigate the risks. As educated elites pressed for a return to pre-colonial diets, they integrated food choices and perceptions of food into a burgeoning nationalist idea.

The educated elite attacked the government for its inability to uphold British food standards for Gold Coast consumers. Exposing the double standard of government food regulations – one, more discriminating, for British, and the other, lackadaisical if not outright neglectful, for Africans -- the *Gold Coast Leader* printed several articles about a firm charged with selling horsemeat for consumption. The charges were reduced to a small fine when the investigation revealed that the meat was not meant for consumption in Britain but in West Africa.¹³¹ Another contributor pointed out that British authorities discovered the horsemeat due to vigilant and routine inspections of stores in Britain, which the Gold Coast lacked. Given that in Obuasi there was no Sanitary Inspector of food, and European shopkeepers routinely sold spoiled food, a government inspector of foods for the area was needed.¹³² The government’s lack of enthusiasm for food inspection in the colony compared to the metropole was considered proof of the of government neglect.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 2.

¹³⁰ *GCN*, July 23 1914, “Our Commercial Status,” 653.

¹³¹ *GCL*, May 29 1915, 2.

¹³² *GCL*, June 19 1915, 6.

Knowledge of the inferior quality of tinned food combined with the colony's reliance on imported food fuelled a belief that British companies exported provisions that did not meet metropolitan food regulation standards to the colonies. The educated elite viewed such provisioning as an unfair practice that posed a health risk to unsuspecting Gold Coast consumers. One person wrote:

The Gold Coast is made the dumping ground for all kinds of tinned foreign provisions and we have over and over again noticed in towns in the Colony tinned meat, vegetables, fish unwholesome and unfit for human consumption being sold which the people ignorant of the injury that such provision may do to their health, buy and eat readily.¹³³

In an effort to offset portrayals of their food as unsafe, companies advertised in Gold Coast newspapers that their products were fit to be consumed by the British public and not made just for export.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, educated Africans continued to write and report on tainted food and the government's inability or unwillingness to apply metropolitan standards of food regulation.

The educated elite aired their grievances over unfair access to quality food imports. Europeans in the Gold Coast monopolized the sale of imported food and ensured white consumers' access to the best quality of food available. In the *Gold Coast Leader* one editorial writer expressed outrage over the inequality that Africans in Obuasi experienced when dealing with European purveyors of tinned food: "Any unwholesome provision can be sold to natives. A European returning a bad tin of milk or anything bought from this store may receive a better one in replacement. This privilege belongs

¹³³ *GCL*, May 10, 1913, 4.

¹³⁴ For example see the *Gold Coast Leader*, March 23, 1912, 1.

exclusively to Europeans.”¹³⁵ Thus, Europeans had some recourse when they purchased spoiled food, unlike local Africans. This unfair treatment was especially noticeable when food shortages occurred. In 1916, due to the scarcity of fish in Cape Coast, shops charged high fees for tinned meat that was “worse than useless.”¹³⁶ A correspondent from Tarkwa wrote that the uneducated were prone to buying visibly spoiled tinned beef when shopkeepers assured them that the food was unspoiled.¹³⁷ As advocates of the ethical treatment of consumers, whether literate or not, the educated elite positioned themselves as the defenders of the health and well being of ordinary African inhabitants of the Gold Coast.

Conclusion

The newspaper discussions of food in the Gold Coast reveal that educated Africans used food to communicate their expectations of the colonial government as well as their aspirations as representatives of Gold Coasters. By discussing issues of food production, importation, access, and quality, the educated elite exposed the inability of the colonial administration to uphold food regulations on par with those of the metropolitan Britain. Speaking on behalf of farmers, market women, clerks, and non-literate populations, the educated elite showed the colonial government’s widespread neglect of the average Gold Coasters’ concerns.

Food consumption and food related issues were an important device for the educated elite to demonstrate their significance as modernizers and political leaders of

¹³⁵ *The Gold Coast Leader*, “Editorial Notes,” June 19 1915, 4.

¹³⁶ GCL, March 4 1916, 2.

¹³⁷ GCL, *Tarkwa*, June 20 1903, 2.

the Gold Coast. Food related issues provided a window into cultural, political, social, and economic issues of the colony. By highlighting the colonial administration's disregard and neglect for the everyday experiences of Gold Coasters, the educated elite situated themselves as important caretakers of Gold Coast society. In order to underscore their relevance they participated in public dining events to transmit the notion of a capable and cohesive upper class that was willing and able to direct the development of the Gold Coast. Food provided the terrain for the educated elite to organize themselves as a group while also expressing their desire to model the Gold Coast's modern future. Food consumption and the politics of food provided an opportunity for the educated elite to challenge the authority of the colonial administration and its exclusive claim to modernity.

Throughout these years, nationalist sentiments escalated and by the 1920s the educated elite formed official political organizations that openly opposed the colonial government rather than seeking accommodation and cooperation.¹³⁸ These parties sought to remedy the African elite's political exclusion and colony's economic exploitation. In particular, the goal of organizations such as the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) included self-determination and control over the economy and resources.¹³⁹ At the turn of the twentieth century, food became the springboard for continuing contestations of colonial governance in British Gold Coast.

¹³⁸ Doortmont, 484.

¹³⁹ Killingray, 56-57.

