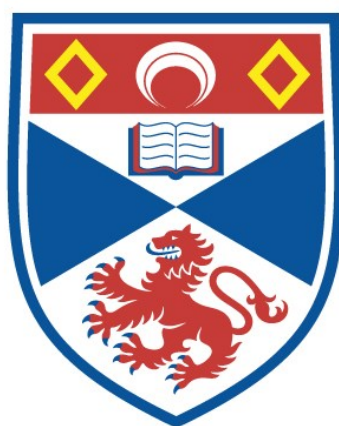# TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY REVISITED: ANCESTORS, DEVELOPMENT AND AN ALTERNATIVE TEMPO-MORALITY IN HO, GHANA

Eileadh Swan

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

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Traditional Authority Revisited: Ancestors, Development and an alternative Tempo-morality in Ho, Ghana

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26th January 2012

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Abstract

This thesis endeavours to re-theorise traditional authority through a consideration of chieftaincy within Ghana's Asogli Traditional Area. Chiefs' increasing activity in the implementation of development projects, has piqued anthropological interest in traditional authority once more. Recent anthropological analyses have focused on chiefs' proficiency in mediating between tradition and modernity, and in particular, their ability to use their traditional past as a means towards the establishment of a modern and developed present and future. The ancestors, while a central feature of colonial studies of traditional authority, remain notably absent within these recent post-colonial studies.

However, my own research suggests that traditional authorities were recognised by people as credible development leaders precisely because their authority was ancestral. I argue that tradition – by way of the ancestors – provided an alternative temporal mode through which people could realistically envisage development and future well-being. Because of their very ontological ground as once living, historical kins-people, I contend that the ancestors were able to fashion a tradition which was not temporally opposed to the present or the future, and a tradition whose authenticity was not dependent upon the eclipsing of the colonial and European relations which equally constituted it.

Secondly, this thesis argues that development and future well-being was also conceived of as a moral project and one which the traditional authorities – as caretakers of ancestral morality – were best placed to oversee. Traditional morality was based upon the ideal relationship of care and respect between ancestors and their descendants. As such, chiefs and elders were increasingly valued as leaders capable of articulating and resolving tensions between freedom and obligation, accumulation and distribution. It was in the funerary context, where ancestors and morality were made, that the traditional authorities, as the 'police of death', revealed both the honour and burden of traditional authority.

I focus primarily on the views and practices of the traditional authorities themselves and those for whom the 'traditional complex' resonated most strongly. Theoretically, I refuse to take Asogli tradition less seriously because it was discredited by some anthropologists as a modern invention. I also resist the temptation to question appearances by attributing to Asogli Traditional Authority the status of an alternative modernity. By thinking through the ancestors, this thesis seeks to engage with tradition rather than 'tradition', but without fully subscribing to the recent 'ontological turn' in anthropology.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Note on Orthography

The Ewe language was reduced to writing in the nineteenth century by German missionaries, using a modified form of Roman alphabet. Tone is of utmost important to the Ewe language and Ewe is a rare example of a language in which tone is almost exclusively lexical. The information below is based upon that found within *The Language Guide:* Ewe *Version* (1974) written and published by the Bureau of Ghana Languages.

The Ewe language has seven vowels. I list them and the English word which best conveys their sounds below, followed by the anglicised version I will use throughout this thesis.

a (cast), (a)   **ɛ** , men (<u>e</u>)   **e**, gale (e)   **i**, feet (i)   **ɔ**, cost (<u>or</u>)   **o**, goal (o) **u**, cool (u)

Ewe has twenty three consonants but no c, j or q. It does however have a further six consonants which cannot be found in English. I list them below, in addition to a description of their pronunciation. Again, I refer in brackets to the anglicised version.

ɖ : softer than the English 'd' and pronounced from slightly further back in the mouth.(<u>d</u>)

ƒ : a bilabial 'f', pronounced with both lips, as if one was blowing out a candle.(*ƒ*)

X : sounds like a very soft 'h'. (x)

ɣ : a voiceless velar fricative, pronounced like a voiceless 'h'. (<u>x</u>)

ŋ : pronounced like 'ng' in 'sing'. (<u>n</u>)

ʋ : a voiced 'f', sounds like an English 'v' pronounced with both lips. (*v*)

In addition, Ewe has a number of digraphs, which are listed below with their pronunciation.

ts: sounds like 'ts' in 'hits'

tsy: sounds like 'ch' in 'chair'

dz: sounds like 'ts' but softer

kp: position the velum as for 'k', the lips as for 'p' and then release the two, closing simultaneously

gb: sounds like 'kp' but is softer, voiced and heavier

ny: sounds like 'ni' in 'onion'.

Figure 1: Map of Ghana

Figure 1: Yam Festival Procession with Asafos

Figure 2: Zikpitor overseeing Sedinam's Outdooring Ceremony

Chapter 1: Introduction

'It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true
mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible'[1]

It was September 2011 and the annual Asogli Yam Festival was in full swing. Like previous Yam Festivals I had witnessed whose theme centred on socio-economic development and the building of prosperous futures, this year the theme was: 'Our Politics Must Bring About Peace, Unity and Development'. I was in Edinburgh, and on the phone to Korsi Akpo, my close friend and research partner in Ho, Ghana. He was standing outside his house, under the ancient Neem Tree, on the corner of A_fede_ Street. In the background, I heard traffic, drumming and the buzz of people rushing to and from the palace forecourt, sounds of voices I almost recognised, reminding me of the two Yam Festivals I took part in. This year's Yam Festival was different though; Korsi told me that the English translation of the early 20th Century German missionary Jakob Spieth's '*Die Ewe Stamme'* (The Ewe People) was being launched as part of the Yam Festival celebrations. This was very exciting news indeed; finally, I could purchase my own copy of this much coveted book. Still on the phone, I went online to read some of the news reports covering the launch, excitedly reading sections out to Korsi. Curbing my enthusiasm slightly, Korsi reminded me of the 'foolish' people who believed that everything about Asogli chieftaincy could be learnt from this book. He asked me whether I had forgotten our own archival research, which had revealed to us the numerous arbitration and court rulings that had rejected the book when it was used as evidence during the longstanding Ho chieftaincy dispute, on the grounds that it was contradictory and unreliable. I should be hurrying up with my own writing, he told me.

This is a thesis about contemporary Chieftaincy or Traditional Authority in the Volta Region of Ghana and, in particular, the Asogli Traditional Area. I am aware that in 2012, an anthropological study of traditional authority may not sound particularly innovative. Indeed, for many anthropologists, its very mention invokes the work of

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[1] Wilde, O. 2011 [1891] *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* p26

our own anthropological ancestors, Meyer Fortes and Edward Evan Evans Pritchard. In this sense, this thesis may be read as an invocation and an attempt to re-theorise a classic anthropological topic. While many of the questions I ask and some of the explanations I offer may not be radically new, my choice to focus on traditional authority as a particular form of temporal and moral authority and leadership has emerged from twenty three months of fieldwork and archival research between 2005 and 2009,[2] coupled with a sense that the New Chieftaincy Literature (NCL)[3] cannot adequately theorise its subject matter until it asks one very important question. Who are the ancestors or, as my friends in Ho often described them, the living dead?

Paul Nugent has noted that while historians and anthropologists have begun to reappraise chieftaincy as a post-colonial phenomenon, there remains a lack of synthesis between writing on colonial and post-colonial chieftaincy (Nugent 2004: 106). I propose that we might begin to create a synthesis by investigating the role that tradition and the living dead play within contemporary traditional authority. I may not provide *the* synthesis Nugent is looking for but in attempting to think through the living dead, as some of my friends and interlocutors in Ho did, this thesis hopes to contribute to its growth. Theoretically, this thesis refuses to take tradition less seriously on the basis that it has been unveiled by social historians and anthropologists as a modern invention and it resists the temptation to question appearances by attributing to Asogli traditional authority the status of an alternative modernity. In short, by thinking through the living dead, this thesis seeks to engage with tradition rather than 'tradition'. [4]

I ask why it is that traditional authority has become increasingly important in Ghana today, despite predictions that post-independence modernisation and democratisation would render it, as an 'archaic' institution based upon the hereditary transferral of authority, defunct if not completely obsolete. Why did so many of my friends and interlocutors in Ho feel that their traditional leaders were in a better position to lead them towards viable futures than their democratically elected ministers? As bearers of a particular and alternative temporal consciousness to that of

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[2] In 2005 I spent three months in Ho as a volunteer and conducting research on international volunteerism. See Swan 2012. I returned in 2007 for a period of eighteen months to conduct the main part of my graduate fieldwork and returned for a further two months in 2009.

[3] I shall discuss the NCL in depth in chapter two.

[4] However, this should not be read as a full subscription to anthropology's recent so called 'ontological turn' and, in particular, the arguments set out in the introduction to *Thinking Through Things* (Henare, A, Holbraad, M and Wastell, S. 2007).

both the state and Pentcostalism, were the traditional authorities able to re-temporalise development? As recognised moral authorities, how were they able to help people resolve moral tensions between freedom and obligation, accumulation and re-distribution? What was the source of traditional authority and what were the contexts in which it was both asserted and recognised? What was traditional about traditional authority and what did it mean to be a traditionalist? And, most importantly, who were the ancestors? I argue that it is only in attempting to answer, ethnographically, this last question, that we might begin to answer the others. It is a question which has been overlooked in recent studies of traditional authority, so this thesis invokes our own anthropological ancestors and one of their key questions, suggesting that it is only by bringing the ancestors back to life for anthropology that we may understand why traditional authority is so important for some of the people with whom we live and work.

Ho and the Asogli Traditional Area

The town of Ho, where I conducted fieldwork, is the regional capital and the administrative and commercial centre of the twelve districts that constitute the Volta Region in the Republic of Ghana. Ho is also the seat of traditional leadership in the area and, in particular, the Asogli Traditional Area which is made up of Ho and the neighbouring villages of Akoefe, Kpenoe and Takla. It is equally the seat of the Asogli Traditional Council, made up of the thirty three Traditional Areas which were amalgamated under British rule in the 1930s. A busy and bustling town, the 2000 census put Ho's population at 55,000 but more recent figures put it at around 61,000 (United Nations 2009).[5] Ewe is the main language spoken throughout Ho and the people of Ho also refered to themselves as part of the larger cultural group of Ewe speaking peoples that stretches over parts of Ghana, Togo and Benin.

Although Ho shared with the rest of Ghana similar experiences of chiefs' positions within the British Colonial system of Indirect Rule, it is important to note that the people of Ho also had quite a different colonial history. Ho was part of what was known as German Togoland, an area which included what is now Togo. In 1890 and after diplomatic negotiations with Great Britain and France, who were already

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[5] I have yet to access the 2010 census figures

solidly established on the Western and Eastern borders of Togoland, the territorial boundaries of German possession of Togoland were fixed (Dyke 1954:8). However, the Germans had already been present in Ho since 1859 when the North German Mission established a mission station there. In addition, there had already been Portuguese, British, French and German trading agencies along the lagoons behind the coastline of Togoland whose commercial interest, however, was confined to importing gin and exporting slaves (Dyke 1954: 8). This knowledge provides good reason to reject the notion that globalisation in Africa is a recent phenomenon and to consider, rather, its effects since the fifteenth century, through the slave trade, colonialism and missionisation (Bayart 2000: 235).

After almost thirty years of German rule, the First World War broke out, and in 1918, as a result of her defeat, Germany lost her colonies (Meyer 1999*a*:14). The Eastern part of the Ewe area of German Togland fell under French control while the Western part came under British control as a mandated territory (Meyer 1999*a*: 14). On the 14th December 1946 and after the Second World War, the two territories were transformed by the United Nations from a mandatory status to a trusteeship by the United Nations Organisation (Dyke 1954: 10). The final result was a Togoland partitioned into two parts, the British and the French, with their different administrative systems and policies. A border was erected, obstructing the free flow of people and goods (Dyke 1954: 25), and often making two brothers strangers to one another (Dyke 1954: 38). Dissatisfaction with this new political map resulted in the growth of Ewe-Togoland Nationalism, or *Ablodeism,* a political movement based on the desire to create an independent Ewe Nation. However, this became less of a reality with the advent of Gold Coast independence when the people voted, by a small margin, to remain with the Gold Coast and become independent Ghana.

The people of Ho, like most Ewe speaking peoples, trace their origin from Abyssinia, in what is now Ethiopia, via Oyo in present day Western Nigeria, to Ketu in contemporary Benin and, finally, onto Notsie, which is in present day Togo, sometime around the twelfth century AD. Because of demographic pressures in Notsie and the tyrannical rule of King Agorkorli, they formed three migration groups and escaped the walled city (Meyer 1999: 1). Daniel Fianu (1986) has suggested that while some historians have set the date of the Ewe exodus from Notsie at around 1670 AD, other records suggest that the Ewe had already been where they are now in present day Ghana when the Portuguese set foot on the Gold Coast in 1471 (Fianu 1986: 15).

Exact dates of the exodus aside, oral history and local narratives revealed that it was the people of Hos' ancestor, Asor who lead the exodus after his father, Togbe Takla, used his dagger (*gligbayi)* to break through the walled city of Notsie. It was Asor who lead the Hoawo[6] on the journey to their current abode. Asor's brothers, Akoe and Letsu, went on to found the nearby villages of Akoefe and Kpenoe and, later, Takla. The only daughter of Togbe Kakla, Esa, who is said to have carried the ancestral stool (*Togbe Zikpi*)[7], migrated and settled at present day Saviefe, to the north of Ho. The four ancestral 'brother' towns constituted, as we saw above, what is now known as the Asogli Traditional Area.[8]

When I conducted fieldwork, Ho was divided into five main divisions: Bankoe, Ahoe, Dome, Heve and Hliha. As the founding town and holder of the *gligbayi* and ancestral Afede stool, which were said to have been carried from Notsie, Bankoe[9] has, historically, been the seat of Ho's leadership. Within Bankoe, there were four clans; the royal clan Gbloefe and then Bake, Muviefe and Hornuviefe. The Paramount Chief or *Agbogbomefia,*[10] Togbe Afede XIV was, in addition to the positions I already mentioned, also the chief of Bankoe. In addition to the *Agbogbomefia*, were divisional and sub-divisional chiefs, queen mothers, youth leaders and other traditional office holders. Togbe Kasa was the senior divisional chief of Ho and also the chief of Ahoe division (the *dufia* of Ahoe). Togbe Howusu was the war chief of Ho (*Avafia* of Ho) and the *dufia* of Dome division. Togbe Anikpi was the *dufia* of Heve Division and Togbe Afele the *dufia* of Hliha division. Succession to the Paramount Asogli stool was both hereditary and selective. In addition to showing Royal descent, an incumbent had to be understanding, intelligent and willing to take the advice of the elders who had selected him (Fianu 1986: 27). In this respect, the Paramount Stool Father (*Zikpitor*) and the elders (*ametsitsitorwo*) of Ho played

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[6] The people of Ho (plural)

[7] The ancestral Afede stool can be said to 'carry' the chieftaincy. A chief is enstooled and 'sits' on a stool. It is a small object, kept in the Stool Room in Bankoe and only the chief, the stool father and a few other traditional office holders may visit it in order to cleanse it or make offerings to it on behalf of people.

[8] Unlike the amalgamated Asogli Traditional Council which, during the British era was named the Asogli State Council, the four 'brother' towns had a long history of coming together for festivals and to stand against common enemies. In recent years, the Asogli Traditional Area has sometimes referred to itself as the Asogli State but I shall refer to it here as a Traditional Area as it is by this name that it is more commonly and legally recognised.

[9] Shortened from *Banyakoe,* meaning 'the muddy settlement', named as such because the area had so many streams, making it incredibly muddy.

[10] *Agbogbome* means 'within the walls' and refers to the walled city of Notsie. *Fia* means chief so Togbe Afede's title can be understood as invoking his direct connection with his ancestral father who led the exodus.

significant roles in the work of traditional authority; in particular, the *Zikpitor* was the Kingmaker and he, in consultation with the council of elders chose who would become a chief. It was in *Zikpitor's* family house in Bankoe that I resided for the main part of my fieldwork.

Returning to my discussion of the exodus from Notsie, we can of course only speculate about the precise political organisation and economy of the Ewe in pre-colonial times; however, it is likely that they did not form one united kingdom and chose, instead, to organise themselves instead into separate, autonomous states only allying themselves with others whenever the political need arose (Meyer 1999: 1). In Ho at least, many of my friends and interlocutors explained that their ancestors' choice to organise themselves in this manner was a result of their previous experience of the tyrannical rule of Agorkorli in Notsie. Upon leaving, they vowed never to live under a single ruler again.[11] These oral accounts go in some way to explain why there was so much resistance to British efforts to create amalgamated chieftaincy structures. Paul Nugent has argued that after their takeover of the Western half of German Togo was confirmed, the British authorities asserted that German policy throughout Eweland had been disruptive. Although they shared a common migration story from Notsie, Ewes did not inhabit a single political unit (Nugent 1996: 207 c.f. Amenumey 1986). The major drawback of the Ewe set-up therefore, was the excessive fragmentation of the political map (Nugent 1996: 208). Their solution was to transplant onto Ewe traditional authority the chieftaincy policy which they had perfected in the Gold Coast Colony where they had been able to build upon existing chieftaincy institutions in Ashanti. Therefore, in order to 'tidy things up', the District Commissioner (DC), Captain Lilley, and his colleagues embarked upon the now infamous policy of amalgamation (Nugent 1996: 209), some of the effects of which we shall encounter in Chapter Five of this thesis.[12]

I shall discuss in more detail the relationship between both the colonial and post-colonial state and traditional authority in the next chapter. However, to draw this section to a close, I shall outline briefly what the constitutional position of chieftaincy in Ghana is. The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana has made it clear that the

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[11] Not all Ewes shared this post-exodus political organisation though; more centralised political organisation can be found among the coastal Anlo Ewe .

[12] In Chapter Five I will discuss the effects of this policy on the Asogli chieftaincy and detail the chieftaincy dispute that emerged as a result.

chieftaincy institution is guaranteed by it and that parliament has no power to invoke or enact any law which 'confers on any person or authority the right to accord or withdraw recognition to or from a chief for any purpose whatsoever' (Article 270). The 1992 Constitution defined a chief as 'a person, who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queen mother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage' (Article 277). However, just as much as the state should not 'interfere' with chieftaincy, neither should chiefs dabble in politics. The Constitution also made it clear that although chiefs could be appointed to public offices, they could not take part in 'active' party politics (Article 276). The 1992 Constitution arguably granted chiefs a particular political autonomy; chiefs were no longer to be used by the state to collect local taxes and neither were they to be paid state salaries. As local adjudicators of customary law, they were to be given the same constitutional powers of jurisdiction as Ghana's magistrate courts. Nevertheless, they could not take part in any party politics, even at the local level. As this thesis will show however, chiefs' dabbling in politics was not only deemed wrong for constitutional reasons; there was a stronger and more common sentiment that doing so would sully the 'sanctity' of the chieftaincy institution.

In this thesis, I have chosen to refer to traditional authority and chieftaincy interchangeably but I have tried to use the former term where possible as it more inclusive of all the traditional office holders – chiefs, queens, elders, youth leaders and so on – who took part in the daily work of tradition. This also reflects a similar usage throughout Ghana. In addition, the Ewe word for tradition (*dekornuwo*) refers to rites and ritual offerings which, I argue captured better, the difference between traditional authority and the government's political authority. The Ewe words for chief again reveal the English term as failing to capture the many roles that traditional authorities play. Firstly, chiefs are referred to as *Togbe*, which literally means 'the father behind the father' and so refers to a grandfather. Indeed, elders in general are greeted as *Togbe*. However, within the context of traditional leadership, *Togbe* also reveals the spiritual role of traditional leaders. Both the ancestral stool and the ancestors are referred to as, respectively, *Togbe Zikpi* and *Togbeawo*. Therefore calling a chief *Togbe* highlights their role as the link between ancestors and their descendants. The second word used to describe a chief is *Fia* which, literally, means teacher and refers to the responsibilities of chiefs to teach and lead the people. Taken together then we

can see that the *Agbogbomefia* was both Togbe A̱fede XIV, a title which reflected both his connection to the A̱fede stool and his particular place within the lineage. However he was also a *Fiaga*, literally, a big teacher or leader. Without these understandings of the Ewe terms, the English word 'chief' fails to capture what makes traditional authority distinct from other forms of authority.

Theoretical Positioning

I am certainly not alone in attempting to re-theorise a classic anthropological topic. The last twenty years has produced many anthropological studies which have argued that there is no local that cannot be shown as having a global history and no tradition that is not also modern.[13] As Jennifer Cole puts it: 'what is remembered as 'tradition' is perhaps the most 'modern' construct of all' (Cole 2001: 8). Modernity has been pluralised in order to describe ethnographically how people could be modern without being European, leading to the widespread anthropological conceptualisation of alternative or multiple modernities (Ferguson 2006: 31). In his study of the Kabre of Togo, Charles Piot describes his work as an attempt to re-theorise a classic out of the way place. He argues that Meyer Fortes, Jack Goody, and Marcel Griaule created analyses of the Tallensi, LoDagaa, and Dogon as if they were timeless and bounded, 'located beyond the space-time of the colonial and the modern' (Piot 1999: 1). His own analysis, he argues, will provide a contrast by showing that a similar savannah society – the Kabre – has in fact long been globalised and is better conceptualised as existing within modernity (Piot 1999: 1).

However, Piot is very keen to remind his readers that in order for him to make this argument, he shall have to '*argue against appearances*' (Piot 1999: 1, my emphasis), because all around him are signs of a 'still pristine African culture: subsistence farming, gift exchange, straw roofed houses, rituals to the spirits and ancestors' (Piot 1999: 2). What is more, he argues, 'many of these elements of 'tradition' – the ritual system, the domain of gift exchange – have flourished and intensified over the last thirty years' (Piot 1999: 2). This leads Piot to the conclusion that *despite* their appearances, all these traditional features are in fact modernities. Modernities because they were forged during the long encounter with Europe over the

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[13] For example, Geschiere 1997, Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, 1999. Behrend and Luig 1999; Shaw 2002; van Dijk 1999. For a critique, see Gable 2006

last three hundred years and therefore owe their meaning and shape to that encounter as much as to anything 'indigenous'. (Piot 1999: 2). It is with this argument that Piot hopes to unsettle the orientalizing binarism – and conceit – that associates Europe with 'modernity' and Africa with 'tradition' and has long informed scholarship about Africa and other places non – Western. (Piot 1999: 1-2).

While I cannot question Piot's intentions, like a number of other anthropologists, I am uncomfortable with the anthropological trend of attributing a relativised alternative modernity to the people with whom we work. Harri Englund and James Leach have taken issue with what they describe as the whole Meta-narrative of modernity and what they see as the 'dialectics' that underpin the idea of multiple modernities (Englund and Leach 2000: 228). They argue that the concept of multiple modernities assumes that modernity is absolutely everywhere; there is nowhere that is not modern. Secondly, there is the implication that alternative modernities cannot be defined in advance; one anthropologist might decide to focus on witchcraft as a site of alternative modernity, while another on political economy and so on. And there is always the assumption of absolute cultural difference such that every 'global' process will have numerous 'local' responses. Englund and Leach argue that within all studies of multiple modernities, it would appear that the anthropologists themselves are outside culture altogether and end up representing themselves as holding a superior understanding of the world. As Westerners, they know whatModernity is and can use it as the 'wider context', and the 'global predicament' that has become such an essential point of reference in our current analyses (Englund and leach 2000: 238).

James Ferguson, while also taking issue with the relativistic notion of multiple modernities, does so for slightly different reasons, focusing on the perspectives of Africans for whom 'alternative modernity' is ascribed. For Ferguson, the pluralisation of modernity, however appealing and well intentioned it may be, stressing Africa's coevalness with the West, is not without its own problems. For a start, Ferguson wonders, like Englund and Leach, if every aspect of the contemporary world is in fact shown to be modern, what would constitute the non-modern? (Ferguson 2006: 31). A more serious and practical problem however, is that in Africa, modernity does not simply refer to a particular temporal understanding of the past and the present; it is also a matter of up and down (Ferguson 2006: 32). That is, aspirations to modernity have always involved political and economic improvements, and local ideas about

modernity index particular things such as improved housing, healthcare and education. While anthropologists celebrate what they see as evidence that Africa has always been modern, local discourse suggests rather that modernity is lacking in Africa, and that modernity involves a particular level of socio-economic development that, thus far, the majority of Africans can only dream of (Ferguson 2006: 33).

The crux of Ferguson's argument as I see it is that anthropologists' relativising discussions about equal but different modernities, are based on an idea of those modernities as entirely 'cultural' formations. However, for the people described as being 'alternatively modern', modernity is not so much a cultural formation but rather a desirable socio-econonomic condition from which they have thus far been excluded (Ferguson 2006: 33). Or, might I suggest, they want Modernity, not an alternative version. Being included within an anthropological and analytical notion of modernity might not be what Africans have in mind (Ferguson 2006: 167). So while Ferguson is keen to appreciate anthropological efforts to historicise cultural practices, he warns us against using the concept of alternative modernity as a tactic to sidestep the harder issue of material inequality. In this sense he applauds Piot's Kabre study because it works against generations of 'exoticizing and primitivizing constructions of an essential and 'traditional Africa'' (Ferguson 2006: 168). However, he cannot bring himself to share with Piot the conviction that the Kabre enjoy a modernity 'as privileged as any other' and questions the extent to which Kabre people see their varied historical interactions with Europeans as constitutive of their equal but different modernity (Ferguson 2006: 168).

I share Ferguson's concerns and theoretically, this thesis can be seen as an attempt to take things as they appear a little more seriously.[14] I suggest that one of the trends in anthropology over the last few decades has been to produce ethnographies through which the reader is shown that what appears to be one thing is in fact another, the most obvious example being the argument that what appears to be tradition is in fact modernity, albeit an alternative version. I suggest that for a number of reasons, rather than immediately attributing an alternative modernity to those with whom we work, a term that is often unlikely to even be recognised by them, we might do better

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[14] Again, with reference to anthropology's so called 'ontological turn', I agree with Joost Fontein (2011) who holds that an interest in ontology can be part of the anthropological project without swallowing it up and that rather than emphasising radical ontological difference, we might do better to become more sensitive to the proximities and co-existences that result from our shared historical engagement.In this way we might succeed in writing against politicised differences rather than reasserting them on ever more abstract grounds (Fontein 2011: 723).

to investigate the terms our friends and interlocutors do use in everyday life, even if they were, as words and within particular discourses, introduced by Europeans. My brief history of traditional authority in Ho, along with my introductory discussion, has already intimated that that traditional authority has long been embedded in global, colonial, missionary and post-colonial processes. The annual Yam Festival which had been celebrated for centuries and could be traced back to Notsie in Togo, worked in the present to secure socio-economic development and political stability on both a local and national level. Secondly, the importance of German missionary Jakob Spieth's *Die Ewe Stamme* for the traditional authorities in Ho cannot be overstated. The book not only chronicled Ewe history and traditions for German missionaries at the time but also played a central role in defining aspects of chieftaincy and helping to resolve chieftaincy disputes. The scarcity of English translations until this year resulted in the few copies being highly coveted, taking on an almost sacred status themselves. [15]And of course, most anthropologists and social historians of Africa will be familiar with Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's great unveiling of tradition and traditional authority as a modernist invention (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983). However, the fact that Asogli traditional authorities have been embedded within and shaped by global processes for centuries is not enough for me to argue that traditional authority is either invented or yet another example of an alternative modernity. After all, as Ladislav Holy put it, 'renaming a phenomenon does not solve the problems involved in its conceptualisation' (Holy 1996: 168).

This thesis can therefore be seen as an investigation into what tradition means for the traditional authorities themselves and for all the people who spoke to me of its importance. We are used to the argument that tradition and the very opposition between tradition and modernity is simply a product of modernity (Geschiere, Meyer and Pels 2008: 3). However, I accept that tradition/modernity as a discursive opposition may be a product of western knowledge practices, but argue that some of the practices, beliefs and agencies which came to be codified and contained by the term tradition, and, in particular, the ancestors, already existed and had their own life

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[15] This was noted by the *Agbogbomefia* himself, in the Note of Appreciation of the new English translation of the book. He wrote of the book: 'It became the most cherished and sacred possession of the countable individuals or families that owned copies as a result of their direct contact with the German colonial administration (Togbe Afede XIV 2011: xxii). Delighted that the German Government had decided to translate the book, he wrote that its publication would make it 'accessible to all and sundry and the history of the Ewe as a culturally distinct ethnic group will no longer remain the preserve of a privileged few' (Togbe Afede XIV 2011: xxii).

histories prior to their colonial categorisation. This thesis therefore counters the implicit but common anthropological assumption, exampled by Piot, that the so called rupture of the colonial encounter introduced time and meaning to Africa. It argues that failing to investigate the complex life histories and contemporary presences of the people, positions and practices that came to be called traditional would be an academic conceit and a disservice to all those who told me, albeit often for different reasons, that tradition was the very reason why traditional authority was so important. Therefore, it is not enough to argue that tradition is a 'bad' word, acting only to denigrate Africans. And we must not forget about it simply because academics in the 1980s decided it was invented or, as was later revised, imagined. Or, because anthropologists then decided tradition was only apparently so and that in reality, it was in fact an example of an alternative modernity.

Methodological Considerations

As we shall see in the next chapter, what I describe as the New Chieftaincy Literature (NCL) has provided us with a significant body of information concerning how traditional leaders and, in particular, paramount chiefs, describe their contemporary role and how this role is enacted in the public arena. However, we have very little to explain why their so called 'subjects' recognise and value them and, indeed, what the everyday work of traditional authority involves. There has been very little research conducted on how people actually feel about traditional authority and its position holders (Ubink 2008: 27) and there has been a tendency 'to reduce chieftaincy to chiefs' (Nyamnjoh n.d. : 2). The focus has been on the 'big chiefs', their socio-economic development efforts, international connections, degrees from Western Universities and their ability to switch between the linguistic styles and rhetorical devices of both 'tradition' and 'modernity'. Less attention has been paid to the fact that these Paramount Chiefs and their impressive activities do not necessarily provide a representative picture of contemporary chieftaincy. While they appeared to spend most of their time living in large houses in the city and travelling internationally both for their own personal jobs and to source development funding and international recognition for themselves and their communities, they were usually the first to admit that the everyday work of 'chiefing' was done by the numerous other traditional position holders living in the towns and villages. This everyday work involved

resolving disputes, dealing with witchcraft accusations, representing the chief at less important public functions, gathering the community for meetings concerning the progress and problems in the locality and, importantly, organising funerals and overseeing the processes through which ancestors were made or not made.

I agree with Englund and Leach that intimate knowledge of a particular setting, a setting through which many currents flow, allows us to acknowledge and grapple with issues of scale in a way that generalising perspectives do not (Englund and Leach 2000: 238). While I interviewed the *Agbogbomefia* and Paramount Chiefs of other traditional areas, it was with the *Zikpitor* and the Akpo Royal Family that I resided for the duration of my stay. I had a small room in a typical compound house shared by most of his children and their children. I only spent two or three days living in the *Agbogbomefia*'s large guest house in Accra and then saw him again on numerous occasions at public gatherings and festivals. This undoubtedly explains why, upon reading the recent literature on traditional authority, I felt something was amiss. Yes, the chiefs authors were describing could often be compared to the *Agbogbomefia*, but what I had experienced was a completely different perspective of traditional authority. Writing up, I soon realised that when I thought about traditional authority, it was not only the *Agbogbomefia* that I had in mind but also his uncle, *Zikpitor*, his cousin Korsi, the son of *Zikpitor*, and all the other family members and position holders I engaged with on a daily basis as they made their way through the arguably less glitzy side of traditional authority.

Although this study builds upon a whole range of sources, including the archival, fieldwork has provided the bulk of its findings. My method has been ethnographic, invoilving sustained periods of observed participation and extensive conversations with research participants. I conducted numerous interviews with chiefs, queen mothers, youth leaders and other traditional office holders, in addition to individual interviews with individuals throughout Ho. All of these interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewee. Not long after I arrived in Ho, I sought permission from Togbe Afede to conduct my research and a copy of my research proposal was given to his secretariat.[16] While I had initially been worried about how

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[16] I had originally intended to study the impact of international volunteers; the ideas of 'whiteness' that they generated and how they affected generational consciousness. However, upon my arrival, the main volunteering organisation had moved to another town. After a few week of wondering what to do, my first host Orisha Afa, introduced me to his friend Korsi. The Yam Festival was about to start and I was

traditional office holders would respond to my research, on the whole they were very forthcoming and keen to be acknowledged. Traditional Authorities in Ghana are famililiar with social research and are often asked to complete questionnaires and give interviews to researchers from the National and Regional Houses of Chiefs. While my interviews with traditional office holders were invaluable, participation in their daily activities furnished me with other perspectives. Because I was unable to obtain continued informed consent from everyone I spoke to, I have chosen to highlight in the text where names have been changed. For the most part though, people wanted to 'be in the book'. In cases where consent was not clear or a sensitive issue was being discussed, I have anonymised names.

Korsi Alex Akpo Asor was my closest friend and research partner throughout fieldwork. In addition to his position as the son of *Zikpitor*, he worked as an accountant at the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) in Ho, a non-partisan but government institution tasked to educate citizens on their rights and responsibilities. Korsi introduced me both to the workings of traditional authority and, along with the kind support of many other NCCE staff, allowed me to join him on a regular basis at the NCCE office. Indeed, I learnt a lot about why traditional authorities were valued through peoples' complaints about the country's politicians. I commenced my fieldwork in the year following Ghana's 50th birthday celebrations and was present for their 51st while discussions about how much Ghana had achieved as an independent country were still heated, not to mention the corruption allegations surrounding the 50th birthday celebrations. Taking part in voter education programmes run by the NCCE and other local and international stakeholders during the lead up to the 2008 elections, in addition to spending a good part of most working weeks in the NCCE office, at workshops or out with various members of staff, provided me with an invaluable entry into understanding democracy, citizenship and governance in Ghana. Although I do not write specifically about the NCCE in this thesis, my experiences there have surely helped to provide the background against which my main focus on traditional authority can be figured.

Even though Korsi described himself as a traditionalist, and was one of the few people, traditionalist or not, who did not attend church in Ho, in his youth he had been a staunch Pentecostal. In his early forties when I met him, his education, varied life

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invited along to witness some of the events. Before long, I was living in *Zikpitor's* house and simply carried on from there.

experiences and belief in tradition made him something of a 'life consultant'; people came to him for advice on NGO proposal writing, getting a message to the traditional authorities, help getting their children into schools, and their uncles out of prison. We often worked together on other projects, sometimes helping local NGOs write proposals and, in some cases, trying to ensure that once funding was granted, the project was implemented. Korsi also occupied an interesting position between the youtn and elders in that he could put on cloth and sit with the chiefs and elders or remain in his usual clothing with the majority. Again, in ceremonial contexts, he could choose to join the chief's standing army, the *Asafos,* or sit in state with the chiefs and elders. Indeed, he was often recognied by both the youth and elders as a point of connection between them. When problems arose between them, Korsi was often called to mediate. As such, I was fortunate to conduct my research on traditional authority via these different perspectives.

It was undoubtedly helpful that Korsi was often as interested in my research questions as I was. In addition, my own initial nervousness about the ethics of taking photographs combined with Korsi's skill as a photographer and position within the community, resulted in me handing over the camera to him for the duration of my fieldwork. This proved a very helpful research tool; Korsi took photographs which he felt depicted something significant and then, at the end of the day, we sat down to view, organise and discuss them. Although I had a very good Ewe teacher and was taught every morning for a few months, Korsi continued to help me with language learning, emphasising that researchers, both Ghanaian and foreign, were not taken seriously if they made no effort to understand the language. And living in a compound house with so many children was invaluable. Nevertheless, as the *adagana* went: '*Amedzro nku lolo menya xordome o'* ('the stranger with the big eye does not know the way between the houses').[17] There was a limit to my grasp of the language.

Although I acknowledge the presence, conflicts and tensions between various forms of authority that my friends and interlocutors experienced, I accept that I may be accused of painting an overly cohesive picture of traditional authority, treating it as an impenetrable social whole. However, I follow Michael Lambek in arguing that we

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[17] *Adagana* can be described as a 'deep' proverb. They vary from region to region and are not necessarily known by everyone. In particular, they can be used to hide particular pieces of information from other. More so, new *adaganawo* (pl) keep emerging. The one I quote here is a common one and refers to the many small and often hidden paths around and between houses in Ho.

may imagine social wholes without implying that they are reified, distinct and bounded. Social wholes may be described as such not through recourse to functionalism but because they reveal 'a dense symbolic and social nexus and a confident capacity to attract and encompass' (Lambek 2002: 15). Most importantly, people may move in and out of attachment to this complex and it has to compete with other discursive formations, interests and attractions for peoples' attention (Lambek 2002: 15). This thesis is very much a view from traditional authority and those for whom the complex of tradition is most meaningful and valued. That is, it focusses primarily on the views and practices of various traditional leaders and the people whom they resonate most strongly for. It suggests that as people attempted to navigate an uncertain post-colonial present, traditional authorities sometimes became the 'last hope' for the future and were celebrated as such. To that extent, my thesis may carry an enthused tone.

Thesis Outline

This thesis may be divided thematically into two, with the first four chapters focussing on different temporal aspects of what I describe as the traditional 'time-shape', and the final two chapters focussing on morality, obligation and ideal personhood. I use the term time-shape throughout as a way of bringing together considerations of why people represent time in particular ways and who might benefit from doing so politically, in addition to the embodied practices through which people orient themselves towards particular temporal ideologies – how people 'do' time (James and Mills 2005: 350; Dilley 2005). In this sense, I respond to Mikael Karlström's call for more studies into how modernity and development as a 'distinctive temporal ideology' is appropriated and elaborated upon in different locales (Karlström 2004: 597) and, indeed, by different groups of actors. In Ho, there was little debate about socio-economic development and progress being positive goals but great debate concerning which leaders would ensure that peoples' aspirations for prosperous futures became realities. I suggest that debates about Ghana's socio-economic development and conflicts between the state, Pentecostals and the traditional authorities over how they should be addressed can be understood more concretely as part of a pervasive chronopolitics (Fabian 2002 [1983]: 144) or 'tempopolitics'

(Howard-Smith 2008). However, like Michael Lambek, I am less interested in how the past structures the reception of new events in the present than how the past is articulated with the present such that time takes on a particular shape and form (Lambek 2002: 11-12).

James Howard Smith (2008) writes of the ways in which Kenyans have re-temporalised development to their own ends, challenging the colonial and postcolonial tempopolitics that depended entirely on an idea of African backwardness and on the hegemony of the notion of unilinear progress (Smith 2008: 245). In a similar vein but this time writing on Kingship in Uganda, Mikael Karlström suggests that the revival of the Bugandan Kingship was successful because it focussed on the creation of a moral future, and worked implicitly as a 'counter to the disjunctive chronotope of progress as a temporal locomotion that would leave the past behind' (Karlström 2004: 604). What he describes is a 'hybrid sociotemporal consciousness', one which is certainly influenced by Western models of progress yet also partially re-appropriated to tropes more deeply grounded in local consciousness (Karlström 2004: 604).

However, Charles Piot questions the extent to which traditional authorities can have such an influence within contemporary Africa. His recent book (2010) describes contemporary Africa as post-postcolonial. He characterises the contemporary milieu as one in which temporality has been reconfigured such that the preoccupation is with the future rather than the past. The shift from sovereign and chief towards the NGO and prosperity preacher (Piot 2010: 9) has brought with it a corresponding shift in temporal ideologies. Piot argues that both the linear time of the dictatorship with its modernist teleologies *and* the continuous time of the ancestors have been replaced by a temporality that is driven by the 'event', one which is punctuated and non-continuous (Piot 2010: 164). Most importantly, he argues, this is a temporality that 'anticipates a future while closing its eyes to the past' (Piot 2010: 164). While I appreciate Piot's recognition of contemporary Africans' focus on the future, my own research on traditional authority suggests that for many people in Ho, this did not carry with it a corresponding rejection of the past. Indeed, I hope to provide an analysis which can question his underlying assumption that tradition and the past are synonymous, and that they stand in temporal opposition to the future.

Chapter Two argues that for many people in Ho, the state and the traditional authorities embodied competing time-shapes and promoted divergent temporal understandings of tradition and its role within socio-economic development. I provide

a discussion of the contemporary literature on traditional authority and argue that the majority of it actually works only to reproduce the state's time-shape, in which tradition is conflated with a static past and modernity with an ever changing present and future. Most of these studies highlight the successful contemporary chief as one capable of mediating between tradition and modernity and capable of drawing legitimacy from both traditional and modern resources and power bases in order to secure socio-economic development for their localities. Some studies do refer to the ancestral and spiritual aspects of chieftaincy but they tend to compartmentalise these as the chiefs' 'traditional' role, the role that they have always had, alongside their more recent 'modern' role as a development worker, and mediator between national and international politicians and their 'subjects'. I argue that this body of literature is incredibly important in that it attempts to posit chieftaincy not as an archaic relic of the past but rather as an institution capable of changing and indeed being an agent of change itself. However, my own research suggests that one of the very reasons tradition resonated for people was because it offered an alternative temporal mode to that of the state through which they could realistically envisage a viable future. It is my argument that it was precisely the ancestral or traditional basis of chieftaincy that provided the springboard for and indeed demanded the changes that these authors describe as 'modern' or part of 'development'.

Chapters three and four shall flesh out, as it were, just who these ancestors are. The aim of chapter three is to outline the ontological ground of the Ho ancestors ethnographically. This chapter endeavours to make the case for an understanding of Ewe tradition that is not opposed to modernity and development, and a tradition that does not depend upon either complete opposition to or resistance against the colonial and the European. The ancestors or the 'living dead' as they were described to me, were not distant spiritual entities or long dead forebears. They were rather regarded as once living and historical kinspeople who continued to play an active role in the lives of their descendants, blessing and punishing them so that they could flourish and grow. I argue that in Ho at least, the incorporation of foreign items within ancestral rituals and the acknowledgment of various westerners alongside local ancestors can be interpreted as a simple recognition of ancestors as historical and once living kinspeople who had long interacted with foreigners. The local and the colonial narrative are shown to be interwoven through the ancestors as a group of people who had lived to witness various stages of slavery, missionisation, colonisation,

independence, postcolonial democracy, and structural adjustment programmes and who, drawing on their experiences of the social interactions involved, were able to assist their descendants living in the contemporary world. Ritual offerings to ancestors often worked to bring forth a past event or relationship with Europeans only in so far as its recognition and recollection might bring forth positive effects in the present and the future. Therefore, rather than subordinating the European or colonial within the ancestral narrative and thus resisting it, rituals to ancestors in Ho often worked to reveal particular historical relationships. The traditional time-shape therefore, was not dependent upon the eclipsing of colonial relations but rather emerged through their very revelation.

In chapter four, I note the contemporary absence of studies of ancestors in sub-Saharan Africa, arguing that while they may have disappeared for anthropologists, they are still very much present for many of the people with whom we work. So I travel to Madagascar, where studies of ancestors abound. I find that recent literature has focussed on the relationship between ancestors and colonialism, with ancestors being studied and written about within the theoretical parametres of social and colonial memory. However, I question this theoretical focus, on the same grounds that I questioned the concept of alternative modernities. Within the social/colonial memory literature too, it would appear that there is no tradition that is not also modern, no local that is not global and no offering to the ancestors that is not also a memory of colonialism. In fact, there is very little that is not interpreted as a colonial memory. Nevertheless, the ancestors in Madagascar often bear a striking similarity to the ancestors in Ho. Both the ancestors in Madagascar and the ancestors in Ho now drink 'foreign' drink and demand western items and money during rituals offered to them. In both places, ritual offerings to the ancestors can be seen to index particular moments in history and relations between Europe and Africa. However, I do not agree that the ancestors in Ho can be adequately theorised by the concept of colonial/social memory.

I take the time to outline what I understand as particular problems with Jennifer Cole's otherwise extensive and illuminating work. I suggest that there has been an excessive anthropological focus on the supposed impact that the colonial past has had on the post-colonial present, through which almost every idea, action and object is described as bearing witness to the on-going presence of the colonial past in the present. Moreover, many of these ancestral memories are not only interpreted as

colonial memories; they are also provided as examples of local resistance to the colonial and European. I argue that similar examples found in Ho might be more fruitfully interpreted as bearing witness rather, to the very ontological constitution of ancestors as once living but now dead historical kins people and that they may rather be read as attempts on the part of the living and the living dead to remind both Ewes and Europeans of their historical relationship with one another and their ongoing obligations to one another in the present. They may, in this sense, constitute more of a call for recognition than resistance. As Ferguson has argued, apparent desires for convergence with a global standard, however imagined it might be, are not simply evidence of mental colonization or political resistance but rather reveal aspirations to overcome categorical subordination (Ferguson 2006: 20).

Chapters five and six, while continuing to elaborate upon the traditional time-shape, also consider traditional knowledge and, in particular, how it is conceptualised and performed. Through the investigation of a longstanding chieftaincy dispute in Ho which emerged as a result of the aforementioned British amalgamation efforts, chapter five engages with long asked questions about the authenticity of traditional authority and the invention of tradition. Using archival documents which chronicled various arbitrations and court hearings, I follow the arguments of the two chiefs involved in the dispute, their claims to be the true bearers of traditional knowledge and reflect upon their differently constituted ideas about traditional knowledge. I develop two key Ewe concepts here; firstly, *yevonya* which can be loosely translated as white/western knowledge practices and, secondly, *afemenya,* which can be loosely translated to refer to house/local knowledge practices.

It was the very idea of the chieftaincy hierarchy as a British colonial invention that was used by Togbe Howusu of Ho-Dome in a bid to undermine Togbe Afede's claim to the paramountcy. We come across 'Die Ewe Stamme' again and consider the way Togbe Howusu made use of it as his key and sometimes only witness. Togbe Howusu's strategy then was first to assume a separation between the colonial and the ancestral, tradition and modernity, *yevonya* and *afemenya* and then to argue for the primacy of one in each opposition. Togbe Afede, on the other hand, acknowledged that the structure and the titles of contemporary chieftaincy were British inventions but was able to argue that particular ancestors, positions and objects which had come to be contained by particular 'invented' positions, had in fact resonated with people's understanding of authority prior to their colonial terminological categorisation. Togbe

Afede was able to show that winning the paramountcy was not dependent upon showing the primacy of either *yevonya* or *afemenya* but rather upon the ability to show that the latter already contained – through the living dead – the former and so was not so easily opposed to it. We saw in the last chapter that the ontological constitution of the living dead demanded that relations between the Ewe and Europeans be revealed rather than concealed. Again, here, we find a similar aesthetic was at work. It was through the acknowledgment and revelation of traditional knowledge as knowledge of the ancestors and, therefore, already carrying the relations within the Ewe and Europeans that Togbe A̲fede was able to assert his claim as the authentic and original ruler of the Hoawo. Togbe Howusu was unable to show knowledge of tradition as knowledge of the ancestors and so lost the case, I argue, precisely because he insisted upon maintaining a separation between *yevonya* and *afemenya,* and the ancestral and the colonial.

Returning, in chapter six to temporal conflicts and tensions between traditional authorities and the state, we also maintain our interest in ideas of the authentic, this time by considering the different ways in which the original and the copy were performed, when informed by the the state and the traditional time-shapes. If chapter five reveals some of the ways in which *yevonya* and *afemenya* produced different understandings of the constitution of traditional knowledge, this chapter endeavours to draw attention to the different ways tradition can be performed. I visit two performances; the first, in school where tradition is taught in line with the principles of *yevonya* and the second, during the final funeral rites for the previous *Agbogbomefia*, during which *afemenya* was the primary organising principle. Again, this chapter will suggest that in the context of performance too, different time-shapes gave rise to quite divergent understandings of the original and the copy. I argue that whereas the state's time-shape mapped onto the relationship between the original and the copy an easy opposition between the past and the present, locating the 'authentic' firmly in the original past, a consideration of the final funeral rites and the making of a royal ancestor, suggests that within tradition's time-shape, the temporality of the living dead circumvented the need for the original and the copy as an active opposition and the placing of the authentic in either the past or the present.

The time-shape of the living dead shall connect the first section of the thesis on temporality with the second on morality; I argue that it provided the traditional authorities with a particular temporal authority and consciousness but also with a

temporally infused moral authority. In additition, this section argues that development was conceived not only as a material project but also a moral one. This second section will deal more explicitly with the moral tensions which arose through the co-presence of different leaders, state, traditional and Pentecostal and their often conflicting moral claims. Just as the state, Pentecostalism and tradition offered different temporal modes through which people could envisage development, so too did they make quite different arguments about moral personhood, accumulation, redistribution, freedom and obligation. The state and Pentecostalism promoted choice and the liberal individual, often at the expense of relational values and social obligations and, indeed, Pentecostalism often went so far as to demonise the village and the kin group, suggesting instead that born again Christians take on the global church as their family.

However, my own research suggests that many people, both young and old, were becoming increasingly frustrated with liberal individualism 'gone wild'. They were looking to the traditional authorities who, through their direct connection to the ancestors, represented and implemented a morality in which the ideal relationship between ancestors and their descendants, parents and their children, was taken as a model of ideal personhood and social relations. It would be easy to argue that traditional authorities promoted dividual or relational personhood while the state and pentcostals promoted individual personhood. Indeed, the distinction between *afemenya* and *yevonya* could be mapped onto these different models of ideal personhood. However, I argue that issues are slightly more complicated because of the ontological constitution of the ancestors as the living dead, making it impossible to posit a simple opposition between *afemenya* and *yevonya.*

Chapter Eight shall focus on what I consider to be the main processes through which the traditional authorities, as the 'police of death', exercised their moral authority. Funerals were rites of passage which in contemporary Ho at least, could be considered as a window through which to see some of the moral tensions and conflicts people experienced as they navigated their way through life. At the same time, funerals provide us with an understanding how ancestors were made; a process which arguably revealed simultaneously, how youth become elders, how children became parents and how descendants became ancestors. The chapter is, therefore, a chapter about the making of ancestors and indeed, the making of morality. Funerals were huge social events in Ho and I spent countless weekends both attending to funerals and helping organise funerals for members of my adopted family. This chapter details the

processes through which the traditional authorities worked through the deceased's life, and discusses the reasoning behind their decisions to fine the deceased and some of their living relatives. We see the way that the time-shape of the ancestors ensured that traditional authorities were flexible and cognisant of social and historical changes within the world of the living that had impacted and in some cases changed the meaning of moral behaviour. This was precisely because judgments were based upon conversations between the living and the living dead rather than adherence to a set of written rules. Traditional morality in this sense, was an ongoing conversation and one which I argue was best articulated in the context of funerals.

Conclusions

In the chapters which follow, I seek to think through the ancestors, as many people in Ho did, in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of what makes traditional authority so important today. I acknowledge that there is already a growing body of anthropological studies which attempts to explain and account for the contemporary presence and activity of traditional authority in Africa more generally. The ancestors, while a central feature of colonial studies of traditional authority, remain notably absent within these recent post-colonial studies. Throughout this thesis, I suggest that this body of work must be joined by further ethnographic studies of traditional authority, based on fieldwork aswell as interviews, which properly account for the role of the ancestors within traditional authority.

I agree that chiefs and other traditional office holders make good development leaders. However, I contend that it is not enough to argue that this is simply the result of retreating or failing states, or, indeed, chiefs' ability to mediate between tradition and modernity. I question the latter argument on analytical grounds and acknowledge the former argument as necessary but not sufficient. If we are to really account for the increasing activity of chiefs and, more importantly, peoples' recognition of their activity as valuable, we must consider in more depth who the ancestors are and what they offer traditional authority. In Ho at least, I argue that they offer both a particular form of temporal authority and a form of moral authority. Combined, traditional authorities are well placed to act as development leaders, with development conceived here as at once, a material and a moral project.

Figure 3: The Agbogbomefia and Mamaga with other traditional leaders.

Chapter 2: Traditional Authority Today: Mediating between Tradition and Modernity or re-temporalising Development?