CONCLUSION: FINISHING THE EVERYDAY IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY GOLD COAST

Although the daily experiences of colonialism for Gold Coasters would not come to an end until 1957, many during the early twentieth century challenged the colonial government through everyday practices. Everyday practices and experiences in early twentieth century Gold Coast became an essential part of struggles for authority, control and influence in the colony. Africans and Europeans used space, personhood, and food in early twentieth century Gold Coast to claim authority and to demonstrate their knowledge. Urbanization, migration, and education accelerated during this period, leading to a reconfiguration of daily schedules. This provided the opening for various segments of the population to shape their everyday experience into a reflection of their aspirations and acquire and practice the habits they believed would secure their place in Gold Coast society.

Everyday practices were crucial to colonial administrators' consolidation of power as they used them to highlight distinctions of culture, race, class, and social standing. Colonial officials cultivated everyday habits to reinforce their government's hegemonic position in the colony. At the same time, and in reaction to their exclusion from prominent administrative or political positions, educated African elites mobilized as a group to demonstrate that, as intermediaries, they had an essential role to play in the colony's social and political matters. Through their commentary on the everyday experiences of inequality and injustice in the colony, the educated elite refuted British arguments that they failed to represent ordinary Africans' concerns and opinions. The discourse and practice of the everyday emerged from a logic of political and social

tensions.¹ For the colonial government and educated elites, everyday practices were a harbinger of the Gold Coast's future.

Scholars who have analysed the resurgence of cultural nationalism in postcolonial states have discussed the significance of everyday practices as a point of political contention. This study examines instead how everyday habits and experiences were used to negotiate or assert one's position within the colony with particular attention to educated Africans situated between tradition, within which nationalist sentiment was often rooted, and modernity, which they sought to appropriate and repurpose to suit the needs of Gold Coast society as they understood them. The colonial government called the position of the educated elite into question, and sought to limit their abilities to make demands of the government or to challenge cultural and racial boundaries.² While all segments of Gold Coast society were affected by colonial policies that favoured Europeans and the colonial power, this study primarily focuses on the complex situation of educated Africans.

By showing some of the various ways that the control of everyday habits and experiences interconnected with social and political strain in the colony, this thesis has demonstrated that everyday private and public practices were a manner of negotiation and contestation of control and status in the colony. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, and how the upper class work to distinguish themselves and their practices as natural yet exclusive, aptly fits within the context of colonialism. The colonial administration's use

¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1984, PDF e-book), p. xv-xvii.

² Benjamin Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts eds. "Introduction: African intermediaries and the "Bargain of Collaboration," " *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African employees in the making of Colonial Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 7-9.

of everyday habits and knowledge to construct and uphold racial and cultural distinctions fits this paradigm. Through the study of the everyday such categories as race, age, and class emerge as critical intersecting points.

This is most visible in chapter one, as the colonial administration legislated sanitation policies with the aim of reorienting household practices. The first chapter demonstrates how the colonial administration used race based concepts of disease as “scientific knowledge” justifying control over space and African households. Africans contested this control by not cooperating or by openly challenging the legitimacy of colonial sanitation policies.

The second chapter builds on this, and demonstrates how the control over everyday habits and practices was viewed by people with various degrees of influence and status as an avenue for asserting their status and place within Gold Coast society. Notably, this chapter delves deeper into how notions of modernity and progress featured in conceptions of how Gold Coast youth should behave. With a specific focus on the educated youth, this chapter touches on how competing groups of elders scrutinized the public and private activities of youth in order to entrench their authority by dictating appropriate habits.

The final chapter takes food as its focus. Food as a source of sustenance is integral to a study of everyday habits. The educated African elite used performances of consumption to distinguish themselves as modern and capable rulers of the Gold Coast, while pointing to the colonial administration’s poor management and neglect for the production, importation, accessibility, and quality of food. Through dining practices, the

educated elite used food as a medium to denote their belonging to an upper class elite, while simultaneously critiquing the food policies of a colonial government that did not consider the everyday concerns of ordinary Africans.

A focus on seemingly non-political everyday activities brings points of critical tension to the fore, showing that everyday practices were important, not only to subaltern colonial subjects, but cut across all strata of colonial society. With particular emphasis on how the colonial government and the educated elite used practices and discourses about the everyday to assert their authority and increase their social standing, this study proves that everyday practices instrumentalize contests for power.

Although this study takes the years 1900-1920 as its focus, struggles of the everyday over status and authority both preceded and endured past this period. As this period was one of flux and change it proves an apt timeframe for analysing how various actors in early Gold Coast used everyday experiences and habits as an instrument of power. The 1920s ushered in more changes for the Gold Coast, many of which were galvanized by a growing educated elite willing to mobilise and challenge colonial policies. Seeking political representation and unity, many of Gold Coast elite became involved in the NCBWA.³ Famers also organized and practiced “hold-ups” of cocoa, which was a refusal to sell their cocoa at the low prices that merchants offered.⁴ In addition to this workers began to strike.⁵ These demonstrations were peaceful, but represented dissatisfaction with colonial rule, which resulted in an overall motivation to

³David Killingray, “Repercussions of World War I in the Gold Coast,” *Journal of African History*, 19, 1 (1978): 56-57.

⁴David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 44.

⁵Kimble, 47-52.

make overt demands of the colonial administration. Further studies are needed to show how, as resistance to colonialism coalesced, everyday practices continued to serve as an alternative form of political protest or negotiation.

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