'Firstly, let me state the obvious: Development that brings enhanced standards of living and happiness is what every Ghanaian desires'[18]

At 'Loving Brothers Store', one of the many small drinking 'spots' in Ho on the morning of Ghana's 51st birthday and Independence Day celebrations in 2008, there was a decidedly un-celebratory atmosphere. Looking out to the many schoolchildren and brass bands preparing for their annual march through the streets, my friend Kofi turned to me and said: *'51 years of independence and I had to run down to the bush to shit this morning because there is no water in our office to flush. They tell us we're in the modern world now but we're really going backwards'.*[19] An old woman who always passed by for a sneaky tot[20] every morning shook her head, saying: *'This is a nonsense. Kwame Nkrumah told us 'Forwards Ever, Backwards Never'. Look at us now'!* Still angry, Kofi said: '*This country is not serious. But the crazy thing is that the outside thinks we are great – the bushman thinks we are a beacon of democracy in Africa, leading the whole continent but even when he came, he didn't see the reality. So what if inflation has been reduced – is it actually feeding the people? Do we need to stage another coup so that we can become a coup prone country again before anyone sees the way we are suffering?'*[21] By this point, Loving Brother's Store had become quite noisy! A young carpenter's apprentice entered, shunning a tot of local *akpeteshie* gin in favour of a tot of imported 'Playboy' because in his words: *'I drink playboy. I be playboy'.*[22] Hearing the conversation, I was surprised when he said:

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[18]Togbe Afede XIV 2008 http://togbe-afede.com/textual_content/VISIT_OF_NANA_AKUFFO-ADDO.pdf

[19] People often said *miele megbe yim,* which literally means 'we are going backwards'. The word for development was *ngorgbeyiyi,* which literally means going forward.

[20] A shot of alcoholic spirits

[21] The 'bushman' was a common name for George Bush. The distinction made by foreign politicians and organisations between a coup prone and a coup free country often angered my friends; they felt that their everyday plight was being ignored by the international community because on a political level, the country had been coup free since 1981.

[22] See Akyeampong (1996) for an insightful history of alcohol consumption and production in Ghana. For a more general discussion of drinking in Africa and, in particular, beer consumption, see Fumanti, M. and Van Wolputte, S. (eds) 2010.

'Look. Either we bring back the white man or we let the chiefs rule. After all, our ancestors were more civilised than we are now. These politicians are just fakes building paper roads. Only the chiefs will bring us real roads'.[23] Kofi joined in the conversation again, this time challenging me more directly: *'This small boy is right. We are going backwards. Your people, they think this Ghana is the democracy of Africa! So they send more development money but our politicians just chop it all. This is why we have been calling it politricks! Now it is the chiefs who are bringing us our development, not them. When we ask for development, we're not asking for so much – after all, every human must drink clean water whether they are white, red or blue. Is it not so?'*

Introduction

Agreeing that this was indeed the case, it became clear to me that it would have been missing their point to respond by simply critiquing the imposition of our own grand narratives of modernisation and development on Africa.[24] Similarly, and for reasons outlined in my introduction, attributing to my Ghanaian friends a relativised and 'alternative modernity' was not the answer either. Certainly in Ho, socio-economic development and progress was widely aspired towards but discussions about how progress might be achieved often involved debates about the role that tradition should play and, indeed, what exactly constituted tradition. This had become increasingly so as people started to look to the traditional authorities – the chiefs and other traditional position holders – rather than the state for local and national development, something which, as we shall see, had become yet another point of conflict between the state and the chiefs.

In this chapter, I argue that the state and the traditional authorities promoted competing time-shapes and offered Ghanaians different temporal modes through which they could envisage development. Within the state's time-shape, modernity and development were temporalised, associated with the present and the future and placed in opposition to tradition. Tradition became synonymous with the past and chieftaincy was often represented as its chief (!) emblem. The state's time-shape valued tradition,

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[23] This is a reference to a road intended to connect various villages with Ho. Investigations by members of the community found that it had only been completed on paper. I shall discuss the 'paper roads' and the protest they inspired in chapter seven.
[24] For such critiques see Escobar 1995, Ferguson 1994 and Scott 1998

but only to the extent that it could be used as a means towards securing development as part of the modern 'package deal' (Geschiere, Meyer and Pels 2008: 4). However, as we shall see throughout this chapter and indeed throughout the thesis, the traditional authorities themselves had quite different ideas about tradition's temporal constitution and therefore what its role could be within local and national development. The traditional time-shape, through the living-dead, ensured that there could not be such an easy opposition between tradition and modernity. This chapter therefore questions recent anthropological arguments which hold that the contemporary success of traditional authority is the result of particular chiefs' abilities to mediate between tradition and modernity in their efforts to secure socio-economic development. I suggest instead that traditional authorities were increasingly recognised as successful development leaders precisely because they were able to re-temporalise development. Before I consider both the time-shape of the state and tradition, allow me to provide a brief history of the relationship between development and traditional authority within independent Ghana.

A History of Development and Traditional Authority within the Post-colonial State

While the colonial state focused primarily on administration and maintaining order, Kwame Nkrumah and his CPP Party really brought development to the fore, promising increased living standards to the people (Nugent 1996: 212).[25] And central to Nkrumah's CPP party's bid to defeat the Togoland unification movement, was development and the promise of roads and other amenities (Nugent 1996: 212). Nugent has argued that this focus on development shifted the focus away from villages and towards district and regional centres, with chiefs becoming little more than spectators of development (Nugent 1996: 212). Nkrumah's nationalist ideology, and its translation into policy throughout Africa, was insistent about the imperatives of material modernisation and economic transformation. However, chiefs were widely regarded as barriers to the achievement of either of these goals; they stood for the past, for other-worldly values, and were opposed to both individualism and modernising

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[25] However, as we shall see in chapters three and four, people in Ho often recalled the German period as one characterised by development and progress. The Germans, I was told, although often brutal, built roads and schools, ensured an ethic of hard work and, importantly, introduced literacy. The British, on the other hand, were said to have made the Ewe lazy and only valued people sitting at desks even if they had nothing to do.

corporatism. The processes by which chiefs ruled, the rituals and ideas which maintained their authority, were, it was widely claimed, the enemies of rapid transformation. Africa's and Africans' main problems were understood to be problems of 'underdevelopment' and chieftaincy was seen as a significant part of the problem rather than part of the solution (Rathbone 2000: 3). It was widely assumed that '[C]hieftaincy, rooted in custom and sustained by its mediation with and sometimes control of the supernatural, could not cohabit long with capitalism, the internal combustion engine, literacy, the telephone and international travel' (Rathbone 2000: 4; see also Nyamnjoh n.d: 2).

Of course, chieftaincy never disappeared as had been predicted. Indeed, the perception of chiefs as significant figures within Ghana, was given formal recognition in the 1992 Constitution of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. This date also marked the start of multi-party democracy in Ghana, connecting the democratisation process with an enhanced position of chiefs (Kleist 2011: 3). As we saw in the introduction, the 1992 Constitution returned to chiefs a level of independence to enact policies within their jurisdiction and governments since have increasingly talked about chiefs as 'development partners' rather than enemies (Rathbone 2000). However, as Irene Odotei and Albert Awedoba have argued, the 1992 Constitution was significant in the sense that it took away the power from government to install or remove chiefs from office but that ultimately in defining customary law, it continued to control the definition of chieftaincy. Therefore, even though it appeared that government could no longer 'interfere' with chieftaincy affairs, government and the state still remained very much interested in regulating chieftaincy (Odotei and Awedoba 2006: 17). And because the traditional authorities were often recognised as the bearers of an essential Ghanaian culture, traditional festivals could now be seen as a means for mobilising resources for development (Arhin Brempong 2006: 40), with festivals becoming adaptations of the past for present purposes and chieftaincy 'a secular office to be used for practical purposes' (Arhin Brempong 2006: 41).

The State's Time-Shape

In 2007, the government instituted a new Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture, where previously there had existed a Chieftaincy Secretariat and a separate National Commission on Culture which worked to develop the visual arts, literature and drama.

The vision and mission of the new Ministry that combined chieftaincy and culture has been outlined on the government's website:

'The vision of this Ministry is to preserve, sustain and integrate the regal, traditional and cultural values and practices to accelerate wealth creation and harmony for total national development. This will be achieved through the education of chiefs on government policies for good governance, conflict resolutions among the various cultural groupings. Also by supporting the various chieftaincy and cultural institutions administratively, financially and review the various chieftaincy and cultural legal framework to conform to international best practices'[26]

Below are further quotes taken from the government's website which reveal how the state has understood the utility of chieftaincy within its development agenda and how it has come to be represented within its time-shape. In a section entitled: 'Culture as a tool for development', it reads:

'In many respects, Ghana's cultural traditions can be exploited for development. While some aspects of culture are already vibrant and need only to be expanded, others that are moribund need to be restored or revitalised'.[27]

The government's website also described chieftaincy as 'the Kingpin of Ghanaian traditional culture' and 'an anchor of cultural life in all communities and in the nation as a whole'. [28] Moreover, it stressed that '[T]o the extent that chiefs display the grandeur of cultural forms in chiefly regalia, festival art, pomp and pageantry, they are an asset for promoting cultural tourism'[29] and '[T]heir role in the implementation of State Cultural Policy is vital'.[30] Referring to the national symbol of *Sankofa,* which can be translated from *Akan* to English as 'go back and take it' and also invokes a proverb which states that it is not wrong to go back for what you have forgotten, the government's website outlined: 'In our concept of Sankofa we establish linkages with

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[26] http://www.ghana.gov.gh(accessed 6/6/2010
[27] http://www.ghana.gov.gh(accessed 6/6/2010
[28] ibid
[29] ibid
[30] ibid

the positive aspects of our past and present'.[31] It did however stress that 'The concept does not imply a blind return to customs and traditions of the past' but that '[It] affirms the co-existence of the past and the future in the present and embodies, therefore, the attitude of our people to the interaction between traditional values and the demands of modern science and technology.[32] So, as Birgit Meyer has argued, contemporary national cultural policies have attempted to overcome the ongoing legacy of colonial cultural imperialism and its imposed temporal ruptures through an emphasis on temporal connectivity and specific links between the past and the present. Pride in Ghanaian tradition and culture, with chieftaincy often presented as the central example, has been emphasised as instrumental within the country's 'development' and 'progress', and the construction of modern Ghanaian identities (Meyer 1998: 191).[33]

Returning to Kwame Nkrumah, we find that while his solution to the apparent paradox between traditional rule and a democratic republic was to relegate traditional rule to traditional matters and to subvert chiefs' customary authority (Arhin Brempong 2006: 40), post-Nkrumah regimes and governments have acknowledged the utility of traditional rulers and reintegrated them into the central government's apparatus as development co-ordinators, and local 'public relations officers', representing their communities' needs to a national and international audience (Arhin-Brempong 2006: 37; Lentz 2001). However, that traditional authorities were now recognised by the state as development partners rather than enemies may have been a pragmatic recognition of their necessary input rather than the result of a change in ideology. Nauja Kleist, who has written on chieftaincy in Ghana, has argued that while in principle, various state institutions were responsible for local development, in reality, these institutions were often unable to deliver, which necessitated the involvement of, among other 'non-state' actors, the traditional authorities (Kleist 2011: 13). Cati Coe, who conducted research in Ghana, has argued that the field of socio-economic development was an area in which the traditional authorities and the state could compete directly, both for international funding and for recognition. Chiefs often shared the same levels of education and international connections as politicians,

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[31] ibid

[32] ibid

[33] Meyer has also written at length on pentcostalism in Ghana and I will how tradition is conceptualised through its particular time-shape in chapter six.

despite the fact that chieftaincy and the state remained ideologically distinct (Coe 2005: 89; Kleist 2011: 13). As such, Kleist argues, chiefs were not only able to compete with the state for international development funding, but in some cases, could surpass it altogether (Kleist 2011: 13).[34]

However, as the state and the traditional authorities have become involved in similar activities, including the promotion of development and modernisation, appropriating the traditional authorities' cultural authority has become one of the main ways through which the state has tried to incorporate and undermine their power (Coe 2005: 108). As we saw above, the government's cultural policies have been promoted under the banner of 'culture for development', with the idea that while many past cultural practices were barbaric, they could be polished, modified and promoted for national development. As such, successive governments have been able to claim that they were working in the interests of the people and the future of Ghana as a modern and developed nation (Coe 2005: 95; Steegstra 2004: 19). And within the government's time-shape, it was chieftaincy more than anything else that had come to represent Ghana's tradition and culture. In short, chieftaincy was emblematic of Ghana's authentic pre-colonial past.

In this way, and despite its attempts to overcome the temporal ruptures wrought by both missionisation and colonialism, contemporary national cultural policies perhaps worked only to promote a particular kind of 'modern person', one who was 'separated from traditional lifeways but engaged in studying, documenting, and evaluating those practices' (Coe 2005: 31). Coe has argued that politicians have worked hard to disassociate cultural symbols from their complex and often contested everyday settings so that they could become part of a national identity, and the government's educational and cultural policies have aimed to make culture a national property associated with the state (Coe 2005: 89-90), some the effects of which we shall see in chapter six. At different historical moments then, chiefs have been used to stand for both negative and positive aspects of the past; they have been accused of colluding with the imperialists at one moment while representing an authentic African

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[34] For example, the King of the Asantes, the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, secured a US$4.5 million grant from the World Bank for a Promoting Partnership with Traditional Authorities Project. And the Okyenhene established a University College of Agriculture and Environmental Studies which is supported by Wageningen, Tufts, and Boston Universities.

system of governance in the next; seen both as a block to development and 'progress' and a vehicle for it (Rathbone 2000).

Before I go on to outline the traditional time-shape in Ho, I shall discuss recent anthropological attempts to explain the increasing activity of traditional authorities. I argue that these analyses fail to account for the increasing recognition of traditional authority in Ho because the temporal assumptions which underpin their arguments play into the same allochronic logic of the postcolonial state and its colonial predecessor. Perhaps unwittingly, these analyses end up reproducing the state's time-shape and so fail to fully acknowledge that, in Ho at least, traditional authorities were valued in part because they embodied an alternative time-shape and offered a different temporal mode through which a more prosperous future could be envisaged.

The New Chieftaincy Literature

While anthropological studies of traditional authority waned in the early decades of independence, the increasing visibility of the traditional authorities over the last two decades has caught the attention of anthropologists once again. I shall focus now on what I see as the main and pioneering collection of work by both anthropologists and historians, an edited collection entitled *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape* (I shall refer to it now as the New Chieftaincy Literature: NCL).[35] The editors began by noting: 'The study of chieftaincy in Africa is currently facing something of a loss of paradigm' (van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Niewaal 1999: 1). They argued that this was in part a result of Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) work on the invention of tradition, through which tradition and

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[35] Since its publication, a number of journal articles, monographs and edited collections have been published. Irene Odotei and Albert Awedoba (2006) edited a collection which included a topical article by Marijke Steegstra on white development chiefs. Lars Buur and Helene Maria Kyed have also edited a collection of articles on democratisation, traditional authority and state recognition in Africa and Nauja Kleist (2011) has written on 'return chiefs' and development. In 1996 and along with Donald Ray, van Rouveroy van Niewaal edited a special edition of the *Journal of Legal Pluralism,* which focussed on chieftaincy. There are, of course, other anthropologists who have written about traditional authority but apart from where I make note of them, I maintain that very few studies of contemporary traditional authority have been able to move beyond van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Niewaal's edited collection and what I understand as its shortfalls. I would like to stress here that despite my criticisms of the editors' arguments, their (and, in particular, van Rouveroy van Niewaal's) contributions to the study of traditional authority are incredibly valuable and have acted as a springboard for further research and analysis. Wim van Binsbergen (2003), in an edited collection dedicated to van Rouveroy van Niewaal, notes that the latter had been known as 'Mr Chiefs' for years. While there may be a renewed interest in chieftaincy at the moment, we must not forget that van Rouveroy van Niewaal, as a legal anthropologist, had been researching chieftaincy for decades, despite it being an unfashionable topic.

custom in Africa were revealed as modernist historical phenomenon and events (van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Niewaal 1999: 1). The editors aimed to ignite an interest in chieftaincy once more, quite correctly stressing the contemporary absence of anthropological research on chieftaincy in general. They were keen to show that the role of the contemporary chief today was significantly different from the colonial and pre-colonial periods and that chieftaincy was undergoing something of a revival. Moreover, this revival should be understood as a warning against static interpretations of concepts of chieftaincy (Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996: 23). In the twelve years since the publication of *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-Political Landscape,* a number of articles and further edited collections have been published, revealing a nascent but rapidly growing anthropological interest in contemporary African traditional authority. Nevertheless, this body of work has already revealed a number of dominant themes.

The main theme connecting the various authors writing on chieftaincy today concerns the relationship between chieftaincy and development; in particular, the roles that the traditional authorities play within the socio-economic development of their local communities and at the national level. Donald Ray and Rouveroy van Niewaal have argued that in light of the comparative failure of the African state to bring about democracy and development, chieftaincy has re-emerged as an important vehicle for more or less authentic indigenous political expression (Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996: 7). Chiefs, it is argued, have more space to manoeuvre than might be expected because they have a double base of power. Tradition provides them with their sacred and other customary powers but they also attempt to 'capture' resources such as development projects from the modern state (Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996: 7). Authors of the NCL have described the successful contemporary chief as a syncretic chief, capable of mediating, translating and converting. He is, in the words of Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, 'a socio-political phenomenon which forges a synthesis between antagonistic forces stemming from different state models, bureaucracies and world views' (Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996: 24). While I certainly agree that chiefs do have more space to manoeuvre than might be expected because they can draw on tradition, as we shall see throughout this thesis, this 'tradition', in Ho at least, was not simply a single base of power that sat in opposition to 'modernity' or existed as a separate sphere of action.

What emerges most clearly within the NCL literature is the idea that there exist two 'radically different worlds' and that the successful chief is the chief who can move and mediate between them (van Rouveroy van Niewall 1996: 15, 1999). The first world is that of the colonial and post-colonial state while the second is 'their own', more or less 'traditional' cosmological order (van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1996: 55). Van Rouveroy van Nieuwall gives the impression, throughout his writings, that this ability to connect worlds is peculiar to chiefs. Nevertheless, this role is not described as an easy one because the chief has to straddle two inherently conflicting roles and loyalties as, on the one hand, a 'servant of an essentially foreign and superimposed administration and, on the other hand, that of a head and representative of his own community' (van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1996: 46).[36] My main point however, is that within the NCL, mediating between two 'different worlds' not only becomes another way of referring to 'tradition' and 'modernity', it also temporalises those worlds such that tradition is conflated with a static past and modernity with a constantly changing present and potential future.

Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal states this quite clearly when he writes: 'The underlying question is to know how chiefs have mediated the link between the past, the present and the future' (van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1996: 41).[37] To answer this question, he argues that we must understand the correlation between chiefs' controls over people and resources issuing from differently conceptualized worlds (van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1996: 46) such as the state, the local, the west and the secretive (van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1999: 21). In chapter six of this thesis, I shall discuss in depth the role chronopolitics has played in the relationship between the state and the traditional authorities but for now I simply note that one of the main ways in which the postcolonial state has attempted to challenge the authority of the chiefs is by keeping a tight grip on the structures and institutional frameworks for 'inventing the future' (Davidson 1992 cited in van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1996: 45). In short, development and 'progress'.

One of the main problems I have with the NCL is that it is based on a common form of domain thinking. As I mentioned above, the authors argue that there exist two

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[36] This is reminiscent of Max Gluckman's (1949) analysis of the village headman as an 'intercalary'. For an insightful analysis of the limits of this model and possible alternatives within postcolonial Botswana, see Deborah Durham (2002).

[37] Von Trotha (1995: 469) makes a similar argument: 'a chief should not only be, if he wants to survive in new political settings, an intermediary between the past and the present, but also be an agent of the present and an intermediary between the present and the future' (von Trotha 1995: 469).

'radically different worlds' (van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1996, 1999), the traditional and the modern, the past and the present, and that the successful contemporary chief is the chief who is capable of speaking the languages of each. The second, and arguably more dangerous assumption is that the chief is the *only* person capable of speaking these two languages; everyone else is either completely modern or completely traditional, always a subject or always a citizen (Mamdani 1996) and, only ever a city cosmopolitan or a village local, oppositions which, as we shall see, were rarely found lived out in reality. [38] The fact that a chief can at one moment be wearing cloth and guarding a life protecting talisman and the next moment be wearing Western clothes and showing off a flashy watch picked up while he was travelling abroad (van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1999: 22) is hardly evidence of the chief straddling two different worlds. And even if it was, this description might be equally fitting of most of the 'village locals', and not simply a special quality of chiefs.

In addition, in order that we recognise chieftaincy's dynamic new role and to avoid representing it as static, the NCL is particularly keen that we should no longer hold chieftaincy to be 'traditional', a residual of something authentic (van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Niewaal 1999: 7). The issue of authenticity shall be discussed further in chapter five of this thesis. For now though, I suggest that the NCL has created a representation of chieftaincy that is as, if not more, static than the nameless anthropologists they criticise. This is because they have failed to investigate what tradition means for traditional authorities themselves and the people who recognised them as significant leaders. Within their analyses, when tradition is mentioned, it appears as a given, requiring no further explanation. The first reason for the NCLs suggestion that we should no longer consider chieftaincy or traditional authority as traditional is, I think, because they understand tradition as necessarily opposed to or at least distinct from modernity and development. Once they have established the contemporary chief as a modern one, it becomes easy to mention tradition simply in passing, or as having something to do with mystical rituals. And of course as a resource that can be used for modern, developmental ends.

Or, perhaps the NCL authors feel that the 'Invention of Tradition' literature put tradition to rest and that there genuinely is nothing further to investigate. Writing in

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[38] For critiques of Mamdani's subject/citizen opposition and analysis of the 'bifurcated' state, see chapters by Harri Englund, Richard Werbner and Francis Nyamnjoh in Englund and Nyamnjoh (eds)(2004).

the aftermath of the 'Invention of Tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) rather than contributing to it directly, the NCL authors barely investigate the nature of ancestors at all, conflating them with tradition and therefore only of interest in their use value, as part of a tradition that, whether *actually* invented, imagined or real, is deemed to be interesting only in so far as it is used by chiefs towards the attainment of modern and development ends. The authors tend to accept the 'Invention of Tradition thesis too readily, and assume that everything falling under the umbrella of 'tradition' requires little further analysis. The ancestors had little chance of surviving the 'Invention of Tradition' and now within the new utilitarian[39] studies of chieftaincy they only figure briefly as part of an inert tradition that can be used to bolster the development agenda or promote Ghanaian identity and culture. In short, within the NCL, tradition and the ancestors have come to stand for the past, important only as a means to another end in the modern present and future.

My own argument however, is that ancestors were key figures in the construction of African 'tradition' as a concept and the definition of 'traditional authority' and 'chieftaincy' as a description of African political structures, whether they were later deemed to have been invented or not. When we look at the work of Meyer Fortes and his contemporaries, discussions of ancestors abound; they were shown to be the main source of what came to be called traditional authority and chieftaincy. The ancestors made traditional authority traditional and distinct from colonial political authority. One effect that the 'Invention of Tradition literature has had on Africanist anthropology is that chieftaincy and traditional authority have come to be viewed as either completely or partly invented. The fact that the ancestors were conflated with, swallowed up and spat out by the terminology of tradition and changing anthropological trends has not been properly acknowledged, not to mention the effects this has had on studies of traditional authority. [40] I want to stress that if we are to discuss the invention of tradition with traditional authority in mind, we must be absolutely clear that even *if* it is agreed that particular structures and hierarchies of traditional authority have been invented, this by no means entails that the ancestors themselves were invented.

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[39] I use this term only to highlight the 'means to ends' argument rather than associating the NCL with a particular utilitarian moral philosophy.

[40] For different reasons, Richard Werbner has also noted the disappearance of elders and ancestors within contemporary Africanist anthropology and has argued that we must bring back the dead (2004; also *per comm*)

In the 1940s, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard argued that even if the colonial government could replace most of the secular capacities of a chief, it couldn't replace the chief because '[H]is credentials are mystical and derived from Antiquity' and '[I]nto these sacred precincts the European rulers can never enter' (Fortes and Evans Pritchard 1975 [1940]: 16). While more recent work on chieftaincy has noted that governments do not even aspire to the religious tasks performed by the chiefs (Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwall 1996: 26), unlike Fortes, they fail to actually investigate why this is the case. Their focus has rather been on how post-colonial governments have been keen to make good use of these 'sacred precincts'.

It is in the field of socio-economic development that this chief-as-converter argument can be seen at work. Van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal have argued, invoking Bourdieu, that chiefs can be considered as converters through their ability to 'convert the power of the 'past' to that of the present, the power of the secretive into public power, the law of 'tradition' into codified 'customary' law, and the power of ritual into manifest political activity' (van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1999: 5). The authors suggest therefore that we use the verb 'chiefing' to reflect the creative nature of the mutational work chiefs perform in their present-day role of 'converters'. (van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1999: 5). According to the NCL, 'mystic and sacred attributes and faculties belonging to the cosmological notions of chieftaincy' (van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1999:7) can be converted to or used for modern ends but never actually entail them.

While the authors write: 'It is never easy to assign them to different categories or to clearly define their political and administrative tasks as distinct from the socio-religious and judicial roles they play in African societies' (Ray and van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1996: 24), categorising and separating is exactly what their work endeavours to do, and the NCL is arguably even more guilty that the earlier 'static' work they criticise through their insistence on the separate worlds of tradition and modernity. This is despite their hope that a focus on the various dimensions of chiefs' mutational work would change the representation of chieftaincy from a static into a dynamic, ever-changing phenomenon (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal and van Dijk 1999: 5). We can only assume that when they describe a move away from static analyses here that they are referring to their own anthropological ancestors, the editors and contributors to another collection of articles on traditional authority in Africa, entitled *African Political Systems* (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940). In their introduction to the edited

collection, Fortes and Evans Pritchard also made the point of stressing that it was difficult to categorise and separate the different roles of the chief. However, there was an additional but significant difference in their argument. They wrote:

It is erroneous to think of him as combining in himself a number of distinct and separate offices. There is a single office, that of king, and its various duties and activities, and its rights, prerogatives, and privileges, make up a single unified whole (Fortes and Evans Pritchard 1970 [1940]: xxi).

I suggest that the NCL might have done well to bear Fortes and Evans-Pritchards' warning in mind as it can provide us with a key insight into the workings of traditional authority today as much as in 1940. However, before I return to the observation of Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, let us look at some of the statements of the Paramount Chiefs I interacted with in the Asogli Traditional Area. Had I not lived in *Zikpitor's* house for almost two years, witnessing the everyday work of the traditional authorities, I too might have interpreted them and – by extension – traditional authority itself, in line with the NCL.

Togbe Afede XIV, Agbogbomefia of Asogli Traditional Area and Asogli Traditional Council

The success of the *Agbogbomefia*, could also be seen as resulting from his quite spectacular capacity to speak the languages of tradition and modernity; his ability to offer a libation to the ancestors one day and build a power station to provide Ghana with over half its electricity the next. With an MBA from Yale and a CV filled with numerous successful business and socio-economic development ventures, he, like other successful chiefs in Ghana such as the Asantes' Asantehene, could be praised for making chieftaincy relevant for the 21st Century. All these 'modern' achievements, along with a history of the Asogli Chieftaincy and Stool, the Royal Lineage and some descriptions of its traditions can be found online @ www.togbeafede.com. In addition, the website reveals and explains the recently designed Asogli coat of arms and flag, provides photographs of the *Agbogbomefia* meeting international dignitaries and leading traditional events such as the annual Yam Festival. It also provides examples

of Togbe's speeches to various governmental and non-governmental organisations, churches, foreign investors and so on.

Upon his installation as the *Agbogbomefia*, the modernisation of the chieftaincy institution was high on the agenda. In a number of speeches he suggested, just as various Ghanaian Governments have and the NCL attests to, that chiefs should be development partners and work together with government and other civil society groups to ensure good governance. He has consistently argued that chieftaincy should be an agent of change and that to do so it must respond to changes in the social and political environment. Let me quote at length sections of his Inaugural Address to the people of Asogli on October 4th 2003:

I am humbled and I feel honoured to be stepping into the shoes of these great Kings of Ho Asogli. It is a huge responsibility. But I take consolation in my belief that the elders of Ho Asogli, who in their collective wisdom selected me to lead the people, know what they are doing…Judging from our history, it is obvious that the classical role of the Chief was to protect the sovereignty of his community and also to maintain law and order. However, geo-political changes and the introduction of western style political administration have rendered these obsolete. Security and law and order have become the responsibility of the central government… Consistent with the contemporary needs of my people, my primary concern as their leader will be the developmental needs of Ho Asogli. While many of our citizens have prospered, the majority continue to wallow in poverty, ignorance and disease. Their ambitions are limited by inadequate educational facilities and inadequate job opportunities, among others… I do not accept this. Poverty is not an act of God, but a failure of humanity. Expansion of our educational facilities and attracting investment to Ho Asogli will form an important part of my development agenda. This is my solemn pledge: I will work hard to build a new Ho Asogli that is full of opportunity for all… I know this is within our reach because our founding fathers, through the courage they have demonstrated over the years, have shown us the way. And I know we can do it because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves, and who has created us in His own image…But some reform will be necessary if the institution is to facilitate development. In this regard we should uphold and respect traditional practices and customs that inspire us, while we allow those which do not have a place in the modern world to rest in peace. We should aim to serve our states rather than be pampered and

carried in palanquins. We should invest our wealth in ventures that benefit our communities instead of in gold trinkets, rings and chains. And our success must be measured by the difference we make, not by the size of our regalia...Voltarians of all ethnic backgrounds need to come together for this historic march towards modernization and integration into the Global Village….Our children are the future. I will institute programmes to ensure that their needs are provided for, to help them develop their character and self-appreciation, and to teach them to understand and to uphold the principles of true citizenship, lest they grow into apathetic spectators…. A lot of time has passed since our founding fathers arrived from Notsie. So that we can continue the work they started, I ask all our citizens to show special love for Ho Asogli and concern for its progress……God bless you.[41]

This speech was interesting in a number of ways. On the one hand, in style and form it resembled those made by new Presidents and Ministers. He used the same kinds of arguments about chieftaincy as the government and his speech could certainly be used by authors of the NCL as a key example of the modern, converting and mediating chief. He spoke of a need for the 'modernization of tradition' and the transformation of chieftaincy lest it sinks 'into oblivion'. He described this process as an 'historic march towards modernization and integration into the Global Village' that demanded 'responsible citizenship'. In this way, he sounded very much like successive governments' cultural policies which have stressed the need for polishing and modernizing 'good' traditions while putting to rest those deemed inconsistent with contemporary morals. Importantly, he described his chiefly role as helping to teach people the 'principles of true citizenship', something which would certainly have impressed the Government's Minister for Chieftaincy and Culture. And while a quick recourse was made to history and his appreciation of the chiefs who came before him, they were not called 'ancestors' but rather 'Founding Fathers', a reference usually associated with the founders of modern nations. In addition, there was emphasis on Christian religion (like many traditional position holders, he was a Catholic) and the fact that people are 'made in His image'. There was little mention of traditional religion, something arguably odd given that his position and name, *Togbe*, embodied

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[41] http://togbe-afede.com/textual_content/THE_INAUGURAL_ADDRESS.pdf

the link between the people and the ancestors in that he 'sat' on the ancestral stool, which I was told was the highest spiritual source within the town.

This speech could, on the other hand be read as less supportive of government than a direct challenge to it. Precisely by taking on the style and language of the dominant powers, he was able to reveal their weaknesses and his potential strength. His comment about security, law and order no longer being the responsibility of chiefs but rather of central government was quite a clever move because it juxtaposed the idea of a pre-colonial period of chiefly authority with the contemporary postcolonial one of central government and emphasised that, through no fault of their own, the responsibilities of chiefs had been taken over by government. However, based on all the later discussions I had with people in Ho, this comment was probably well planned and would have served only to remind people that the government was not, in fact, very good at maintaining security, law and order. The *Agbogbomefia* went on to stress that his primary concern as a leader of Ho Asogli would be the developmental needs of his people. While this was another responsibility of the central government, according to most of my friends, development was not taken particularly seriously by the government and individual politicians were more likely to try to 'chop' development funds allocated for Ho. In addition, the *Agbogbomefia* provided clear details about the kind of development he intended to provide; education, healthcare, good roads and more private investment, all things which I learnt many people in Ho felt the government were not likely to provide them with.

The fact that the *Agbogbomefia* made it his task to teach people about how to be good and responsible citizens and uphold the values of 'true citizenship', could be read as a final challenge to central government. He referred with ease to his 'citizens', and in so doing, not only questioned the contemporary relevance of the subject/citizen opposition but also questioned the state's provision of a citizenship that arguably focused more on political and civic rights than social and economic ones.[42] His final comment and request was, I think, particularly interesting. Even if they were called 'Founding Fathers', invoking the ancestors acted to remind people of their forebears, their now dead relatives who had founded Ho. It arguably acted to remind them of their own responsibility as descendants to carry on the work of their ancestors so that the town could progress and flourish. The comment humanised and domesticated

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[42] See Harri Englund (2006) for a discussion of 'Prisoners of Freedom' in Malawi.

chieftaincy, revealing development as a joint responsibility of ancestors and their descendants, both Royal and non-Royal. In addition, by invoking the origin of Ho and his own lineage, the *Agbogbomefia* also emphasised his position over the central government as the most appropriate and obvious form of local leadership. His final comment also stressed that although the *Agbogbomefia* was well versed in English linguistic forms and phrases and could deliver a speech that would resonate well with educated politicians and other African elites (and, I would argue, one that could be understood by most citizens who had received a few years of years of formal schooling), these other elites could not share with him the source of his authority and could not enter into these 'sacred precincts'.

Some six years later, on June 30th 2009, the *Agbogbomefia* launched the US$250 million 'Pathway to Prosperity' development plan for the Volta Region. Below, is a section of his launching speech:

Through the initiation, and hopefully, the implementation of this development plan, the chiefs are marking a new beginning for the Volta Region. We are taking a bold step towards a stronger acceptance of our responsibility to facilitate the realization of the development aspirations of our people. And we are calling on all of the regions sons and daughters to play a role in the unfolding history. Your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, even long before I assumed the leadership of my people, I always wondered why no country that is majority black and black-led has made it into the ranks of the developed world. From Haiti to Mozambique, the story is not good. Indeed, while many elsewhere have prospered, the majority of our people continue to wallow in poverty and in conflict, a lot of these conflicts being nothing more than fights over limited resources. The ambitions of our people are limited by inadequate educational facilities and inadequate job opportunities, among others. The development plan we are launching today was inspired by the belief that the development of our nation is a shared responsibility, and the traditional authorities, who are closest to the people, have an important role to play. Our aim is to contribute to the enhancement of the regions socio-economic infrastructure, and facilitate our attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The 2009-2014 Plan is the first step towards mobilizing the chiefs and the people of the Volta Region for a collective assault on poverty and deprivation. And to make it a plan of the people, we invited input from the people through their chiefs. This plan, and those which will follow upon

its expiration, will be implemented by the newly established Volta Region Development Agency, and should provide an opportunity for the people to voice out their ideas, help set our priorities and become involved in seeing these priorities become realities. The Volta development planning process should establish a permanent medium for mobilizing the people through a process of participatory development planning. We hope it will inspire a greater commitment to the cause of our development, and teach us all to understand and to uphold the principles of true citizenship, and discourage apathy. We should begin to work together to prepare a better future for ourselves and the generations to come. We intend that our plan complements those of Government and other stakeholders. And we want it to contribute to the development of all of Ghana, because we believe our fortunes are inextricably linked. That is why we plan to dialogue regularly with the regional minister, the municipal and district chief executives, and the relevant government ministries, departments and agencies…[43]

This was a very confident speech in which we can really see the *Agbogbomefia* coming into his own as a 'parent' of his people. He made numerous references to 'our people' and 'my people', talking about the need for the chiefs and people to work together 'for a collective assault on poverty and deprivation'. What was most striking for me was that he was no longer acknowledging his role as a development partner to the government, or expressing his desire to work with the government in a bid to help them implement their development programmes and policies. Rather, he was suggesting that the government may have to accept that it had become a development partner of the chiefs or simply a parallel development practitioner. He seemed to be suggesting that since government had failed in their efforts, the chiefs now had to step in if there was to be any hope of the Millenium Development Goals being realised at all. He emphasised that it was now time for the chiefs to 'realize the developmental aspirations of our people' because the chiefs were 'closest to the people'. Being a citizen was not enough; the *Agbogbomefia* stressed the need for citizens to understand the 'principles of true citizenship'.

The citizen/subject opposition appears to have been turned on its head or simply collapsed by a chief who knew that in the 21st Century, 'his people' were no longer swayed by politicians who, in the words of one of my friends, 'talk democracy

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[43] http://togbe-afede.com/textual_content/LAUNCHING_OF_VOLTA_REGION_DEVELOPMENT_PLAN.pdf

but act dictatorship'. He knew that his people had benefitted more as technical 'subjects' of a chief than as 'citizens' of the state and that ultimately, the opposition meant less to people than living in an environment where the realisation of their social and economic aspirations were at least a possibility. In addition, the *Agbogbomefia* appeared so confident that he referred to chiefs as traditional authorities quite freely and without making any comments about the chieftaincy institution having to modernise or tradition having to fit in with the demands of modernity. The bold but simple message conveyed through this speech was that Voltarians wanted development and the traditional authorities were in the best position to help them attain their goals.

Finally, allow me to consider a few sections from the *Agbogbomefia's* 2010 Yam Festival address:

[T]he gods of the land will not forgive me if I fail to acknowledge the special place of our ancestors in all that we have been doing. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, as we celebrate today, it is important that we remember why our fore fathers celebrated the yam festival since their arrival from Notse some three hundred years ago.[44] *They celebrated for entertainment, as a way of giving thanks to God, and for reflection and stock taking, seizing the opportunity to set new development and other agendas. The development objective needs particular emphasis today because that is what our youths are craving for. They want development that brings jobs, income and enhancement of living standards. Development, particularly equitable development, is also important for promoting peace and unity. Most conflicts are simply fights over limited resources. Incidentally, without peace and unity, we cannot have development. So development, peace and unity are important bedfellows[...] Once again, let's remember that development is a shared responsibility. That is why, for example, we cannot leave the fight against corruption to the political leadership alone. But the pre-eminence of our leaders, political and traditional, in our development efforts cannot be overemphasized.*[45]

What I would like to highlight here is the emphasis that the *Agbogbomefia* put on his ancestors, bringing together their interests in development with his own and

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[44] Both spellings, *Notsie* and *Notse* were used in documentation and when spelt out by people.
[45] http://togbe-afede.com/textual_content/2010_ASOGLI_YAM_FESTIVAL.pdf

revealing development not as a recent phenomenon and one defined by European ideals, but rather as one of the main roles of the ancestors in the past as much as the present. As Richard Werbner has argued, discussing elderhood more generally, 'elders mediate between the living and the dead […] and take on responsibility for the welfare of their kin, indeed, for the very bodies and innermost being of their kin' (Werbner 2004*b*: 144). What the *Agbogbomefia* reminded his citizens of, was that he was in a position of authority, not as the African Big Man or the political entrepreneur of the 'politics of the belly' but that he held authority as 'domesticated man' (Werbner 2004: 137) and that it would therefore be pragmatic to recognise him as a development leader.

In addition, rather than making a distinction between modern and traditional forms of leadership, the *Agbogbomefia* chose, rather, to make a distinction between the political and the traditional. On one level, this acted to undermine the value of the tradition/modernity opposition in the first place. However, the *Agbogbomefia* was perhaps bearing in mind that development was often understood as a partner to modernity or, at least, as a part of the modern 'package deal'.[46] Tradition within this time-shape, was synonymous with the past and could only be used as a means to modern and developmental ends. In this sense, his choice to speak of political authority rather than modern authority ensured that development did not remain locked within the state's time-shape and could be re-temporalised instead within the traditional time-shape.

What did the Agbogbomefia's Citizens think?

When I spoke to friends and interlocutors in Ho about development and traditional authority they were, on the whole, optimistic about the *Agbogbomefia's* achievements. However, many people stressed that they were glad that the *Agbogbomefia* was finally listening to his people and the other chiefs and elders. One elder told me that because he was an *Ablotsifia,*[47] and had lived in America, some of his ideas, upon his installation were 'confused'. The *Agbogbomefia,* I was told, had

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[46] See Ivan Karp (2002) for a helpful discussion of the way these terms, through their slipperiness, often become interchangeable or enter into a relationship such that one becomes the foreground to the other's background (Karp 2002: 83).
[47] *Ablotsi* literally means over the water; *ablotsifia* refers to a chief who has spent a lot of time in Europe or America.

been focussed on development but had thought that development meant modernising everything and getting rid of aspects of the traditional system which had been working well. My friend told me: *'He was trying to change things too quickly and listening to the wrong people. He thought he had to make everything like the government'.* This comment was a reference to the *Agbogbomefia's* re-naming of the Asogi Traditional Area to the Asogli State. Many people had joked about this, saying that changing the name Asogli Traditional Area to Asogli State was like trying to squeeze a house into a matchbox. How could the Asogli State be part of the Asogli Traditional Council, the amalgamated body of Traditional Areas?[48] Moreover, how could it exist within Ghana which, since independence, had been a unitary State? Some of my interviews with other chiefs in Ho and throughout the Asogli Traditional Area revealed that the name change had offended other traditional areas and had been interpreted by some as an attempt to make the Asogli Traditional Area distinct from the others that made up the Asogli Traditional Council.

In addition to the move from being a Traditional Authority to a State, the *Agbogbomefia* had instituted an Asogli State Cabinet, a Congress and Trust Fund and fourteen new 'ministries' which replicated those of the government, including one for 'Finance', 'Agriculture', 'health and Environment' and 'Women and Children'. However, by the time I conducted fieldwork in 2008 it appeared that these new ministries had all but fallen apart. I asked why and was told by my friend Gifty: *'it was too corporate and too much like the government. Nobody trusts the government so why would a chief want to copy them?'* Other chiefs and elders told me that all the issues covered by the new ministries were already being dealt with in line with tradition; there were particular leaders who had held specific roles for generations and whose role it had been to assist and advise people. They complained that instead of trying to incorporate the contemporary issues and everyday challenges that people faced into the traditional system, as had always been done anyway, the *Agbogbomefia* had just abolished tried and tested old systems and replaced them with new government like structures. It was bound to fail, friends told me. Wondering why nobody had been able to stop the *Agbogbomefia* from creating these ministries, it became clear that everyone had shared an understandable enthusiasm upon his installation and even those who had their doubts, had felt that it was important for him to learn.

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[48] During the British colonial period traditional areas were known as 'states'.

According to most people I spoke with, the *Agbogbomefia* had learnt a lot. I recall one particular morning, around seven am as I was returning from a dawn walk up the hill outside Ho. I got chatting to a young, brightly clad jogger called Peace who was also on his way down the hill. It was just before the Yam Festival in September and he asked me what I was doing to celebrate. After some conversation about our respective plans, I asked him what he thought about the traditional authorities' involvement in development.[49] He told me: '*This our chief is showing a good example to the youth. We can see how he has worked hard to get where he is. He has struggled too. But now he has money, he is using some of it to help us develop. It is making us proud to be from Ho. As for me, I am from here and now I can travel anywhere in Ghana, even outside, and they will know Togbe's name. My grandfather has always been telling me that it is only tradition that will move us forward but I have been calling him 'colo'* [50] *Now, Togbe has shown us that tradition is not colo – it is our ancestors and chiefs who are making sure we develop. Not the politicians who leave after four years!'*

I asked him what he meant when he used the term 'development' and he told me: '*development simply means making the home, community, country and the whole world a better place to live in. It means making life easier and enjoyable for all. Since time immemorial, our forefathers have been trying to develop and make better lives for themselves.* Peace's comments, along with many other similar ones made me realise that the *Agbogbomefia's* development work and public persona had worked to reveal the traditional time-shape as one through which development could be re-temporalised and shown to have been entailed by tradition. Development here was not, as the state's time-shape would have it, simply the result of tradition's repackaging and transformation into a modern product, namely development, or as the NCL would have it, evidence of chiefs' ability to convert the power of the past into the power of the

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[49]The annual Yam Festival in Ho, which lasted for the month of September, combined thanking the ancestors for another good harvest with raising money for development efforts. They tended to have development focussed themes. I participated fully in two Asogli Yam Festivals and, along with Korsi, have written another document on the History of Asogli, which includes a more detailed analysis of the Yam Testival.

[50] 'colo' was a term often used by youth to insult their elders as it refers to the colonial period; young people often told me that the traditional system is like the colonial one in terms of discipline. Today's elders, in trying to discipline the youth, are behaving 'like our former colonial masters'. In response to the insult, elders often tell the youth that they don't know what they are talking about; they wouldn't have survived the colonial period is they had been alive then.

present. As Korsi often reminded me: *'the role of the chiefs has not changed. It is only the challenges of the day that have changed'.* [51]

The traditional authorities in Ho worked in a number of different ways to respond to some of the everyday challenges that people faced. As we have already seen in one of Togbe Afede's speeches, he recently launched a $250 million five year Volta Region Development Plan, entitled 'The Pathway to Prosperity'. It will be implemented by the Volta Region Development Agency, an organisation chaired by Togbe Afede which aims to foster grass-roots participation in development planning and participation. In addition, and with support from the Chinese Government, Togbe Afede built the Sunon Asogli Kpone Power Plant near Accra. The five hundred megawatts thermal project was conceived as a response to Ghana's ongoing electricity shortages and although the project is still in its second stage of development, last year it was able to produce fifteen percent of the electricity generated in Ghana. In addition, it has provided jobs for numerous Ghanaians from its conception. While this provides an example of his involvement in national development and the 'Pathway to Prosperity' project an example of his involvement in regional development, he has also initiated a number of projects in Ho.

In 2005, work was completed on the Philip Akpo Memorial Roman Catholic Junior Secondary School, providing a much needed school building for over four hundred pupils. The school was built in memory of Togbe Afede's deceased brother who had stepped back to allow Togbe to continue his education when their parents could not afford to finance the schooling of them both. Recognising the difficulties that parents continue to have in financing their childrens' education, Togbe Afede also initiated the Asogli Education Fund, which has already helped numerous 'brilliant but needy' students continue their education. Togbe's international connections have not only helped in providing direct funding but his partnership with various Chinese organisations and individuals encouraged the Chinese Government to provide a number of scholarships for students to take up funded degree courses in China. Also working towards securing education opportunities for more children, Mama Atrato II and the Asogli Queen Mothers Association was successful in securing a grant from the

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[51] Although Kleist does not focus on the 'rupture' of modernity and acknowledges that chiefs have been involved in the development of their areas since precolonial times (Kleist 2011: 6), her analysis is unable to take us beyond the modern/traditional domain thinking typical of the NCL.

Japanese Government to build six new classroom blocks for the Ho-Dome Evangelical Presbyterian Experimental Junior High School.

However, in addition to the specific examples outlined above, I argue that almost all the traditional office holders I met were involved in improving the lives of people in their community. Divisions and sub-divisions of Ho often held community meetings at dawn where the chiefs, elders and people gathered to discuss particular issues and problems affecting them at the time. These meetings were both an opportunity for the traditional authorities to inform people about events taking place and local government plans for the development of Ho, and a chance for individuals to express their particular concerns and problems. Although the traditional authorities were not always able to prevent or change local government plans, the meetings allowed the traditional authorities to convey popular opinion when they were invited to attend local government assembly meetings. It was also during these meetings that the chiefs, queen mothers and elders conveyed to people Togbe Afede's plans and activities and sought out peoples' opinions. Decisions made about how Ho should develop were, in this sense, a result of discussion and interaction between the traditional authorities and the people.

Moving away from Domain Thinking

As I mentioned earlier, what I see as one of the main problems of the NCL is that it is based on a common form of domain thinking, one which will not help us to understand Asogli tradition. Jean-Loup Amselle has described 'ethnological reason' or thinking as 'the continuity-breaking procedure that extracts, refines and classifies with the intention of isolating types' (Amselle 1990: 1). He argues that 'ethnological reason' is a clearly unified theoretical perspective and one of the foundations of European domination over the rest of the planet. It is a perspective which supposes, in effect, the existence of elements separable from their inter-social fabric. It is thus not the notion of society that founds comparativism but the reverse. As an antidote to ethnological reason, Amselle offers us the notion of 'mestizo logics', a continuist approach that emphasises, rather, an originary syncretism or lack of distinctness (Amselle 1990:1). [52]Nevertheless, Amselle argues that ethnology has accomplished its

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[52] See Roy Dilley (2004) for a discussion of alternatives to syncretism. Also, Peter Lienhardt (1987)

civilising mission in the sense that its objects of study themselves often return to the ethnographer the same pronouncements and 'the very image of themselves they saw reflected in the ethnologist's gaze' (Amselle 1990: 18).

Having conducted research in Ghana with chiefs and both local and international development workers, Thomas Yarrow has written about some of the ways in which the opposition between indigenous and western knowledge was invoked in different settings and by different actors. He notes that the distinction between the two types of knowledge sometimes brought about the need for certain individuals, such as chiefs, to put themselves forward as 'mediators' between 'these manifestly distinct ways of knowing' (Yarrow 2008: 225). I certainly agree with him that where opposition becomes the medium through which people understand their own identities and their relationships with one another, it is essential for anthropologists to make sense of what people themselves make of these terms in the context of actual social encounters (Yarrow 2008: 226).[53] In this way, I suggest that we could interpret some parts of the *Agbogbomefia's* speeches, and in particular his earlier ones, in line with the NCL to show that the *Agbogbomefia* was an example of the successful syncretic chief, capable of mediating between the worlds of tradition and modernity, the state and his people. However, as we have seen, his later speeches revealed quite a different aesthetic at work, one which displayed both his own confidence in tradition and evidence that he had been listening to what his 'citizens' had to say about tradition, modernity and development.

I argue therefore, that the image of the chief as broker, mediator, translator and converter is of some value but it relies on a number of assumptions which, after fieldwork in Ho at least, I feel are experientially and analytically shaky. Like Carola Lentz, who conducted research with various 'big men' in Ghana, including a chief and a politician, I wonder whether actors themselves see their biographies as a constant

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[53] However, it is my argument that this very utilisation and the oppositions themselves should be understood as a product of western knowledge practices (*yevonya*), They were thus utilised by chiefs when they took on the role as 'mediators' in the particular contexts which they felt demanded it; often when speaking to an international audience, Ghanaian politicians, development workers and so on. Therefore, it was not so much that chiefs always had to mediate between indigenous knowledge and western knowledge or tradition and modernity but rather that there was only a practical need to do so in their relationships with other actors and in the particular discursive contexts which had emerged and become established primarily through western knowledge practices. For example, Togbe Ayim IV of Ziavi Traditional Area, told me during an interview: *Now that we are in your political situation, the Western type of politics, it is my duty as Fiaga to make sure that my people understand the situation of each political organisation...that is some of my responsibility…You have to co-ordinate the activities of the ruling government and your community…you have to be a mediator'.*

attempt to 'straddle' different spheres or whether it is rather the European scholar who draws these distinctions (Lentz 1998: 61). While acknowledging that there may be conceptual distinctions between traditional and modern political office, she suggests that it might be more fruitful to think in terms of the combination or complementarity of different registers of power than the straddling of different spheres. Her research on various 'big men', has led her to suggest that there seems to be one pattern or 'role image' corresponding with their major field of action which is foregrounded while others are called upon wherever they are found to be useful (Lentz 1998: 61). It could be argued that the NCL has failed to properly investigate the 'traditional' pattern or role image of the traditional authorities, perhaps ironically, because it has focussed primarily on the single 'big man' chief and, in particular, the discursive contexts in which he has foregrounded his capacity to act as a 'modern' chief. However, I am not convinced that Lentz's analytic goes quite far enough; through it we may end up only falling back upon the very domains and spheres that have stifled our understanding of tradition thus far.

Conclusions

Achille Mbembe has argued that the postcolony is not constituted by one single public space. There are rather several, each with its own logic but nevertheless entangled with others (Mbembe 1992: 4).[54] Harri Englund too, has written about postcolonial subjectivity as one which accommodates multiple identities within a single subject. Relations often 'cross cut' each other as persons belong to a particular church, a political party, an ethnic group, and so on (Englund 2004: 14). In a similar vein, Richard Werbner has described the post-colonial African as particularly skilled in the negotiation of multiple identities and their inventiveness in playing off individualism and dividualism (Werbner 2004). In this sense, the postcolonial subject has to learn to manage more than one identity and negotiate them as and when it is required. It is therefore important, Mbembe argues, that subjects learn how to bargain in this conceptual marketplace (Mbembe 1992: 4-5), an argument not dissimilar to Francis Nyamnjoh's later suggestion that being more subject than citizen or vice versa

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[54] Mbembe also argues that we might understand subjectivity itself as temporality and acknowledge, subsequently, the postcolony as a combination of several temporalities (Mbembe 2001: 15).

in any given moment is less a marker of a stable identity than a 'survival strategy' (Nyamnjoh 2004: 56-57).

Certainly in Ho, people talked about moving in and out of different attachments and acknowledged that *'sometimes you have to see a pastor and sometimes you have to see a policeman'*. Nevertheless, I would like to return here to Fortes' 'single unified whole', but bear in mind Michael Lambek's argument (outlined in the introduction) that social wholes may be described as such without recourse to functionalism; indeed, what can often characterise a social whole is its ability to accommodate peoples' changing levels of attachment to it; people might move in and out of this complex as the complex itself has to compete with other discursive formations, interests and attractions for peoples' attention (Lambek 2002: 15). In Ho, many self-proclaimed traditionalists often said things such as: '*There is no such thing as a pure traditionalist. Me, I go to church, I know the bible. But after church, where do I go? I come home of course'*. During an interview with Togbe Ayim IV of Ziavi Traditional Area,[55] he explained to me: *'My citizens are having to serve under two principles – the principle of the christianity and the principle of the community. They go from the community to the chapels for about two or three hours…after that, where do they come? They come back to the community!'*

Following on from these comments, I would like to suggest that the time-shape of tradition had a particular ability to encompass or carry, relations, forces and practices that anthropologists have often described as being opposed to it. Like Lambek's social whole or 'complex', the traditional time-shape was a dense social and symbolic nexus with 'a confident capacity to attract and encompass' (Lambek 2002: 15).[56] Therefore, I argue that traditional authority was becoming increasingly valued by people not because chiefs were mediators or syncretic leaders, capable of bringing together the traditional and the modern, as the NCL would have it, or even because they were able to switch between foregrounding a traditional 'role image' and a modern one. It was precisely because, I argue, the source of traditional authority – the ancestors – was itself an example of Amselle's 'originary syncretism'; that is, the

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[55] Ziavi was about a twenty minute drive from Ho. I met with Togbe Ayim on a number of occasions, both formally and informally and he often invited me to events taking place in Ziavi, including stool rites. In Ho too, Togbe Ayim was often called to represent the *Agbogbomefia* at local school openings and he was often present at workshops, as a representative of the traditional authorities.

[56] See Roy Wagner's (1986: 169) discussion of Louis Dumont's 'hierarchical encompassment' within the development of his own understanding of the Usen Barok 'icon of containment' and 'constitutive image' (Wagner 1986: 146).

ancestors, or the living dead, were already mediated beings. Therefore the only genuine mediatory role that the traditional authorities had,was to mediate between the living and the living dead.

In the next two chapters, I shall develop this argument by fleshing out, as it were, just who the Asogli living dead were. By thinking through the living dead to understand the time-shape of tradition, we shall see that whether we a) take modernity as a historical phenomenon that has emerged out of the encounter between the West and its 'African other', b) understand it temporally as the present or future, in opposition to the past, or, c) as a socio economic material condition or aspirational status, the living dead can provide us with an understanding of tradition which already carries modernity as part of its relational flow. This is because the 'living dead' were neither distant spiritual entities nor long dead forebears. They were rather given recognition as once living and historical kinspeople who were continuing to play an active role in the lives of their descendants, blessing and punishing them so that they might enjoy a more prosperous future.

I shall endeavour to show that it has always been the responsibility of the traditional authorities to ensure the development and progress of their people and area of jurisdiction and that it was the living dead that continued to be consulted for assistance on this path, whether development meant acquiring more land and fighting off intruders, or trying to secure money to build a primary school or health facility as tended to be the case in the early twenty first century. That is, tradition, constituted as it was by the living dead, was not a matter of the past or a symbol of the past but already contained within it a relational flow, linking the past, the present and the future. It could be used as a means to development ends but it was equally an end in itself because it already carried those possible futures.[57] So, let us now see what might happen to studies of postcolonial traditional authority if we remember the living dead.

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[57] See Nancy Munn (1990) for a helpful discussion on temporality in this regard.

Chapter 3: Return of the Living Dead: The Time-Shape of Asogli Ancestors

While I was living in Ho, Korsi often wrote to me on different topics. Here is what he had to say about the ancestors or, as we shall soon come to know them, the 'living dead':

We are therefore of the view that all persons born into Kodzogbe,[58] upon their death, transform from their physical nature into spiritual beings and return to their creator in the spiritual world. The ancestors are thus regarded as people who have lived with us on earth in their physical bodies, who have shared with us every aspect of our daily lives, who shared our abilities and limitations and were virtually part of us during the day. Shedding off their physical bodies through death has moved them up to the spiritual plane where they can now see both there and in Kodzogbe. The ancestors are thus regarded as the living dead and considered best placed to be able to understand the limitations of men and the ones able to better communicate their requests to Mawuga[59] in the spiritual world where they now also exist. The ancestors are equally able to foresee any danger looming around, either from the spiritual world to the physical world or from the physical world to the spiritual world. The ancestors are thus the link between the physical world and the spiritual world. We therefore believe that they are always in our midst, playing their respective roles for our well being. This is why we reverend or venerate them. Some people who have not delved well into our system or who have not been able to enquire from the custodians of our customs, have misinterpreted this as 'ancestral worship'. Just because they hear Togbeawo/Vorvlorwo[60] being mentioned in our libations and almost every important activity, they are of the view that we worship them. In our day to day supplications, we consider the ancestors as our direct link to the spiritual world. The offer of drinks is the sustenance of the covenant between the living dead who once shared those drinks with us. It is difficult to drive across a river without a bridge or a ferry. The

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[58] The physical world of the living.

[59] The creator God and Supreme Being

[60] The *Ewe* terms for ancestors. *Togbeawo* literally means the fathers behind the fathers i.e. the grandfathers. Ancestors, chiefs and elders share this name as does the ancestral stool, which is called *Togbe Zikpi*. *Vorvlorwo* can be translated as the departed ones who are feared.

importance which people attach to the bridge or ferry is what we attach to the ancestors. To us, although they are physically dead, they are still alive. The living dead are not deities who are worshipped. They are the link between the living and the deities.

In the last chapter, we saw some of the ways that the state, through its time-shape, had attempted to eclipse colonial relations in order to create modern Ghanaian citizens, proud of their 'authentic' cultural identity. We also saw however, that despite its attempt to overcome colonial temporal ruptures, tradition within the state's time-shape had come to be associated with the pre-colonial past. Even as it was praised and 'polished' so that it could be used for modern, developmental ends, individuals were encouraged to adopt a particular temporal stance through which tradition remained fixed in the authentic past. And while we have seen some renewed anthropological interest in African chieftaincy recently, the majority of this nascent literature has failed to acknowledge the fact that traditional authority is, first and foremost, ancestral authority. One result of this has been that it has reinforced the temporal assumptions found within the state's time-shape, and failed to acknowledge that tradition itself, through the living dead, entailed the very social and economic development that the state associated with modernity. Nevertheless, the NCLs ignorance of the ancestors is to some extent understandable, given the relative absence of any anthropological interest in African ancestors over the last thirty years.[61] As I outlined in the introduction, I hope to bring the ancestors back to life for anthropology because as my fieldwork attested to, they have not disappeared for the people with whom we work. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to outline the ontological ground of the living dead so that we may better understand their particular time-shape and, therefore, why it was that tradition offered people in Ho an alternative temporal mode through which they could envisage both social and economic development.

The Ancestors in Anthropology

Ancestors have long held an important place in anthropology. Spencer, Tylor, and Frazer all considered 'ancestor worship' as the definitive mark of 'primitive religion'. Although evolutionary concerns were eventually superceded by functionalist

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[61] I refer here to sub-Saharan Africa.

models of African societies, ancestors remained a key component in analyses of the maintenance of jural authority, land tenure systems and segmentary social organisation (McCall 1995: 256). Meyer Fortes and his work on the Tallensi of Northern Ghana has probably provided anthropology with one of the most well-known and developed functionalist analyses of ancestorship in Africa. Fortes argued that it was only possible to understand the roles and functions of the ancestors for the Tallensi through a thorough knowledge of their kinship, family and descent structure (Fortes, 1970: 165). Indeed it was this relationship between kinship – or more specifically descent – and ancestorship, that was central to Fortes' approach. In this way, ancestorship within Fortes' work may be understood as an extension or reflection of these kinship relations within the spiritual realm. He argued that the reason everything was subject to the authority of the ancestors for Tale people was that kinship was the dominant system of social organisation (Fortes 1949:340), and ancestors were 'the main ideological bulwark of the kinship system' (Fortes 1945:33).

According to Fortes, ancestors were named, dead forbears whose living descendants of a genealogical class represented their continued structural relevance. In 'ancestor worship', such an ancestor received ritual service and tendance directed specifically to him by the proper class of his descendants. It was thus the relationship between the father and son that Fortes argued provided the backbone of relations between the living and relations between the living and the dead. As he put it: 'ancestorhood is fatherhood made immortal' (Fortes 1970:189) and even if individual fathers died, 'fatherhood' never died. Fortes argued that the jural authority of living fathers was metamorphosed into the sacred authority of the ancestors, who were backed by the whole hierarchy of ancestors who had come before them (Fortes 1970:193-4). He noted that among the Tallensi, the ancestors constituted the ultimate tribunal and the final authority in matters of life and death. Upon any person's death, it was said that they had either been slain by the ancestors or had been summoned by them. In the case of the former, this was usually in retribution for 'neglect of ritual service demanded by them or breach of promises made or duty owed to them' (Fortes 1970: 179). Fortes stressed however, that these ancestors were not remote divinities, but were are rather part and parcel of the everyday life of their descendants (Fortes 1970: 192). So ancestor worship, while consisting of ritual relations with dead forbears, was not co-terminous with the worship of the dead. Ancestor worship was a representation of an extension of the authority component in the jural relations of

successive generations (Fortes 1965:133).

The structural-functional theory of ancestors arguably reached its final peak over four decades ago with the publication of Igor Kopytoff's article 'Ancestors as elders in Africa' (1971), although the early 1980s saw a series of correspondence in *Man* concerning ancestors in Africa. Following Fortes, Kopytoff argued that ancestorship in Africa has tended to follow a particular pattern. For a start, ancestors are vested with spiritual power and authority but they also maintain a functional role in the living world and, in particular, with their descendents. That was why African kin groups might be better be described as communities of the living and the dead (Kopytoff 1971: 129). Kopytoff argued that in general, ancestors have an ambivalent relation with their living kins people; they are both benevolent and punitive, with the former being assured by offerings and sacrifice and the latter by neglect. Like Fortes, Kopytoff stressed that the connection point between the ancestors and the living was through the elders of the kin group and, indeed, the authority of the elders was a result of their close connection to the ancestors (Kopytoff 1971:129).

However, Kopytoff diverged from Fortes with his argument that Africans do not draw significant distinctions between ancestors and living elders. It was Kopytoff's contention that the question of whether a person in a position of political and jural authority was dead or alive was a preoccupation of Western academics rather than an everyday concern of Africans. He wrote: 'Once we recognize that African 'ancestors' are above all elders and are to be understood in terms of the same category as living elders, we shall stop pursuing a multitude of problems of our own creation' (Kopytoff 1971:138). Kopytoff backed up this argument with linguistic data, revealing that the *Bantu* terms used to refer to ancestors were the same as those used for living elders. He pointed out that the *Suku* had no word for 'ancestor' so to talk of an 'ancestor cult' was simply wrong. The dead members of the lineage were referred to as *bambuta*, which literally meant the 'big ones', or the 'old ones' and was widely acknowledged as referring to those who have attained maturity, those older than oneself and, collectively, the ruling elders of a lineage, whether they were alive or dead. Kopytoff argued that the meaning of the word was comparative rather than absolute; lineage authority and the representation of the lineage to the outside world were organized on a continuum of age, that is, of relative eldership (Kopytoff 1971: 131). Every junior owed 'honour' and 'respect' to their seniors, whether they were living elders or dead ones (Kopytoff 1971:133). Ultimately, Kopytoff did not deny the fact that there was a

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difference in the manner in which the living and the dead were approached. However, he asserted that this difference was one relating to their different physical states; structurally, they remained in their same positions vis-a-vis their juniors' (Kopytoff 1971:134).

Gods, Deities and Ancestors

In Ho, the 'Supreme God' [62] was called *Mawuga*. Said to be neither male nor female, some of the accolades reserved for *Mawuga* included: '*Mawuga kiti kata*' (*Mawuga* reaches far and wide, and is present in the largest and smallest things) '*Mawuga Sogbolisa*', (*Mawuga* is strong and all powerful), '*Mawuga Sodza*', (the great and almighty), and, finally, '*Mawuga Hagbenor*' (the creator or the master craftsperson who created both the hands and the feet *(Adanuwoto, ewo asi kple afe)* of human beings). Below *Mawuga*, were *trorwo* or spirits, and *trorwo* can be literally translated as 'those who are able to turn things around'. These *trorwo* were regarded as agents of *Mawuga* and every significant aspect of life had an agent of *Mawuga* in charge of it. The *trorwo* were identified according to their various manifestations and the types and places of their manifestation acted to show people where they should build a shrine (*trorkpo*) to house them. For example, if within a river there was a particular point where the water was constantly swirling or surging upwards, divinations would be conducted in order to find out why this particular area of the river did not form part of the wider flow. If divinations proved that the area was the source or dwelling point of a spirit, a shrine would be constructed in order to reveal *Mawuga's* manifestation, through a particular *trorwo*.

Although new shrines could be constructed, particular villages and towns also had deities and shrines with associated priests and priestesses as mediums. Some of the main shrines within Ho included the Dzoha Shrine, which was the deity attached to the

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[62] See Horton (1971) for a discussion on the distinctions between god, spirits and ancestors. Also, Greene (1996) for a discussion of the 'Supreme Gods' debate. The Anlo Ewe poet, novelist, and political activist Kofi Awoonor has also written at length on Ewe spirituality. He writes of the trinity of the unborn, the living and the ancestors sharing a unified existence. Like Korsi, Awoonor argues that the spirit world is coterminous with the waking world but that it is on a higher plane. With *Mawuga* (Supreme Being/God) at the top, followed by other smaller gods and spiritual entities, the ancestors form the first line of advocates on peoples' behalf before the deities (Awoonor 2006: 380). Awoonor notes that they are 'venerated precisely because they are our elders who can be depended on to speak on our behalf and obtain from the deities our needs if we supplicate them' (Awoonor 2006: 384).

Afede stool, and Hosi, the market shrine. Both of these were located in Bankoe and originated from Notsie. Then there was Kalia, and Gogokpoe, both water spirits and also located in Bankoe. Afeli was the deity that had marked the establishment of the town, and it remained in the palace grounds at Bankoe. Dzebrum was a war spirit that originated from and was still situated in Bankoe. Ati Blamsaga, the overall linguist of the deities, also originated from and remains in Bankoe. I was told that just as the chief had a linguist, so did the deities. Togbe Zikpi, the ancestral stool, which was located in Bankoe, was acknowledged as having been brought from Notsie As we shall see, the stool was not a deity like the others but rather recognised as the highest spiritual force in the town and, arguably, the carrier of the chieftaincy. Chiefs and elders explained to me that just as *Mawuga* was positioned above the deities and the ancestors, at the level of the town and as a spiritual force, the stool was positioned above all the other deities in the town. And, importantly, if the priests and priestesses wanted to perform rites for any of the other deities, they had to first seek permission from the paramount chief, usually via *Zikpitor*. Similarly, it was through *Zikpitor* that people could make offerings to the ancestral stool and seek protection and assistance from it.

Further down the spiritual hierarchy and below the deities or *trorwo* were *Togbeawo/Vorvlorwo,* the ancestors or living dead. Because they were recognised as being closest to the living, whenever *Zikpitor* wanted to communicate with *Mawuga*, the ancestors were asked to take a message to the *trorwo* who could then pass it on to *Mawuga*. When the ancestors were being summoned as a collectivity during libations, they were referred to as *Togbeawo*, the plural of *Togbe,* and the name also shared by chiefs and elders. Literally it means the father behind the father (grandfather). However, in the context of a public libation when the chiefs and elders made a request to the ancestors on behalf of the people, the people could be seen to represent the 'son', the chiefs and elders their 'father', and the ancestors their 'grandfather'. In a sense, the chiefs and elders were both father and son; the fathers of the living people and the sons of the ancestors. And, again, within ancestral relations, the most recently deceased were accorded the position of 'son' to their ancestral 'fathers' and 'grandfathers'. In addition to being called *Togbeawo* though, ancestors were also described as *Vorvlorwo*, literally meaning 'the departed ones who are feared'. However, *vor* does not imply a purely negative sense of the word fear and refers more generally to respect and reverence. And *vlor*, although literally meaning to depart, referred to the fact that when a person died, they were not described as having died

(*eku*), but rather as having departed (*evlor*) and travelled to their village (*eyi afe*). Death here was not taken to be the end of life but simply the starting point of a journey to the spiritual world or what was commonly talked about as the ancestral village and final resting place, *Tsiefe.*

The three main stages of the Ewe life cycle were *Bofe*, *Kodzogbe* and *Tsiefe*. At any given point in time, I was told, a person would be at one of these three stages. In *Bofe, Bomenor,* (Mother Nature) resided with several children under her care while *Kodzogbe* was described to me as the material world of the living. However, according to those I asked on the topic, all that was to happen to a person in *Kodozgbe* had already been told to *Bomenor* by the reincarnating soul before its arrival in *Kodzogbe*. In *Kodzogbe*, living a moral life was understood to be judged upon how a person behaved towards others, both living and living dead, and it was this that would determine whether, upon their death, they became an ancestor or a troubled and haunting spirit. People explained to me that it was only the reincarnating souls who made it to *Bofe* again; those who had already completed their tasks upon their death in the physical world, remained as ancestors in *Tsiefe*. *Tsiefe* can be translated as the home of the dead, and it was where the ancestors resided before returning back to *Bofe* if they needed to (although the early missionaries translated it as hell). Some people also told me of a space between *Kodzogbe* and *Tsiefe* called *Avlime,* literally meaning, 'within a shallow place'. Everyone had to pass through *Avlime* in order to reach *Tsiefe* and if someone had lived their life in a good way, they would pass through *Avlime* very easily. However, if a person had lived an immoral life, they would be prevented from passing to join the ancestors in *Tsiefe* and their spirit would remain there. [63] As one of my Ewe language teachers put it: *'It is these people who become the demons, tormenting the living in Kodzogbe. It is the spirits of these bad people that will always stay bad and make the world an uneasy place'.*

Almost everyone I spoke with acknowledged the existence of reincarnation, and it often arose in the everyday context, for example when a misbehaving child was seen to be exhibiting the same characteristics as a particularly stubborn family ancestor. Sometimes if such a child's behaviour became recurrent, the family started to call the child by the name of the ancestor, with the assumption that the ancestor had not fulfilled their destiny yet. However, over the course of my research, I realised that

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[63] I will discuss morality and death in greater detail in the final two chapters of this thesis.

many people were quite unsure of the precise names and stages that I have outlined above and some people mentioned one but had forgotten others. Discussions about them often led to a lot of confusion and arguments, even among the elders because, as one elder explained, *'as a result of the Christianity and the schooling, things have been lost along the way and we are oversimplifying most things now by just talking of the physical and the spiritual world, the world of the living and the world of the ancestors and spirits'.* Again, I did not hear the terms being used in such a detailed manner, even when sending off the deceased during funeral rites; however, people explained to me that it was not up to the living to discuss specifically whether someone would go to *Tsiefe* or *Avlime.* As a result of the many meetings and discussions held by the traditional authorities during the lead up to a funeral, it soon became quite obvious where the deceased was headed for.

That said, a big distinction was made between ancestors and other spirits; as I was frequently told: *'all ancestors are spirits but not all spirits are ancestors'.* As I have already mentioned, it was the position of ancestors as once living humans, that marked them out from other spiritual forces and provided them with their particular time-shape as the living dead. The living dead were described to me as existing over the threshold between the physical and spiritual world. The traditional authorities provided the point of connection between the living and the living dead; they 'represented' the ancestors in the physical world as it were, and acted as intermediaries between the living and the ancestors in much the same way as the ancestors act as intermediaries between the living and *Mawuga.* In addition, a person's structural position in the physical world would also direct their position within the spiritual world. For example, if someone ruled as a chief in *Kodzogbe,* they would continue being a chief within *Tsiefe.* In the past when a chief died and was 'sent off' to the ancestors,[64] other people had to be sacrificed so that they could act as the chief's servants in the ancestral realm. However, things had changed and just as a chief in the twenty first century no longer had servants, neither did he require them in *Tsiefe.*[65]

In Ho, ancestors bore a striking similarity to the benevolent but punitive ancestors described by Fortes and Kopytoff. Again, in line with Kopytoff's argument,

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[64] I witnessed the final funeral rites of the previous paramount chief, through which he was 'sent off' to his ancestors. I will discuss the rites in chapter six of this thesis.

[65] This practice was maintained until only a few generations ago, when *Zikpitor* at the time (the father of the current one) abolished it. He was also very active in the Catholic Church and a Catechist there so a number of practices that were deemed as 'inhumane' were abolished.

in Ho there was a hierarchy of relative elderhood, both in the community of the living and the community of the living dead. A further similarity can be found when we consider that the name *Togbe* was used to refer to living and living-dead grandfathers. However, although there were numerous structural parallels drawn between the living and the spiritual world and, indeed between the living and the living dead, their ontological ground as the 'living dead' – as once living but now dead historical kinspeople – has challenged me to move beyond 'structural positions' to understand their importance.

Looking after the Elders, Living and Living Dead

The ideal relationship between ancestors and their descendants was described to me as the basis of moral personhood and good relations between living youth and their elders. It was based upon relations of respect and care between the youth and elders, whether living or living dead. In so far as youth respected their elders, elders would care for, teach and look after the youth. And, to reciprocate the love and care that they had received as children, all adults had a moral obligation to look after and care for their elders as they became weak and old. This reciprocal care did not end with the death of an elder and children were expected to provide their deceased parents with a 'fitting' funeral in recognition of their earlier parental care, a process which I will discuss at length in the final chapter. However, at the beginning of my stay in Ghana, I often became frustrated when I saw the way children were constantly being sent on errands by their elders and questioned for not helping out enough. My host family explained to me that every child would also grow and become an elder one day; they too would have children to tend to them. It was therefore important for them, as children and youth, to learn the way that the system worked and the roles that youth and elders played.

In this way, personhood might be better described as potential personhood because every youth was a potential elder and every elder a potential ancestor. And, of course, while the elders in the living world had authority over the youth, positions of youth and elder-hood were always relational and contextual; the living elders were also positioned as 'youth' in relation to their ancestral elders who they had to 'feed' and treat with respect if they wanted to receive care and protection from them. So even if the children were always the first to buy the food but the last to be fed, their living

elders could not eat until some food had been put on the ground for their own ancestral elders. As far as I know, young children were not given the ancestor-descendant relationship explicitly as a guide for good behaviour. It was rather that as children learnt how to treat their elders with respect, they also implicitly learnt about the ideal relationship between ancestors and descendants.[66]

It was the youths' lack of respect for their elders that was often given to me as one of the main reasons for why Ho and indeed Ghana was not developing and was going backwards *(miele megbe yim)*. As I shall discuss in chapter seven, development, or moving forward, involved both material development and moral development. Indeed, the former was argued to be impossible without the latter. Elders concerned with the apparent waning of respect for and recognition of the ancestors, often expressed their fears to me that when they saw the way the youth had no respect for their living elders, they became even more afraid of the future. My old friend Komla told me: '*You see, these disrespectful and undisciplined youth of today will one day grow up to become elders. But they have not learnt to respect so how will they be able to respect the ancestors? The ancestors will only become angrier and there will be more trouble in the town. As for the future, I fear'*. What was interesting about this comment and other similar ones, was that problems in the physical world were, in part, put down to the lack of respect shown both by youth towards their elders and by the living towards the living dead. In both the physical and the spiritual world, the breakdown of the ideal relationship of respect between youth and elders was often seen to be at the root of contemporary problems.

That there were such parallels between the physical and the spiritual worlds should not be surprising because ancestors were not remembered simply as structural positions or abstract powers but were rather remembered as persons and often particular relatives. Komla's fears were perhaps quite justified because the very elders that he complained the youth were disrespecting today, would become the ancestors of

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[66] The word for respect is *bubu* and a respectful person is called *amebubu.* Literally however, *bubu* means to turn upside down. People explained to me that if you respect a person then you will be more successful in making them change their judgement, turning it upside down in your favour. I was told that it also referred to the ripening of the banana; when an upside down basket is placed over unripe bananas, they soon ripen and become sweet and tasty. Therefore, the idea was that the turning upside down action brought about good things and acted as a transformative power. If the youth respected their elders, their elders would ensure that good things also came to them. However, on a number of occasions when I heard parents asking for respect from their children, I heard the children respond by saying: *'ok, wait and I will get a basket to cover you so you too can become ripe like the banana'*.

tomorrow; they would be perfectly capable of remembering who had disrespected them previously. This was the key point; although living elders became ancestral children in relation to their ancestral elders when they died and went to *Tsiefe,* from the perspective of the living they were still the same elders, only this time 'living dead' rather than just living. So if children disrespected their grandfather while he was alive, once he was dead, he would still remain their grandfather and remember which of his grandchildren had failed to respect him. Moreover, it was only if they respected him and 'looked after' him as an ancestor, that he, in turn, would bless them and help them to prosper. I heard many cases of people making offerings and pleas to the ancestors without them being acknowledged. After consultations to find out why, the living were simply told that they had not been respecting the ancestors up until then so the ancestors would not act upon their pleas for protection and prosperity and might even start to kill members of their family if they refused to start showing some respect.

Forgetting the Living Dead

Because the ancestors were those who, unlike the living, could 'see in the dark', disrespect and ignorance from the living often had dire consequences. Indeed, one of the main reasons that ancestors were revered and feared was because they could see in the darkness as well as the light. They could see potential problems coming towards the living and so could warn them, but they could also see when the living misbehaved. One of the names for the spiritual world was *Agume,* meaning 'inside the sun' because in the past it was believed that deep within the sun it was dark. There was also a saying: *'Yorme nyo kaka gake agume dzea de yorme o'* which can be translated as: 'the ancestral world is very good but the sun does not rise there'. I witnessed numerous occasions when ancestors became angry and possessed their descendants, one of which occurred shortly after the final funeral rites of the previous Paramount Chief and three other chiefs and prominent elders. Reconciliation rites had to be performed to reconcile the deceased with the living and to pacify his spirit. The deceased had become angry after noticing that his brother, John,[67] had failed to attend most of his funeral rites, thus failing to give him the necessary respect and recognition. John had remained in his mother's home town, some two hours away, throughout the

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[67] Although the rites I witnessed were conducted in public, I have changed the names of the individuals involved as I did not have the opportunity to ask for their consent individually.

whole planning period and had refused to come to any of the meetings that the elders called him to, claiming that he was no longer from Ho. Once angered, the deceased's spirit possessed John's daughter Praise and threatened to take his other two children to the ancestral village with him so that they could help him there.

Through Praise, he explained that while he had no problem with her and the other children as such, their father had been so disrespectful that he was holding the daughter in trust until the necessary rites were performed to pacify his spirit. Not only had John refused to show his deceased brother any respect by attending his final funeral rites but he had also disrespected his living elders by refusing to attend any meetings they had called him to. During Praise's possession, the deceased specified the items which would be required for him to be pacified: eight bottles of Castle Bridge gin, one keg of palm wine, one ram and other additional cooking ingredients. He stressed that if the items were not provided, Praise would be killed. This was what usually happened when the ancestors wanted to punish someone who had wronged; it was rarely the perceived 'wrongdoer' who was punished but rather someone they were close to, and usually a member of their family. The deceased stressed that this time, if anyone misbehaved and interfered with the process, no pacification would work again and no one would be spared. Upon hearing the message, John quickly gathered the items together and asked *Zikpitor* for the rites to be performed as soon as possible. Because of the seriousness of the matter, many people came to the family house to witness the rites, which were performed almost immediately. And in sharing the ritual meal that had been prepared with all the ingredients, first with the ancestors and then with the chiefs, elders and other people gathered, the community of the living and the living dead were pacified. For the time being at least.

In this sense then, living dead were recognised as a kind of 'moral police', striking down those who forgot or denied their relationships and obligations of care towards others in the community made up of the living *and* the living dead. However, because the living dead had once been historical persons, they were aware of changing times and the different challenges that the living faced. People told me that because of this, they had become more flexible; the newly deceased or younger ancestors were able to explain contemporary conditions to their ancestral elders and encourage some lenience. Nevertheless, and despite their flexibility, if they believed that the balance had been tipped, and that people were beginning to abandon the principles of

afemenya, embracing only *yevonya,* they intervened and punished the 'offenders'.[68] Ancestors also made it known which aspects of *yevonya* they found good and bad: promiscuous sex and abortion was judged by them as a damaging outcome of *yevonya,* unlike schooling which was seen as positive. Unfortunately, some of my young female friends found this out the hard way. One young woman who had performed a 'home' abortion, returned home from work to see her otherwise healthy mother dead on the ground, having literally fallen to her death whilst standing. Other members of the family directly related to the young woman began to follow and because no-one had become possessed as a way of passing on the message, the head of family consulted a seer to find out the cause of death. He was told that the ancestors were striking down the family because the young woman had offended *Mawuga* by killing her child unnecessarily. The family was told that they had been watching the number of young women in the family messing around with boys in a *nyamanyama* (rough and unprincipled) way and then going for abortions. The ancestors had decided to put a stop to it. The family was warned that if the young women continued to behave in such an irresponsible manner, even worse would befall them.

Remembering the Living Dead

To build up an understanding of the time-shape of the living dead as once living but now living dead historical kinspeople, I have outlined the care and respect that elders were expected to be given by youth, and have suggested that this relationship was expected to continue after an elder's death. I have also shown that upon their death, elders carried with them both knowledge of their kinship relations and an understanding of the particular social context in which they lived as humans. In this next section, and through an analysis of how the living dead were invoked and remembered through ritual, I suggest that the living dead be understood both as

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[68] *Afemenya:* home/traditional knowledge and issues, morals and ways of relating to one another. In short, it includes all that one is supposed to learn growing up in a home in order to become a person. Note the insult: 'you don't come from any home' used to describe someone without morals. *Yevonya:* Western knowledge and issues, based on the system of behaviours, institutions and ideas about the person introduced by Europeans. *Yevo* is the name given to westerners. It comes from the word Ayevo which literally means: he/she has the cunning/tricks that will make him/her free. I was told that the name had emerged from the colonial encounter but it may also shed some light on why, by going to the city and working in a *yevonya* job (*yevodor*), such a person might be described as literally freeing themselves from the demands and problems of home and community.

individual persons and as representatives of the particular periods of history through which they lived and interacted with others as humans. They were, simultaneously, temporal mediators, engaging in an on-going conversation between their living descendants in the present and other ancestors who died before them, but also, as the 'living dead', temporally mediated beings themselves.

The living remembered their living dead ancestors and communicated their requests to them by offering them a libation and pouring a small amount of alcohol on the ground before drinking the rest themselves.[69] Throughout my time in Ho, this was something that was done on public occasions by *Zikpitor* and some other chiefs and elders but privately and for particular family issues, by family and clan heads. The responsibility lay with the head of family - who was usually the eldest male in the family - because they were 'next in line' as it were; they were still alive but likely to be the first in the family to join the ancestors. For example, within my family, if there was a specific problem that was proving difficult to resolve, the 'old man'[70] would call his grandfather and say: *'Fia Kodzo, it was during your reign that we had the Asante war so just as you were able to help us defeat them then so help us now'*. Therefore, particular family ancestors were called upon at specific moments, if was recognised that the experiences they had while they were alive and the knowledge that had been generated through them might be of assistance to their living descendants in the present. We can see, therefore, that the most recently deceased were contacted first and asked to send a message to their forebears in the ancestral world because they had been alive most recently and so were most likely to understand the current concerns of the living.

During the libations that I witnessed, when an ancestral 'messenger' was called upon, the person offering the libation usually referred to their own immediate descendent or, if it was being poured on another's behalf, their descendent. I shall provide an example from the Final Funeral Rites of the previous Paramount Chief

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[69] The libation itself was called: *Tsifofo le anyi*, literally meaning pouring water on the earth or the ground. The majority of offerings to the ancestors involved water, palm wine and imported gin/schnapps and, when necessary, chicken, sheep or goats. However, usually if an animal was sacrificed it was to the deities or *Mawuga,* and the ancestors acted merely as messengers or intermediaries rather than direct recipients. Before the animal was killed, it was lifted up and down to the ground nine times, indicating that the eighth was for the deity and the ninth for the messengers - the ancestors. However, all sacrifices began with a libation of drinks for the ancestors because they acted as messengers between the living and *Mawuga* and, as I was often reminded in the everyday context as well as the ritual, all those going on a journey must be offered water.

[70] We often called *Zikpitor* 'the old man'.

which were performed officially by the current Paramount Chief. *Zikpitor*, when offering a libation to ask *Mawuga* for the protection and on-going wellbeing of the people, called upon the recently deceased chief, Togbe Afede As<u>or</u> II, to take the message to his forebears in the ancestral realm. In this way, both the chieftaincy institution and the power of the stool was shown to be on-going, with individual chiefs able to emphasise their legitimacy through their ancestral connections.[71] As was usually the case within the chieftaincy institution, successive chiefs took on the name of the stool, and the number that followed their name referred to their individual place in the chiefly lineage. Some, like the previous chief Togbe Afede As<u>or</u> II, also took on the name of another important historical descendant, in this case As<u>or</u>. Just as the current chief was recognised as the link between the people and the ancestors, so too was the most recently deceased chief recognised as the link between the current chief and his ancestors.[72] What this and the previous example reveal is that the living dead were not engaged with as undifferentiated and ahistorical spiritual forces but rather as particular people and carriers of the various historical periods through which they lived.

The Living Dead go Online

1)What is Asogli State? This copycatting of the primitive Asantemanism should cease. That other idiot of a Ghana Chief, like the clown King of Ashanti, has no power to restrict the rights of the people. The sooner this self - important idiot is stopped, the better. Volta Region has no stomach for Chiftaicy lunacy. [73]

2)The so-called Agbogbogbo has no authority to stop the citizens of a democratic Republic from pursuing their daily lives just to let him perform primitive rites of a

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[71] However, the current Paramount Chief said that he would rather remain as Togbe A<u>f</u>ede XIV. Although I did not confirm this with Togbe, others claimed that as an international business man, Togbe had been worried that additional names would just bring confusion to the majority of people unfamiliar with the language.

[72]The reason I was given for the fact that chiefs could no longer be destooled in Ho was the chief would also have to be killed in order to join the ancestral lineage. Were the chief to be destooled without being killed, no other chief could be enstooled. The lineage of the Afede stool could be traced back to its origin via the living chief to all the ancestral chiefs and on no account could the line be broken. As people told me: 'in this our so called civilised world, you can't go around killing chiefs so we can't destool them at all'.

[73]Three separate peoples' comments who posted them on: www.ghanaweb.com. I have maintained spelling mistakes as they appeared on the website.

dead ancestor. May he rest in peace but that dead body is no more important than my late grandfather. It is surprising that educated folks like the so-called Agbogbo-something will interfere with people's God - given rights. Stop the idiot before he grows past the Asanteman circus shows.

3)This idiot again. Last year he did the same thing banning funerals for months. Who is going to pay for mortuary bill? What is the significant of this ban? So this lunatic Agbogbomefia has nothing better to contribute to society. No wonder Ewes are backward and poor.

The above messages were posted on an internet message board and were a reaction to a notice published in the media by the Ghana News Agency on May 23rd 2008, informing people of the suspension of public celebrations during the final funeral rites for Togbe Afede Asor II, the previous *Agbogbomefia,* which were to take place between August the 1st and 9th in Ho. This suspension was part of the usual procedures surrounding the funeral of a Paramount Chief. The message read:

Outdoor ceremonies such as funerals, weddings, political rallies and outdooring of child would be banned in the Asogli State from August 1 to 9 this year, a statement from the Asogli State Council said on Friday. A statement signed by the Council Secretary, Mr John Kukah said the Agbogbomefia Togbe Afede XIV would perform the customary final funeral rites of his predecessor, the late Agbogbomefia Togbe Asor II during the ban period. It was addressed to all paramount and divisional chiefs, queens, community leaders, heads of departments, Churches and political parties who would be expected to mourn with the Agbogbomefia and the Asogli State.

There were also numerous responses in which the suspension was seen in a positive light and the above critics were dismissed.[74] However, even in September when the annual Yam Festival was held, a month after the Final Funeral Rites had been performed, the critical comments were still proving to be a cause for concern. Although I participated in both the 2007 and 2008 yam festivals, it was only in 2008

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[74] See above website.

that I was allowed to join the Asafos[75] at the graveyard to perform the rites that marked the commencement of the festival: *Vorvlorwo fe nudada* (literally: cooking for the departed ones who we fear/revere) but also commonly described and printed on programmes as 'All Soul's Day'[76] Within the yam festival calendar, the day was dedicated to thanking the ancestors for a good harvest and feeding them at the graveyard. The living dead were offered goat and fufu made from plantain and cassava, a meal that was intended solely for them and not for any other deities or the Supreme Being, *Mawuga*. Apart from a few women who carried foodstuffs and utensils, women were not usually allowed to participate in this aspect because the messages conveyed to the ancestors were very important. I was told: *'It is not that there is anything bad happening at the graveyard but these our women - you know them - they can gossip plenty so we don't like them to be there'.*

However, Togbe Deti,[77] who was in charge of the rites, insisted that I came this time because I had seen so much already and had to see the 'correct thing' rather than rely on second hand reports. He also said that he wanted me to see that nothing dubious or fearful was going on at the graveyard, as the Pentecostals often implied, and that they were only feeding their deceased relatives and asking for their continued assistance and protection. Togbe Deti only warned me that once there, on no account should I mention anyone's name because the ancestors would be all around us and if they heard a person's name being called, they might take them back to *tsiefe* when it was time for them to return there. Of course, and completely by accident, I did mention a name as I was asking Korsi about something but thankfully I must have whispered it quietly enough for the ancestors not to hear. As *Togbe Deti* began to offer the libation to the ancestors, he called upon his deceased predecessor to take the message from the living to all the other ancestors. With the group of *asafos* standing behind him, he began to call his 'father':

'*Dzimi, Dzimi Dzimi Atsu, I'm not calling you like a child. We pre-informed you at the palace before we set off on our trip. You have always been part of us so today we want to remember you. As you are aware, before we eat the new yam, we always remember you and we always feed you first before the new yam is feasted upon. Today*

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[75]The chief's standing army

[76]Sometimes, in order to explain it to me, people made the comparison with the Catholic practice of celebrating significant Saints.

[77] Also known as Togbe Happy because of his happy and friendly demeanour.

is your day of feasting. As you have always known, we cannot see the hidden things in the spiritual world - it is only you that can see. So if anyone has planned anything evil meant to disrupt the yam festival activities, we cannot know. But we believe you know and can see it. As we bring you this food today we are swearing to you. As you are aware, the town has expanded with many people from different areas settling here, many of whom are desirous of destroying their neighbours. A case in point are the recent publications against the Agbogbomefia on the Internet . Although the person thinks they are hidden and can attack the image of the people by attacking the chief, we believe he is not hidden from you. We see this act as a commencement of hostilities against us. Times have changed for which reason we are no longer fighting battles or wars with guns but we are still fighting wars in different and new ways. We have no hope and no other people to rely on than you, you who can see in the darkness. We swear to you and ask you to reveal any person who wishes harm against us'.[78]

When I later spoke to Togbe Deti and other elders about the libation he had offered and asked him why he had called specifically upon his predecessor rather than all the ancestors, one elder explained: *'It is the same thing that is going on with them, in the spiritual world – they also need messengers so it is always the youngest that gets called to be a messenger is it not? If you only died recently then you are also young in that place are you not? And even if you become the oldest ancestor, you will always still only be a messenger between the living and God!'* So, as in the physical world where there was a relative hierarchy of age, with the youth at the bottom and the chiefs and elders at the top, so too was there a parallel set up in the spiritual realm both within ancestral relations themselves and between the ancestors and the other deities and *Mawuga*. The ancestors, at the bottom of the spiritual hierarchy, were called upon to take the message to *Mawuga* and it was usually the youngest ancestor who took the message from the living to his elder ancestors before they dispatched it further.

Togbe Deti offered a similar but additional explanation for why the 'youngest' ancestor was called upon to take the message to his ancestral 'elders': *'Aaaa, you see – that is the way it is. You see when the Stool Father calls on the previous Paramount Chief to take the message to our fathers, it is because he died most recently so it is good to keep the line correct so it is not broken. Also, because he was the chief who*

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[78] This is a translation from Ewe, and one which Togbe Deti and Korsi oversaw.

was amongst us most recently, he will know how to explain our problem to those ancestors who died long long ago. Do you see? So that is why I called my predecessor – he is the best person to take the message to his elders. What will some of the older ones know of this new Internet? Some of them have not even seen television!' This explained how ancestors, and especially the relatively recently deceased ancestors, were able to move between the concerns of the living and the long dead with such ease. They were temporally mediated beings; unlike any other spirits or deities, ancestors were historical kins-people who had lived, eaten, loved and died as humans. And some of them had even learnt to surf the World Wide Web.

So for the benefit of the long dead ancestors, *Togbe Deti* had stressed that times had changed; contemporary battles were not being fought with guns but with words – electronic words no less. The message was that the battles were no less challenging and still required the same, if not more, ancestral assistance, but that the weaponry used by the living had changed. However, I do not provide this example in order to make an argument about cultural resistance. It could certainly be argued that something new and supposedly foreign – the Internet – was incorporated within the framework of the old and the local – the ancestors – and, as such, re-interpreted within an indigenous and authentic 'cultural logic'. Such would be the now rather old anthropological argument, which suggests the only way Africans can have any genuine agency is if they resist, either explicitly or implicitly through incorporation and local/indigenous redefinition, ideas and commodities that have come from the West.[79] Hopefully, what will become clear by the end of this chapter, is that once we historicise the ancestors properly – as people in Ho did – as their once living but now 'living dead' relatives, engaging in an argument about cultural resistance would rather miss the point.

The above 'internet' example was not an isolated one and I often heard elders communicating with their ancestral elders about various changes that had taken place within the town. In case they had not been told by their ancestral juniors, living elders often reminded their ancestral elders why a particular change had taken place. In some cases, this was as simple as apologising for all the people who had chosen to go to church instead of attending an important ritual. I often heard elders explain to their ancestral elders that in this 'modern world' people could do as they pleased and

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[79] In the next chapter, I shall outline Ferguson's (2006) critique of such arguments.

attempting to stop them would only result in a losing battle with the police. During the outdooring and naming of newborn babies, on their eighth day and when people could be sure that the baby would not return to the ancestors, elders also communicated to their living dead elders, and explained why some aspects of the outdooring ritual had changed. During the outdooring rites for *Zikpitor's* great-granddaughter, he offered a libation and explained that in the days of old the child would have been given a cutlass for farming but that now the pen would bring prosperity to the person and make them successful in school and so in life. A pen and a bible was then placed in the hands of tiny Sedinam, to give her the 'tools of the day' which, if used correctly, would bring her success. So change itself was never denied, and indeed it was often explicitly asserted, but it was always shown to have been made visible only through continuity.

Michael Lambek's analysis of Sakalava ancestors resonates with my understanding of the ancestors in Ho. Lambek argues that when Sakalava ancestors agree upon a change taking place, they sanctify it and demand that it is established through ritual (Lambek 2002: 235). This means that change is recognised, acknowledged, and accepted; meaningful change itself carries the authority of the past. In this way, it can be said that Sakalava tame or domesticate change, transforming the randomness of sheer change into the meaningfulness of history. Change, Lambek argues, is not something which happens unconsciously but rather occurs 'as the product of self-conscious agents, addressing the contingencies of the present with reference to the past, and responding to the address of the past with gentle reminders about the contingencies of the present' (Lambek 2002: 245).

Remembering Colonialism

In the next chapter, I shall consider the relationship between ancestors and colonialism and, indeed, some of the analytical frameworks through which this relationship has been theorised by anthropologists. To draw this chapter to an end and to anticipate the next, I will provide a discussion of what is arguably the main carrier of communication between the living and the living dead: libation. What is of interest here is the fact that every public libation offered by the traditional authorities on behalf of the people, through their very constitution, indexed the first relationships between the Ewe traditional authorities and Europeans. The public libations I witnessed were all structured in the same way and although there were different reasons for the

offerings, there was always a particular framework with utterances that remained the same. To start a libation, *Zikpitor* poured water on the ground, always in three spots because 'the elders say that three is life' *(Tsitsiawo be etor enye agbe lo)*. He would begin by saying: *'Togbeawo, fete fete mie va xor aha no'* meaning, 'all the ancestors should come and take their drink'. Then, the ancestors were asked to take particular messages to *Mawuga* on behalf of the people: *'Togbeawo se ne de Mawuga gbor'*. After the water, the same offering would be made with palm wine. This time though, after the mission statement was given again, *Zikpitor* would tell the ancestors: *'miafe titiha eke'* (this is your drink from time immemorial), *'ne etsor la mesor o, mi menya o miaxore'* (if the person who has carried it is not pure/holy we are not aware so please just accept it from us), *'ne ekpala mesor o, mi menya o miaxore'* (even if the person who has tapped it is not pure/holy, we are not aware so please just accept it from us), *'ne ame de gbugbore kpa, mi menya o miaxore'* (even if the palm wine has been diluted, we are not aware so please just accept it from us). These pleas were only made when pouring the palm wine and not alongside the water or the imported schnapps because, as I was told, palm wine is *titiha,* a drink that is older than any living person can remember and what the ancestors have always drunk.

Various elders told me that because Ho was now a bustling town and the palm wine was collected by sellers from the nearby villages where it was tapped, those offering it to the ancestors could not guarantee that it would be of the same quality as the palm wine they were drinking all those generations ago. People also explained to me that the palm wine, more than any other drink, was associated with the ancestors, who were also often described as *tititorwo*. It was especially associated with the ancestors who had been living when the people of Ho still lived in *Notsie,* the starting point from which stories and oral histories were often recalled. Before that, people said that very little could be remembered and it was only known as *tititi,* with the ancestors from that time known as *titititogbevorvlorwo.* [80] Ancestors who had departed during the contemporary era were simply described as such: '*Togbe ketorwo xe vlor le mia dome ntsor ke wo me'*. And it was to these recently departed ancestors and those who joined the community of the living dead from the nineteenth century onwards, that the third and final part of libations were particularly directed at. This part of the libation

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[80] I do not argue that time stood still for the people before they lived within and escaped from the walled city of *Notsie,* rather that it is from the point of *Notsie* onwards that stories were explicitly recalled and made to have relevance in the present.

was poured using imported gin or schnapps, known as *yevoha* (white man's drink) or *tordziha* (the drink on the water/the drink that arrived by sea).

When *Zikpitor* poured the *tordziha* he would say: '*miafe tordziha kexe yevowo korve, xe mi noor, eyake*' which meant: 'This is your drink that the Europeans brought, that you were drinking then and that we are presenting to you now'. The idea behind this statement was simply that just as the palm wine was offered to the ancestors because it was what they had been drinking since time immemorial and indeed represented that period and peoples' ongoing connection with it, so too did the imported spirits make reference to the arrival of the Europeans as a specific point in time that marked a change in the everyday lives of the people. Korsi and Gabi explained this further; it had been the chiefs and elders who had accepted and received the Europeans when they first arrived, bearing gifts of alcohol from Europe. The chiefs and elders present at the time had used those very drinks to pour a libation for the ancestors to ask for the support of the deities and *Mawuga* to make the relationship between the people of Ho and the Europeans a good one.

Another elder put it like this: '*those chiefs and elders who first met the Europeans, accepted them and their drinks. And it is those same chiefs and elders who are now our ancestors. They took the foreign drinks when they were alive, so they take them now that they are ancestors*'. My friend Gabi explained further: '*We offer them gin and schnapps as a sign of respect. They were drinking it when they were alive and they have been seeing that it is what we give to the chiefs and elders as a sign of respect. If we offer them akpeteshie now, they will see it as disrespectful and start to worry us*'. By considering the way that the living accounted for their particular choice of drinks to offer their living dead elders, it becomes possible to understand how those living dead elders were recognised as temporally mediated beings. Offering them drinks which indexed different historical periods, revealed that as a community, the living dead were recognised as carriers of the shared history of Ho. On an individual level, and in much the same ways as particular ancestors were consulted because they were deemed to have knowledge of a particular historical event, offering the ancestors the same drinks as they had been offered in life, highlighted the fact that their present identity was fused with their past identity. They really were the living dead or, perhaps, the 'dead living'.

Returning to Michael Lambeks work, Sakalava ancestors too were capable of juxtaposing different historical epochs through the different drinks that they

consumed. Indeed, this juxtaposition was part of the very constitution of Sakalava ancestors. Writing of *pastis*, or, 'cat's eye', as the locals called it, Lambek notes that it could be understood as something which condenses the 'discordance between the precolonial and colonial world and the distinction in historical consciousness that colonialism established' (Lambek 2002: 54). However, he suggests that it might equally be understood as a discordance that Sakalava historical poiesis was able to comprehend and thereby, perhaps even transcend (Lambek 2002: 54). What is key, Lambek argues, is that we can understand the ancestors as perduring rather than enduring. Perdurance allows him to argue that history is additive, because in principle, later generations do not displace earlier ones; they rather perdure alongside them. (Lambek 2002: 51). And this conjunction of temporalities, including the present, Lambek argues, allows each period to act as a commentary upon the others. As a result, multiple voices and alternate points of view can be expressed and made available for consideration, without being subordinated or silenced by others. Lambek is keen to stress that while this is a condensation of historical time within the space of the present it is not a flattening or confusion of historical voices (Lambek 2002: 51). And, what it reveals is that historical consciousness is not reducible to a single attitude but arises through the interplay of multiple voices (Lambek 2002: 51).

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have endeavoured to show ethnographically, that time-shape of the living dead was one which could provide the traditional authorities with a particular form of temporal authority; one through which people could envisage development and progress without turning their backs to the past. My consideration of the living dead, both as temporally mediated beings and as carriers of the particular historical contexts in which they lived, can, I hope, be seen in contrast to the state's time-shape and the NCL, through which the ancestors have been conflated with a static past and an inert tradition. Although I have described the living dead grappling with the internet and drinking foreign schnapps, I argue that such examples are best understood by thinking through the living dead themselves, rather than by seeking out an abstract analytical framework through which, for example, the local can be seen to resist the colonial through its incorporation by the ancestor-descendant relationship. In the next two chapters, I will develop the argument that the 'local' in the context of Ho,

cannot be easily opposed to the colonial, and certainly not in the manner demanded by the resistance narrative. According to the chiefs and elders in Ho, traditional authority was not dependent on its ability to deny colonial relations and, as we shall see, the efficacy of ancestral rituals often demanded that particular relations between Europeans and Ewes were brought to the fore and revealed.

Chapter 4: Ancestors and Colonialism: Resistance or a Call for Recognition?

'If African ancestors, unlike Malagasy ancestors, have not been compared with, and reinvigorated through the incorporation of, colonial power, we need at the very least to ask what might account for the difference'[81]

Whenever I saw the *Agbogbomefia* in public, he always had two men standing behind him, wearing matching but rather odd looking dark blue uniforms. Their uniforms stood out against the background of traditional *kente* cloth worn by the assembled Chiefs and Queen Mothers, the brown hunting uniform (*adewu*) of the *Asafos* and the brightly printed clothes worn by the general public.[82] On some occasions, in addition to the two men who stood behind the *Agbogbomefia*, a number of others, similarly clad, stood in different positions amongst gatherings. However, their uniforms were only worn on ceremonial occasions, when the *Agbogbomefia* was present; on an everyday basis I often saw their wearers walking around the town in casual clothing. Curious about these special blue uniforms which looked as though they had come from another era, I began to ask people what they were and, more importantly, what the roles of the people who wore them were. I was told the same by everyone I asked; the men were the *Agbogbomefia*'s 'security men'.

However, I soon learned that they were only a relatively recent innovation. During the planning of the burial of the previous *Agbogbomefia*, Togbe Afede Asor II in 2002, the funeral planning committee had been looking over the history of the chieftaincy institution with the intention of strengthening it for the next incumbent and ensuring that they gave a befitting funeral and burial to their previous chief. Some of the chiefs and elders on the planning committee recalled that during the German era, the Germans had provided some police men for the chiefs, as a way of recognising the work that chiefs were expected to do in maintaining law and order within the

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[81] Cole, J and Middleton, K. 2001. 'Re-thinking Ancestors and Colonial Power in Madagascar. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 71 (1), p36.

[82] *Asafos* are the standing army of the chief. In the past, they also tended to be hunters. Although they are categorised as 'youth', this is not a category specifically related to biological age. If they have the will, strength and endurance, anyone can become an *asafo*. Their main role today is to accompany and protect the chief on his journeys. However, they cannot be forced and are often quite vocal if they are unhappy with the chief; indeed, their appreparance or non-appearance reveals the level of support and recognition that a chief has.

community. My friends explained to me that this had been proof of the way the *Dzamawo* (Germans), however brutal and disciplined, had always been respectful towards the the chiefs and customs of the people. They were quite different from the British (*Englesi*), who, it was widely claimed, were always meddling in chieftaincy affairs and creating disputes. The story of the *'Dzama Policie'* (German Police) had been passed down the generations and the police uniforms had, for a time, even been on show in the local museum. Therefore, the funeral planning committee decided that it would be good to re-invigorate this system during the burial rites and maintain it for the future security of the chief.

Upon hearing of their plans, the German Embassy had been very encouraging. People told me that they were proud and happy that the people of Ho wanted to commemorate their historical relationship in such a way. They showed their support by providing an example of the original uniform so that copies could be sewn locally and also by paying for the material and sewing costs. People told me that the Germans were just so happy that the historical dress would not be 'lost'. Moreover, the chiefs and elders were keen that the return of the *Dzama Policie* to the *Agbogbomefia* would not merely be for ceremonial purposes. The 'policeforce' was selected and then given extensive and rigorous training by an ex drill trainer at the Military Academy, turned Chief Executive of a private security company. The 'policeforce' might have been wearing the uniforms of a bygone colonial era but they had been trained in the latest security measures and responses. This meant that in addition to providing personal security for the *Agbogbomefia* in public, some of them were also employed by him as security guards at his personal accommodations.

Introduction

How should the recent re-instatement of the *Dzama Policie* be interpreted? Why has this 'colonial relic' been dragged out of the dusty museum only to be reinvented by contemporary chiefs, the descendants of the very chiefs we assumed had suffered under the well documented brutalities of the German administration over a hundred years ago? I finished the last chapter with a discussion of the use of foreign drinks within the libations offered to the living dead and suggested that by thinking through the ontological ground of the living dead as once living, historical persons, we might rather think it strange if they did *not* demand 'foreign' drinks and other objects. It was not only the Ho ancestors who demanded foreign drink though; as we have seen

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already, through the work of Michael Lambek, in Madagascar too, the ancestors drank foreign drink. Jennifer Cole's analysis of Betsimisaraka ancestors also features ancestors with cosmopolitan tastes. However, her choice to explain these tastes within the framework of colonial memory is problematic because this framework too creates oppositions between past and the present, ancestral and colonial, local and European. Although she argues, in two separate publications, that ancestors and white people were regarded as both similar to and different from one another, it was as distinct entities that Cole, as the analyst, was able to put them into some kind of relationship with one another, whether it was one of opposition or similitude.

As we shall see, my own data suggests that the very ontological ground of the living dead as once living but now dead kinspeople, some of whom had lived through and experienced colonialism, requires that we recognise the living dead as already carrying the relationships between the local and the western, the ancestral and the colonial. I shall suggest in this chapter and draw out ethnographically in the next, that the authenticity of tradition's time-shape was not so much dependent upon its ability to eclipse that to which it was often assumed to be opposed. Rather, its authenticity and indeed its efficacy through ritual, was often dependent upon bringing forth and revealing the particular relations – including the colonial – of which it was composed.

The Three Ms

There is already a growing body of anthropological literature which focuses on the social practices and perspectives through which the colonial past lives on in the present lives of 'postcolonial' Africans, each of which could provide us with an alternative reading of the *Dzama Policie*. Although there are numerous themes and analytical strategies used by anthropologists dealing with this topic, I shall focus below on what I call 'The Three Modish Ms': Mimicry, Modernit(ies) and Memory, the second of which we dealt with already in the introduction. The three concepts are predicated upon the common form of domain thinking which I described and critiqued in the last chapter. Terms like mimesis and parody have figured prominently in anthropological analyses of ritual, especially in studies of spirit possession, where spirits have been shown to comment on and parody colonial experience by incorporating commodities associated with Europeans and imitating bodily practices

derived from Europe (Stoller, 1995; Taussig, 1993; Thomas, 1991). And who can forget Jean Rouch's classic *Les Maitres Fous,* the tale of ritualised resistance in which we saw Africans becoming possessed by the spirits of their colonial masters, embodying their movements and styles, all the while foaming at the mouth and smearing themselves with the blood of a dog? We as viewers were told that they were actually resisting and parodying the colonial system and expressing their agency as Africans. It was not only white people who objected to this academic explanation; most Africans who saw the film recognised little resistance and were rather angered by what they saw as Rouch's 'primitivising' and 'racist' stance.

James Ferguson has provided a review of what he calls the 'anthropology of imitation' arguing that the typical anthropological solution to colonial and postcolonial imitations of Europeans has been to interpret them as either parody or appropriation and therefore in both cases, a form of colonial resistance (Ferguson 2006: 159). The argument goes that by imitating Europeans, Africans appropriate their power within the terms of their own cultural system and indigenous cosmology. Within such analyses, 'what *appears* to be a practice of cultural assimilation is reclaimed as an appropriation of Western goods and signs within the terms of an 'indigenous' cultural logic' (Ferguson 2006: 160, my emphasis). As such, African otherness is salvaged and it is shown that even if some Africans appear to be Westernised, they are actually authentically African (Ferguson 2006: 160). Therefore, it can be concluded that they are only 'performing' modernity so that its magic can be appropriated within an indigenous cultural order (Ferguson 2006: 161).

For Ferguson, it is easy to see why anthropologists come to such conclusions concerning mimicry as a form of indigenous resistance. He discusses the 'embarrassment' felt by westerners well-schooled in their anti-colonial convictions when they are faced with Africans who oppose their beliefs and express nostalgic desires for the return of white people to Africa (Ferguson 2006: 156). This is, he argues, an embarrassment which can be traced back to the colonial period and the 'civilised native' – the object of alterity who refused to be other and the 'bad' ethnographic subject (Gable 2006: 406). Yet, as Eric Gable has argued, there is no reason why certain ideals, attitudes and conditions that can be found within Western history and culture cannot also be found in another context (Gable 2000: 254). It is ferguson's argument that what is actually happening when Africans appear to imitate Europeans or express their desires for Western styles and clothing is that they are

making claims for membership within the global world order. They are asking for access to Modernity, rather than being interpreted as having their own alternative modernity – their own version or imitation of modernity. It is this, Ferguson argues, that should be the focus of our studies of Africans who appear to refuse to be 'authentic'. This, along with the abjection felt by many Africans as they become aware of the existence of a privileged 'first class' world, together with their own increasing social and economic disconnection from it (Ferguson 2006: 166).

Social and Colonial Memory

In addition to mimesis and alternative modernity, memory has also been invoked by anthropologists as a way to account for the presence of the colonial past in the postcolonial present. Richard Werbner has argued that throughout postcolonial Africa and in a number of diverse ways, the colonial past has left its trace on the postcolonial present (Werbner 1998: 2). Rejecting the 'presentist' approach to memory, associated with Halbwachs, which takes memory simply as a backwards construction of the past in the present, continually being adapted to suit present needs, he proposes instead an approach to memory that attempts to deal with the traces of the past that are felt on peoples' bodies, their landscapes and in the 'fabric' of their social relations (Werbner 1998: 2-3). Many anthropologists, perhaps wary of the idea of multiple modernities, have been able to utilise the concept of social memory to play a similar role in highlighting the historicity of African societies which might have hitherto been considered bounded, ahistorical and unquestionably local. Like the 'alternative modernity' anthropologists, many anthropologists working on social memory have stressed that even within the most 'traditional' rituals we can find traces of the colonial past (Cole 2001). In a similar vein, Rosalind Shaw (1997; 2002) has written extensively on contemporary witchcraft beliefs in Sierra Leone, arguing that they are only the current expression of metaphors of consumption and extraction which be traced all the way back to Temne peoples' experiences of colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. However, what I find most disconcerting with this contemporary rendering of social memory is that it tends to conflate too easily and without much reflection, 'social memory' and 'traces of the past'. This, I believe, is particularly problematic in the case of 'colonial memory'.

Kevin Yelvington has stressed the importance of developing theoretical principles for the cross-cultural study of relations between history, memory and identity so that 'the cross cultural study of the past' might be elevated to a status alongside anthropological staples such as kinship and marriage, religion and rituals, economics and legal systems (Yelvington 2002: 230). However, he is equally wary about the ease with which anthropologists are invoking memory as an analytical tool. He notes the dissatisfaction in anthropology and other now historicised disciplines with 'history' and 'culture', arguing that this has led to the emphasis on 'memory' as more authentic and less amenable to distortion, mediation or outright invention (Yelvington 2002: 236). David Berliner has complained about the inability to define where 'social memory' starts and where it finishes. Berliner wonders when and where we should use memory to refer to the psychological process of remembering and when we should use the term to refer to the transmission and persistence of cultural forms through time (Berliner 2005: 577). That is, what is the difference between 'memory' and 'tradition' or 'culture'? All have been used to describe the processes through which the past impacts or carries on into the present (Berliner 2005: 577; Fabian 2007). Do anthropologists invoke 'social memory' simply as the latest way of referring to the transmission of culture and the reproduction of society (Berliner 2005)?

Moreover, is it really possible for anthropologists to argue that meanings generated four hundred years ago continue to resonate *as memories* for people in the present? This is one of Michael Stewart's questions, whose response to Shaw's work reveals a number of important issues. While he acknowledges the merits of Shaw's work, he questions the extent to which anthropologists can talk of social memory when there is not always native exegesis to sustain claims that today's practices in some ways recapitulate or bring into being historical experiences (Stewart 2004: 562). That is, is Shaw in a position to argue that the slave trade is 'forgotten as history but is remembered as spirits, as a menacing landscape, as witchcraft, and as postcolonial politicians' (Shaw 2002: 9)?

Stewart suggests not because Temne people themselves do not make such explicit connections. While I am not of the opinion that anthropologists should only concern themselves with what they are told or what is consciously articulated, I suggest that we ought to be more cautious when we use 'unconscious data' to build up an idea of other peoples' memories. Precisely because of the muddiness of memory, in

its descriptions of both conscious and unconscious processes, and the way anthropologists use it unreflexively in order to analyse simultaneously the 'verbal statements of the society and their observed behaviour' (Holy and Stuchlik 2006: 162)**,** I hold that it is particularly problematic to use it to describe the history of the slave trade or colonialism. I suggest that while a social memory is always also a trace of the past, a trace of the past is not always also a social memory. Fundamentally, I share Johannes Fabian's worry that there is a danger of Africans being colonised once again through the imposition of colonial memory on them by Europeans, their former colonisers (Fabian 2007:103).

Ancestors, Memory and Madagascar

In a co-authored article (2001), Jennifer Cole and Karen Middleton have noted that the relative disappearance of ancestor-related practices associated with descent relationships in Africa remains largely untheorised (Cole and Middleton 2001: 1). The ancestors, they argue, have been strangely absent from the numerous studies of culture and colonialism which have emerged since the 1970s (Cole & Middleton 2001: 1).[83] Certainly, apart from David Lan's (1985) *Guns and Rain,* I could find very little work on African ancestors, post Fortes and Kopytoff. Perhaps, as Cole and Middleton suggest, the primary focus of recent studies of culture and colonialism has been on other kinds of ritual practice and, in particular, witchcraft, spirit possession and Pentecostalism . Does this mean that there are no longer ancestors or that these, arguably more cosmopolitan spiritual forces have become more attractive or forceful within the African landscape? James McCall, has acknowledged the continuing presence of ancestors in Nigeria and has suggested that the apparent divergence between African practice and scholarly interest is largely due to developments in Western scholarship rather than an actual disappearance of ancestors from the lives of African people (McCall 1995: 256).

Jennifer Cole and Karen Middleton, although both working in Madagascar, have urged Africanists to re-consider ancestorship on the African continent more fully

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[83] However, see McCall (1995) and Fontain (2011). Richard Werbner (2004) has also noted that the absence of ancestors within recent anthropology may, in some way, go to explain the relative absence of studies of morality, a topic we shall engage with in the final two chapters of this thesis.

(Cole and Middleton 2001: 5). Cole's main contribution to the study of ancestorship has been framed analytically within a particular understanding of colonial memory. Cole begins her ethnography, *Forget Colonialism?*, by informing the reader that she went to Betsimisaraka country because she wanted to understand how historical events were experienced in terms of everyday consciousness (Cole 2001: 2). In particular, she was interested in finding out how Betsimisaraka remember the past and, in particular, the symbolic and actual violence associated with the French colonial period (Cole 2000: 1). For Cole, contemporary anthropological studies on memory, following Maurice Halbwachs, have tended to focus on commemoration, public representations of the past and, in particular, the relationship between memory and socio-political identity (Cole 2001: 23-24). While Cole shares with Halbwachs the opinion that remembering is always a socio-political process, she is more sceptical of the functionalist notion that memories are just created for whatever the present demands (Cole 2001: 26).

While not expecting the people to speak about the colonial past all the time, Cole was nevertheless 'perplexed by the apparent irrelevance not only of the 1947 uprising but also of the colonial past more generally' (Cole 2001: 3). What she found rather was a community whose focus on ancestral cattle sacrifices evoked Fortesian studies rather than the more recent studies of hybridity and global interactions which she had been armed with as a young student. Indeed, perhaps to emphasise her surprise, she writes:'The local practices that confronted me appeared at first so unquestionably *local* that it was almost impossible for me to see them as simply an effect of colonial power' (Cole 2001: 4). Neither did she find it easy to discern any sites or practices through which historical consciousness of the colonial past was produced' (Cole 2001: 4). Within Cole's work, we find the same determination to discredit appearances as we found in the work of the alternative modernity anthropologists such as Charles Piot. Here too, is the separation of the local from the colonial so that they may be later hybridised or syncretised for the reader.

Cole explains that the village is a French colonial creation with invented traditions such as headmen and a council of elders. However, it is also a village experienced by the inhabitants through their local lens and through their social relations and concerns. Both of these aspects, Cole argues, are interwoven in Betsimisaraka experience (Cole 2001: 6). While the French had certainly re-organised the Betsimisaraka, the Betsimisaraka themselves had also actively adopted some of the

changes, 'moulding them to their own concerns' (Cole 2001: 6), and revealing that powerful forces of social memory were at play, forces which 'worked selectively to produce an indigenous sense of locality' (Cole 2001: 7). Ever determined to find evidence of memory at work, Cole stresses that it was because practices of remembering and forgetting produced a such a convincing sense of locality that the effects of the colonial past were hard to perceive in the first place (Cole 2001: 7). Although houses represented enduring ancestral-descendent relationships, they also indexed historical relationships, thus historicising and memorialising peoples' links to the ancestors (Cole 2001: 125). However, it was sacrifices to the ancestors that constituted the main mechanism through which non-local practices had been woven into daily life. In this way, sacrifice reconfigured locally, external structures such as colonialism, acting as an 'interpretive filter'. Cole tells us that sacrifice, and in particular cattle sacrifice, is key to understanding how the non-local becomes local (Cole 2001: 171). This is because people used it first to negotiate ancestral power and secondly to 'rework their relationship to the signs and practices that form the legacy of French colonialism' (Cole 2001: 191).

Cole notes the existence of rituals which specifically aimed to transform something that stood for colonial power into ancestral power. Tin roofed houses, for example, demanded ritual action because their materials were perceived to have come from antagonistic social orders; their combination thus posed a potential threat to people (Cole 2001:194). When a house was built using a combination of local and imported materials, ancestral rites were performed and the cranium and horns of a cow were attached to the roof. Therefore, Cole argues, the house could come to stand for the owner's ancestral connections rather than remaining a symbol of alien rule.[84] Cole moves then from an argument about how materials and processes introduced during the colonial period have been unconsciously incorporated into local life to an argument about how this process of incorporation actually constitutes colonial resistance. She argues that Betsimisaraka 'symbolically appropriate the power associated with colonial practices and use it to build up the power of ancestors' (Cole 2001:196). It is an attempt, she argues, to 'reverse the effects of colonialism' (Cole 2001: 215). When people 'washed' tin roofed houses they were 'erasing memories of the colonial and

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[84] In an earlier article, Cole argues that this transformation was accomplished because the people involved were able to remember one set of relationships – the ancestral – while 'washing away another' (Cole 1998: 622), the colonial.

postcolonial government and recasting them as part of […] their narrative about ancestral power' (Cole 2001: 279). Memories of the colonial past were socially suppressed and pushed into the background, against which the work of commemorating ancestors could play out (Cole 2001: 283).

I am not convinced that the Betsimisaraka, through ancestral rituals, were attempting to reverse the effects of colonialism. Indeed, statements from Cole's informants suggest another dynamic was at work. In an earlier article in which Cole discussed the same ritual, an informant explained why the ritual needed to be performed before the house could be lived in. Speaking of the foreign tin and nails and the local thatch and floor boards used to build a house, he said: 'You take the European and you take the Malagasy and you mix them. You make the European and the Malagasy like kin so that they will not fight and harm the people who live in the house'(Cole 1998: 622). So, the memories of relations with Europeans were not 'washed away' and replaced by local ones, thus subordinating colonial history to a local ancestral narrative, as Cole is so keen to argue; rather, the rite was intended to make the European and Malagasy kins people and to ensure good relations between the two. It asserted a relationship – both a historical and a contemporary one – between Europeans and Malagasy and acknowledged the potentially positive outcomes that could emerge from their becoming 'like kin', as different but complementary forces. Their description as being 'like kin' could arguably also be read as a local demand for national and international recognition of this relationship. However, apart from the explanation of the tin roof ritual intended to make the European and local 'like kin', there is very little other evidence of native exegesis to suggest that the ritual was significant as a colonial memory. [85]

One solution to Cole's puzzle of how to account for the presence of the colonial past in the postcolonial present can be found in a more obvious place; in the way Betsimisaraka people conceive of ancestors and, in particular, the relationship between the dead and the living. Cole notes that the Betsimisaraka order their world in terms of a hierarchy that runs from God to the ancestors and down to the those who mediate between the living and the dead and are responsible for resolving conflicts among descendants (*Tangalamena*)(Cole 2001: 85). Ancestors are ever present but

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[85] Another unfortunate aspect of Cole's work is the assumption that before the great 'rupture' of colonialism there was only stasis.

invisible to the living. According to Cole's informants, ancestors continued to behave in much the same way as they did when they were alive and they continued to enjoy the same food, drink and music (Cole, 2001: 87). Although she discusses it only as an aside, she notes: 'In giving their ancestors coffee and imported rum, villagers not only remember their relation to ancestors but remember them as particular people whose lives, desires, and preferences were shaped during the colonial era'(Cole 2001: 127). As such, the practices and materials Betsimisaraka used to construct ancestral memories 'carry the traces of prior epochs' (Cole 2001: 123). I suggest that this is what Cole should really have been emphasising; it would have provided her with a very simple answer to her puzzle. That is, the very ontological ground of ancestors, as now dead but once living relatives meant that it would have been unusual if ritual offerings to them did not make references to the colonial past. That the Betsimisaraka offered their ancestors rum does not necessarily warrant a complicated explanation in which the act becomes yet another example of 'colonial memory' and an example of the local and ancestral resisting the colonial and the foreign by incorporating its symbols – in this case rum - within its own cultural order.

I agree with Cole that there are different types of memory and varying modes of remembering and forgetting but I feel that her insistence upon describing all evidence of the historical transformations brought about by colonialism as memory – in one way or another – obscures more than it reveals**.** Very much like Piot's analysis on alternative modernities, one which Cole acknowledges (Cole 2001: 8), Cole describes her own book as 'an ethnography of remembering, in which what is remembered as 'tradition' is perhaps the most 'modern' construct of all' (Cole 2001: 8). Her analysis reveals what she describes as the historically constructed nature of ancestral rituals, their role in mediating Betsimisaraka experiences of colonialism, and the creative ways in which they reacted to colonial intrusions and transformations (Cole 2001: 11). Since the eighteenth century, the village Cole conducted fieldwork in has been 'historically constituted and reconstituted *through* people's interactions with both Merina and French colonial power' (Cole 2001: 171). But did Cole require 'memory' to explain every aspect of this entire process? I suggest not and note that by elevating every 'trace of the past' to a 'colonial memory' she may have in some cases at least, mistaken her concerns for theirs and conflated history with memory.

Notwithstanding the inconsistencies between Cole's monograph and the article she co-authors with Middleton (2001), within both there are clear separations between

the ancestral and the colonial which are then brought into some kind of relationship with one another for the reader; in the article the ancestral and the colonial bear similitude and in her monograph they exist as opposites. And, in each, the ancestors and their descendants are mapped onto a straightforward opposition between the past and present. Again, whether it is described as being similar to or different from colonial power, ancestral power and ancestral memory (Cole moves seamlessly between both terms in both works), is argued to be capable of being invoked to resist colonial power. Despite her absolute determination to find colonial memories from the outset (a desire which I, like Fabian, find ethically dubious in itself), her book is, I would argue, rather about how Betsimisaraka people commemorated their ancestors and how this process has incorporated practices and materials introduced during the colonial period.

Behind the contemporary anthropological interest in colonial memory is, I argue, a more general anthropological tendency to attribute a great deal of agency to the past. According to Michael Jackson, it is very easy to imagine history as a series of critical events whose force continues to be felt in the here and now, shaping the way we live and think (Jackson 2005a: 355). Jackson argues that we have tended to reify 'the past' and objectify it such that it has been portrayed as existing beyond the control of people who cannot, therefore change it. However, to treat people primarily as victims of circumstance, without showing how they actively work on these circumstances, is to 'share in this bad faith' (Jackson 2005a: 357). The past does not necessarily have to be understood as a traumatic event and one which will leave scars on generations to follow. Perhaps sharing some of Fabian's worries, Jackson reminds us that we must refrain in our analyses from making living Africans complete victims of their own history and thus representing Europe as the source of Africa's meaning (Jackson 2005: 371).[86]

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[86] Work such as Cole's provides a good example of this tendency and we might read her work as one through which the Freudian psychotherapist provides the key metaphor. As the analyist, Cole is able to see beneath appearances so that what appears to be ancestral memory is in fact revealed as colonial memory, what appears to be tradition is revealed as an alternative modernity. Similarly, the ritual specialists who mediate between the living and the dead, can also be understood as psychotherapists of a kind; through Cole's analysis, they can be seen helping the living to process their pasts by bringing repressed memories to the surface and recovering them in the context of ritual. We might bear Ian Hacking's comment in mind here: 'One feature of the modern sensibility is dazzling in its implausibility: the idea that what has been forgotten is what forms our character, our personality, our soul' (Hacking 1996: 70).

Remembering the Dzama Policie[87]

I return to the *Dzama Policie* and suggest that their re-instatement in the postcolonial present might be framed as a memory of colonialism. However, I suggest that it acts as much with reference to the future as it does to the past. Throughout my time in Ghana, people often spoke to me about the Germans and recounted stories, which had been passed down the generations. I was often told that the German system was more in line with that which had been maintained by their ancestors, before the coming of the Germans - one based on honesty, simple hard work and often severe discipline. As everyone was fond of telling me, the *Dzamawo* made a much more positive impact on the region than the British (*Englisi*). Often, in the mornings at Loving Brothers Store, when we all huddled around to read yet another story about a corrupt politician, people became angry, saying things like: *'Bring back the Germans! You can't behave this way if the Germans were here!'* Most mornings when I saw my old friend Komla, we greeted each other by exclaiming *'Dzamawo!'* a habit which had grown out of a conversation about the disciplined Germans. Komla had told me: *'The Dzamawo made us strong and hardworking here in the Volta Region. We were the best craftsmen in the whole area. They developed the whole place – roads, schools, everything. They were harsh but we learnt to be very disciplined. Then the British came and spoiled us - they only wanted us to be office clerks for them so now you see the way we sit all day in an empty office doing nothing but we are still proud to be doing yevodor'.*[88] And sometimes when children or young people were misbehaving, their elders would scold them by telling them that they were only lucky that the Germans were no longer here – then they would see real discipline.

Although many people spoke about the significance of the *Dzama Policie,* the 'police force' did not last for very long because the British replaced the Germans after the First World War, and failed to provide the chiefs with a similar 'police force'.

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[87] In Ewe, memory is linked with consciousness. To say I remember, one would say '*me do nku dzi'* which literally means 'I've laid my eye on something'. I don't remember is: '*nye me do nku dzi o',* literally, I have not laid eyes on the thing. If one wanted to say I have forgottenone would say: '*me nlor be',* literally to parcel something and leave it down.

[88] Similarly, Kate Skinner quotes one of her informants: 'We used to say …'Death is better than a German prison' …But one thing about the Germans …in thirty years they developed the country so fast that they had put a telephone in Yendi (Skinner 2007: 138). See Amenumey (1969: 628) for a discussion of chiefs who were recognised by the German Government and assigned two policemen to help them with maintaining law and order within their jurisdictions.

Nevertheless, the chief's *Dzama Policie* was recognised as having made a positive impact on the chieftaincy institution in the past. It was therefore decided that it should be re-instated, and adapted to suit the contemporary needs of the chief. One member of the Royal Family told me that the reason the *Dzama Policie* had been re-instated was that that the chiefs and elders had simply wanted to commemorate the support that the Germans had given the chiefs; although the chiefs already had their arbitration 'courts', during the German era, the Germans supported this institution by providing a police force to help the chiefs in their judiciary work. This was given to me as an example of how *afemenya* and *yevonya* could be complementary rather than conflicting and, as such, this positive relationship demanded recognition and celebration.

So, to commemorate the positive historical relationship between the Hos and the Germans, during the planning for the funeral of the previous chief, the committee had gone over history, trying to find out the practices and relationships which had been beneficial to the institution. They felt that the deceased Chief's long term illness and various other factors had meant that the institution had 'started to break down'. The Final Funeral Rites provided an opportunity for it to be strengthened. As one young man put it: *'We had to make sure that people came to see the most organised funeral of a Chief so that they would know that we were a force to be reckoned with again'.* In this way and just as the Germans had helped to strengthen the chieftaincy institution in the past, so too would they be able to in the present, through the re-instatement of the *Dzama Policie.*

It was therefore the relationship *between* German colonialism and chieftaincy that people wanted to commemorate a hundred years later. More so, they did so with a view to the future and not only to the past. Everyone was very keen to tell me that they had informed the German High Commission of their plans and that the Germans had been very happy to give their support and even gave them an example of the uniform for historical accuracy. They had also attended the funeral and made a donation. The *Dzama Policie* might then be better understood as both a commemoration and a call for recognition, to use James Ferguson's argument, from the Germans and perhaps the international community more generally, reminding them of the long historical relationship between Ho and Europe and their continuing responsibilities towards the development of Ho. As one old man told me: *'Independence is good but we are still only children - our country is young and our fathers have abandoned their*

responsibilities towards us'. The presence of the *Dzama Policie*, wearing odd yet familiar uniforms around the chief at all public gatherings, many of which were attended by international visitors, might therefore be understood as an attempt to remind those visitors of the relationship between the Germans and the people of Ho; its past and its potential future. As Eric Gable has noted: 'it is precisely when we become conscious of, but disturbed by, similarity that we regain the distance that difference brings' (Gable 2000: 255).

I return here to the invitation of Jennifer Cole and Karen Middleton, quoted at the start of this chapter. I argue that Asogli ancestors have, indeed, been invigorated by the *Dzamawo*. However, the example of the *Dzama Policie* and other instances in which particular Germans were invoked during rituals to the ancestors, do not together provide examples of the way that colonial experiences have been used to 'performatively signify, appropriate and potentially oppose colonial power' (Cole and Middleton 2001: 5). Cole and Middleton's analysis was one through which they claimed that the Betsimisaraka and the Karembola symbolically constituted their ancestors as Europeans as a way of appropriating some of their power (Cole and Middleton 2001: 20). I argue that in Ho, things were slightly different and I suggest that Asogli ancestors were invigorated neither by appropriating the power of the Germans nor by attempting to 'reverse the effects of colonialism' (Cole 2001: 215) through the transformation of colonial memory into ancestral memory, as Cole argued in her monograph.

In Ho, the traditional authorities invigorated the ancestors rather by drawing attention to the fact that the community of the living dead was made up of both Ewe ancestors and European ancestors. As I outlined in the last chapter, only good people could go on to become ancestors so there was no reason why, as people who had developed long recognised and positive historical relationships with the chiefs and elders of Ho, some of the Germans who had lived in Ho should not also, upon their death, go to *Tsiefe* and join the community of the living dead there. From there, they could work towards the continued development of Ho and, perhaps, remind their own descendants of their shared history with Ho.

Conclusion

I have argued from the start that rather than introducing terms such as mimesis, alternative modernities or colonial memory, we must attempt to follow and think through what the people I spoke with described such appearances of the past in the present as: tradition. And this was a tradition which, in Ho at least, did not require the erasure, appropriation or eclipsing of colonial relations in order to assert an authentic and local identity. If we acknowledge, as many people in Ho did, that some Europeans too had joined the community of the living dead, it becomes possible to understand tradition – constituted as it was by the living dead – as a good example of Amselle's 'continuum' and his 'originary syncretism' or, as I will suggest in the next chapter, Roy Wagner and James Weiners' 'relational ground'. Tradition here is revealed as the relational ground against which the chiefs and elders, through ritual and even in the pouring of every libation, made particular constitutive relations appear so that their past potentials could be channelled into morally appropriate and future oriented action.[89]

I have argued in previous chapters that within the time-shape promoted by the Ghanaian state, colonial relations were eclipsed so that an authentic, albeit static, 'tradition' could be used for development and the construction of modern, Ghanaian identities. The traditional time-shape however – through the living dead – rather allowed people to engage directly with their past and, indeed, their colonial past, as part of their identity and as essential for the creation of a more prosperous future. Finally, I argue, the presence of German living dead does not so much provide us with an account of contemporary attempts to resist or appropriate colonial power than an account of how the living dead were conceptualised by the living and, indeed, why they were valued.

In this chapter, I have also endeavoured to move away from an anthropology of the past and towards a more pragmatic and future focussed anthropology, one which takes seriously informants' memories of colonialism but also their alternative explanations for why traces of the colonial past appeared in the postcolonial present. By focussing on the ontological ground of the living dead, this future focussed

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[89] My use of 'past potentials' was inspired by but diverges from Hannah Arendt's (1998 [1958]) usage of the term. Michael Jackson (2005) also discusses the term, with reference to both Arendt and Walter Benjamin. My discussion of morally appropriate ends was inspired by my reading of James Weiner's (2001) work on the Foi of Papua New Guinea.

perspective should become more apparent. Or rather, it will reveal an understanding of the past 'characterised less by necessity than by *potentiality*' (Jackson 2009: 81). The reinstating of the *Dzama Policie* to act as security guards for the current chief should perhaps not be so surprising because it spoke to a widely held sentiment that the times of the ancestors and the *Dzamawo* were 'good times', in contrast to the British era, which was associated with 'meddling' into the chieftaincy institution and the creation of the longstanding Ho chieftaincy dispute which forms the focus of the next chapter. However, the Germans were not entirely absent from this dispute; as I shall describe in the next chapter, *Die Ewe Stamme* was used as a 'key witness' by the *Agbogbomefia's* rival claimant to the Paramountcy. Its recent translation and publication may have been celebrated as a sign of continuing good relations between the Germans and the people of Ho, but throughout the dispute, it was the cause of some controversy.

Chapter 5: Knowedge of Tradition: An Authentic Invention?

'I attach no importance to written agreements of amalgamation. They must perform their own native and so-called binding customs. I have never been present at any amalgamation ceremony nor would I advise you to be as agitators will say to Government that owing to your presence so and so were forced to join'[90]

In August 2008, the *Agbogbomefia* walked, along with his entourage of chiefs, queen mothers and other position holders, towards the Palace forecourt in Ho where he was about to perform the final funeral rites for his predecessor Togbe Afede Asor II. Supporters lined the streets and awomen of the town stood along the sides of the road, waving handkerchiefs, praising him and exclaiming in English: '*Original, original, Agbogbomefia. No be duplicate, no be copy*'. When I asked the women why they were shouting this so enthusiastically, they explained to me that their current chief was descended from a long line of chiefs that could be traced all the way back to Agbogbome, the area in which their ancestors had lived and escaped from in Notsie, under the tyrannical rule of King Agorkorli. This was why they had called their current chief the *Agbogbomefia;* to highlight the spatio-temporal nature of traditional authority and the current paramount chief's connection to the lineage of royal ancestors descended from Notsie. The women told me that chiefs were their authentic *(nyawoanikordetefe)* and original *(nuntorntorn)* rulers. The Ewe word used in this context as a translation for the English word 'authentic' can be broken down literally to mean a truth verifiable by its connection to a place, and in this case, Agbogbome in Notsie. The Ewe word for original can be translated as something that is real, but throughout the discussion about chieftaincy, the words for real, authentic and original were used interchangeably. According to my friends then, Togbe Afede was authentic and original not because he was bound to a particular time, whether past or present, but rather because his position embodied the spatio-temporal continuity between the past

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[90] Lilley,C (Captain) 1938, 'Handing over Report to D.N.Walker', Ho, Volta Regional Archives.

and the present, as the mediator between ancestors who had lived in Agbogbome and their descendants now living in Ho. What the women were saying when they described their chief as original, was that the first *Agbogbomefia* was no more or less authentic and original than the current one or indeed any future *Agbogbomefia.*

Introduction

In the last two chapters, I outlined the ontological ground of the living dead and highlighted their existence as once living, historical kinspeople. I suggested that we therefore understood them as providing tradition with an 'originary syncretism' and a relational temporal ground. In particular, I focussed upon the relationship and communication between the living and their living dead ancestors who had been alive from the colonial period up until the present. In this way, I endeavoured to show that upon their death, they carried with them to *Tsiefe,* their experiences of particular colonial agents and the colonial past more generally. And, as we saw in the last chapter, there were even some colonial Germans within the community of the living dead. I described the way that the living often invoked significant ancestors in order to activate the past potentials of some aspects of colonial history to bear upon and influence the present of the living. Because the ontological ground of the ancestors was a relational ground and already carried as part of a flow, the past, the present and the future, along with the relationships between themselves and colonial Europeans, the ancestral could not be so easily placed in opposition to the colonial for the sake of scholarly analysis. And neither could the ancestors be identified completely with the past, in opposition to the present of their descendants. I suggested that if we thought through the living dead, as many people in Ho did, we might arrive at understanding of tradition which was neither temporally opposed to the present, nor dependent upon its opposition to the colonial and the western.

In this and the next chapter I shall consider how knowledge of tradition has been contested, debated and performed, both in the past within the Ho chieftaincy dispute and in the next chapter, in the present through the state's teaching of tradition in schools. Below, I argue that Asogli tradition might be understood as an authentic invention. In particular, I suggest that the British imposition of a 'Paramount Chief', who presided over an amalgamated State Council of previously independent people, had, by the end of the dispute, been transformed into a site of ancestral authenticity. As

the decades passed and the dispute continued, it became less important whether or not the position of 'Paramount Chief' had been invented by the British and more important to ensure that whoever was to become the Paramount Chief could imbue that position with ancestral authority. I argue that the living dead force us to rethink our assumptions concerning the impact of colonialism and, in particular, suggest that they provide us with a more realistic set of answers to long asked questions about the authenticity of traditional authority, the invention of tradition and the meaning of the original and the copy. Like Lambek, I am less interested in the invention of tradition (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983) than, as Sahlins (1999) aptly put it, the 'inventiveness of tradition'. (Lambek 2002: 11).

I argue below that it was the very idea of the chieftaincy hierarchy as a British colonial invention that was used by Togbe Howusu of Ho-Dome in a bid to undermine Togbe Afede's claim to the paramountcy. We come across *Die Ewe Stamme* again and consider the way that Togbe Howusu made use of it as his key and sometimes only witness. Togbe Afede, on the other hand, acknowledged that the structure and the titles of contemporary chieftaincy were British inventions but was able to argue that some of the ancestors, positions and objects which had come to be carried by particular 'invented' positions, had in fact resonated with peoples' understanding of authority prior to their colonial terminological categorisation. Togbe Afede was able to illustrate that winning the paramountcy was not dependent upon showing the primacy of either *yevonya* or *afemenya* but rather upon the ability to show that the latter already contained – through the living dead – the former, and so did not need to be opposed to it. We saw in the last chapter that the ontological constitution of the living dead demanded that relations between the Ewe and Europeans be revealed rather than concealed. Again, here, we find a similar aesthetic was at work. It was by revealing that knowledge of tradition was in fact knowledge of the ancestors and, therefore, already carrying the relations between the Ewe and Europeans, that Togbe Afede was able to assert his claim as an authentic and original ruler of the Hoawo.

A Brief Visit to Melanesia

Throughout this thesis, I have, on a number of occasions, described tradition as having – through the living dead – a 'relational ground'. Tradition, I have argued, actually carries as constituent relations that to which it is often described as being

opposed; modernity, the present, the colonial, the western and so on. In this chapter, I will develop this argument through a consideration of the aesthetic forms of both Togbe Afede and Togbe Howusu's claims to knowledge of tradition. Therefore, my brief journey to Melanesia is intended simply to acknowledge the source of my terms and, to some extent, my toolkit.[91] Moreover, the material from Melanesia has been illuminating not because of its content – in travelling to Melanesia, I make no effort to synthesise African and Melanesian interests or anthropology as such. The work of Roy Wagner and James Weiner, which I discuss below, rather provided me with insights into *yevonya* and *afemenya*, not only as bodies of knowledge and practice but also, as revealing the different aesthetic forms which had emerged through their particular utilisation of principles associated with the relating and differentiating of entities.

It is Roy Wagner's (1977)[92] argument that for Westerners, differences between distinct entities and domains constitute the ground against which the relating of these entities are figured, whereas for Papuans, relations and similarities provide the ground and it is the responsibility of humans to control those relations through a process of intentional differentiation. Wagner therefore summarises the contrast between Western and Papuan modes of engaging with the world as the difference between 'relating the perceptibly differentiated, or differentiating the perceptibly relational, from the standpoint of the actor' (Wagner 1977:391). He argues that when people intentionally differentiate, they assume their actions to be transforming relational continuity into discrete and different entities but that this now transforming relational continuity comes from a source beyond human intention. And likewise, when people intentionally relate, they perceive the action as a transformation of distinct entities into a relational continuity, with these distinct entities coming from a source outside human intention (Wagner 1977: 391).

What interests Wagner then, is the way in which one modality is always accepted as the realm of human intention and action while the other is regarded as the 'innate'. The innate for Papuans is an immanent force, flowing through human beings, other creatures and the cosmos itself, providing similarity between diverse beings

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[91] As an undergraduate I took two honours modules with Dr Tony Crook; one general introduction to Melanesia and the second on the anthropology of knowledge. I thoroughly enjoyed these modules and was quite dazzled by them but I was certainly not conscious of taking them with me to Ghana. It was some time after my return to Scotland and as I was going through fieldnotes, that I decided to look again at my undergraduate notes.

[92] Marilyn Strathern's *The Gender of the Gift* (1988) deserves a mention here. However, the particular argument I wish to make here, a version of which has been developed in great length by Strathern was put forth, I think, quite succinctly by Roy Wagner in 1977.

(Wagner 1977: 297). So, as Wagner argues, what Westerners would call social relationships are 'for Papuans the very ground of being' (Wagner 1977: 397). In order to maintain the relational flow, human beings must through ritual and daily life, make visible and reveal the differences both between themselves and between other beings inhabiting the cosmos (Wagner 1977:398). For Westerners and Papuans alike, the differentiating and the relating are always interdependent modalities. Wagner's point and the contrast he draws between Western and Papuan modes of engaging with the world is that Westerners and Papuans differ in which mode constitutes their realm of the innate and which one constitutes that of human intention and action. That is, the difference is between which modality provides the ground against which the other is figured. And while there are only two alternatives, 'they are alternatives that divide the whole world of human thought and action between them' (Wagner 1977: 393).

In a similar vein, James Weiner, discussing the Foi, argues that for them, it is analogy and relation that provides the background against which they articulate distinctions in social life, whereas it is differentiation that provides the background against which Westerners impose relations and similarities (Weiner 1988:7). In a Foi lifeworld it is relationship itself that is the ground upon which all human action is worked; the task of human beings is not simply to sustain relationship but rather to restrict and limit its flow (Weiner 2001: 76). Foi cosmology therefore revolves around the distinction between what is perceived to be the natural and unending flow of vital forces and energies, and the contrasting realm of human action whose intent is to halt, redirect and contain such forces into socially and morally appropriate ends (Weiner 1991: 184).

Wagner's distinction between 'relating the perceptibly differentiated, or differentiating the perceptibly relational, from the standpoint of the actor' (Wagner 1977:391) is a key one but it is one that I would like to take in slightly different direction. I suggest that in the Asogli context and, indeed perhaps throughout a great deal of the world, these, and indeed others, are modalities which actors can switch between quite frequently. This is revealed clearly when we look again at the Ewe distinction between *afemenya* and *yevonya*. It could be argued that while the former system works by differentiating the perceptibly relational, the latter works by relating the perceptibly differentiated. If we look at *afemenya,* we can see that out of the relational flow of past, present, colonial and ancestral, the living traditional authorities draw out these distinctions and relationships in ritual, and use them towards socially

and morally appropriate ends. *Yevonya,* on the other hand, may be characterised by the way its practitioners make use of perceptibly differentiated entities such as the past, present, colonial and ancestral, by bringing them into some kind of relationship with each other. However, through an analysis of the chieftaincy dispute, I would like to take this argument a bit further by suggesting, as I did above, that *afemenya* already carried – through the living dead – *yevonya* and so cannot be so easily opposed to it.

The Notsie Narrative and the Dispute

The women in my opening vignette who were exclaiming so enthusiastically '*Original, original, Agbogbomefia. No be duplicate, no be* copy', as Togbe Afede passed them, explained to me that they were making reference to the long-standing chieftaincy dispute which had arisen in the 1930s when the British Commissioner Captain Lilley wrongly chose Togbe Howusu of Ho-Dome over Togbe Afede of Ho-Bankoe as their paramount chief, a position and term which of course had, hitherto no meaning in Ho (Lawrence 2005: 250). My female friends were jubilating because finally, and after decades of arbitrations and litigation, the Supreme Court of Ghana had ruled in 1977 that the Afede *s*tool was the paramount stool and the chief who 'sat' upon it, Togbe Afede, the rightful paramount chief. Even though an official 'reconciliation' between Ho-Bankoe and Ho-Dome had taken place in the early 1980s and the current Togbe Afede and Togbe Howusu were in fact good friends with only a faction of the Domes remaining hostile, the people of Bankoe admitted to me that they still liked to find subtle ways to celebrate their position.

While many people in Ho regarded the chieftaincy institution as a pre-colonial form of political organisation, chiefs, elders and others who had taken a keen interest in local chieftaincy acknowledged openly that the structure of chieftaincy today had been a colonial invention of the British and that it had been based largely on the Akan model. As I discussed in the introductory chapter, until the British arrived, the people of Ho had particular elders leading them who had stools but these elders ruled over much smaller units than existed now, units based upon the groupings that had travelled together from Notsie, around three hundred years ago.

There is debate however, over the extent to which the Notsie exodus narrative was genuinely shared by all Ewes and whether Ewe speaking people were rather encouraged by the German missionaries to take it up as part of the construction of a

shared Ewe identity. Notsie became central to missionaries' conceptualisation of the historical origins of a diverse range of people and it has been suggested that missionaries ignored local assertions of the differences between various groups of Ewes and also the importance of Notsie for various non-Ewe peoples (Greene 2002: 15). This desire for a common and shared Ewe identity was rooted in the German notion that all individuals are members of a *volk,* a people whose history, culture and language is shared and can act to distinguish them from others. And central to this concept of *volk* was origins; it was held that by re-capturing a shared point of origin, a national and ethnic spirit could be re-invigorated. Notsie was selected as the site from which all Ewes were encouraged to believe they had originated, even though the missionaries were aware that not all Ewes already held such beliefs. By ignoring divergences, missionaries were able to construct a unifying origin story (Greene 2002: 20) and it was this history that then became central to the development of the Ewe Nationalist movement later on (Greene 2002: 22). Greene's argument here echoes Verdon's arguments about missionary and colonial failures to appreciate the systematic differences between the three main Ewe groups (Verdon 1981).[93]

Nevertheless, for the people of Ho, the Notsie narrative played a significant role within the chieftaincy dispute and within intra Ewe relations because of the Ho's claim that they had liberated the people from Notsie. Oral histories revealed that while they were living in the walled city of Notsie, the Ewe had existed as small units headed by elders. However, they were ultimately all under the rule of an evil tyrant, Agorkorli, who forced them to take on horrific and impossible tasks such as moulding rope from clay. Finally, after getting all the women to pour out their dirty water on a particular spot of the wall near the Dzoha shrine (now in Ho), the wall began to soften and crumble away. Togbe Kakla, [94]a blacksmith and the leader of the suburb of Notsie called Agbogbome, minted a dagger, now known as the *gligbayi.* A spiritually powerful elder called Tegli appealed to the ancestors for their support in escaping from the walled city and Togbe Kakla was able to break through the wall, releasing all the Ewe people from captivity. Korsi explained to me that while in the past Togbe Kakla's role in breaking through the wall had been contested by the coastal Anlo Ewe, who

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[93] However, the Notsie Narrative is commonly shared among Ewes and has also been documented by Michel Verdon in his work on the Abutia Ewe*s*, who live around ten miles from Ho (Verdon 1981, 1983)

[94] The current chief is descended from Kakla.

often considered themselves to be the 'real' Ewe, prominent Anlos had since acknowledged the role of the Hos.

Chiefs and elders in Ho told me that those who are today known as the Anlo Ewes, decided to join together under a single ruler again when they settled in the coastal area. The inland Ewes, or Ewedome[95], of which Ho is a part, were so disturbed by the wicked rule of Agorkorli and felt that 'power corrupts but absolute power corrupts absolutely'. So despite being 'brothers' and continuing to join forces against any common enemies such as the Akwamus and the Ashantis, they decided not to come together under a single ruler as they had been forced to in Notsie. I have discussed this history here because it highlights the fact that what has become known as traditional authority or chieftaincy, was not perceived to have undergone its first radical change in structure as a result of British impositions. That the people of Asogli tried to resist the British imposition of a Paramount Chief and its associated hierarchy should not, therefore, be surprising. After their experiences of Agorkorli in Notsie, their ancestors had already rejected such a model of hierarchical political organisation once before.

I was told that everyone knew it had been Kakla who had liberated them from Notsie and his son Asor who had led the exodus and gone on to establish the town that was now called Ho, taking with him the Afede stool, liberation dagger and other regalia.[96] Asor's brothers settled nearby, founding the towns now known as Akoefe, Takla and Kpenoe. While the descendants of these brothers had always recognised each other as siblings, it was only under the British that for administrative purposes they became known as Ho Traditional Area. Most of my informants saw this particular British 'invention' as relatively harmless because it had only provided an English name or category for what the people knew already and expressed in the form of accolades: *'Mianovi Akoefeawo'*, *'Mianovi Hoawo'*, *'Mianovi Kpenoeawo'*, *'Mianovi Taklawo'*, *'Asogli Dukowo'*. These accolades literally mean: 'Our brothers from Akoefe, our brothers from Ho, our brothers from Kpenoe, our brothers from Takla: the people of Asogli'.

Historically then, Ho - Bankoe had always been recognised as the 'leader'

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[95] Ewedome should not be confused with Dome. Literally, *dome* means 'in the middle'; Ewedome refers to a large group of Ewes who settled inland rather than on the coast. Within Ho, as we shall see later, the people who came to be called the Domes, were called such by the Bankoe chief because they could not understand Ewe. He settled them in the middle of Ho so that they could learn.
[96] Although it was actually his sister Esa who carried it.

because of the role As<u>or</u> had played in the exodus and despite the fact that all the villages of the Ho region operated autonomously, they reunited with Ho-Bankoe presiding for religious and agricultural festivals (Lawrence 2005: 250), such as the annual yam festival, a festival that was celebrated in Notsie and continues to be celebrated by the Asogliawo (people of Asogli) today. Indeed, just to emphasise the importance of the Notsie narrative, in recent years, during the Asogli Yam festival, the Hos – have joined various other Ewes in Ghana, Togo and Benin – returning to Notsie for two days where they are hosted by the current Togbe Agorkorli. Some years ago, Togbe Agorkorli took the Hos to what is left of the walled city and showed the Hos where, according to his predecessors, the Hos had lived.

District Commissioner Captain Lilley

It was District Commissioner Captain Lilley's creation of what is now called the Asogli Traditional Council that caused outcry among chiefs and resulted in a chieftaincy dispute over the paramountcy, which lasted for decades and ended up at the Supreme Court of Ghana, with the official reconciliation between Bankoe and Dome only taking place in 1984.[97] From around 1884, the Germans had been present in most of Eweland, part of what was then called German Togoland. After the First World War, the area came under the control of the British in 1919 as a League of Nations Mandate (Lawrence 2005: 244). The British were keen to impress the Akan model upon the Ewe people and wanted to create strong, centralised chieftaincies and large political units or states. It was this amalgamation of smaller political units into larger states that formed the basis of the British policy of indirect rule in Eweland. Within this new set up, '[S]ub-divisonal chiefs jockeyed to be divisonal chiefs. Divisional chiefs struggled to become paramounts, and paramountcies were particular hotbeds of litigation' (Lawrence 2005: 246).

Paul Nugent has noted that by 1931, forty-four divisions had successfully been amalgamated into four new states: namely Buem (the least artificial creation), Avatime, Akpini and Asogli. And, by the time of his retirement in 1938, Lilley was able to boast that only fourteen divisions remained unaffiliated to a state (Nugent 1996: 209). Formal guidelines stressed that the decision to amalgamate under one chief

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[97] The British imposed amalgamation of thirty three previously independent Traditional Areas under one Paramount Chief took place in the early 1930s

had to be voluntary and required the unanimous consent of all the sub-chiefs in a particular community. A second guideline outlined that the new states were expected to be geographically connected and large enough to be viable. In addition, it was asserted that an amalgamation would only be endorsed if 'binding native customs' had been performed. Finally, and most importantly, the heads of new states were not to be installed as full Paramount Chiefs, but were to enjoy the status of 'first amongst equals'.

However, as Paul Nugent has argued, despite these formal guidelines officials often intervened in the process, sometimes putting pressure on chiefs to accept the leadership of their rivals and other times disrupting autonomous efforts at amalgamation (Nugent 1996: 209). When the British arrived in Ho, Togbe Howusu of Ho-Dome, an educated man and the only literate 'chief', made himself readily available and introduced himself as the Head Chief of all the Ho divisions to the British and soon became an advisor to the District Commissioners (Lawrence 2005: 250). He was pronounced 'Paramount Chief' of Ho even though the term had hitherto no meaning there (Lawrence 2005: 250). Captain Lilley proposed that a new stool was created and, in 1930 it was carved and 'the necessary customs were performed' (Lawrence 2005).

While many of the chiefs and elders I spoke with expressed this opinion and understanding of events, they also shared with me another story about why the British took to Togbe Howusu rather than Togbe Afede. It was explained to me that during Captain Lilley's era, Togbe Afede attended a function with the chiefs in attendance. Lilley was a British war veteran, whose right arm had been amputated. According to Ho tradition, any person who shook with their left hand showed that they were executioners or that they had attained a very high feat at war. That was why it was only Asafo chiefs who shook each other with the left hand. Within society more generally, the left hand was associated with the negative; when shaking hands with friends and acquaintances one wished no evil towards, it was important to shake with the right hand. In addition, passing items to others, and especially food and drink, should be done with the right hand. If a person's right hand was occupied and food needed to be passed, they had to first apologise to the other person and acknowledge that they had no evil intentions towards them. There was also a saying: *'Ameadeke mefiana measi wodeo,'* meaning 'no one shows the direction to his hometown with his left hand'. The implication was that to do so would be to denounce one's own people

and think of them as evil.

So, during the function that Captain Lilley attended, he was going around shaking hands with the various chiefs. Togbe Afede however, refused to shake hands with him because Lilley could only offer his left hand. Togbe Howusu, on the other hand, ignored the custom and shook Lilley's left hand. Lilley took great offence at Togbe Afede's refusal to shake hands with him and it has been argued that it was this incident, more than Togbe Howusu's literacy that influenced his refusal to allow Togbe Afede to become the head or 'Paramount Chief' of his new creation, the Asogli State Council. Indeed, in a petition to the last Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Charles Noble Arden Clarke, Togbe Afede Asor II, stated his belief that it was this hand-shaking incident involving his predecessor that was at the heart of the British sway towards Howusu[98]. Nonetheless, despite the British preference for Howusu, there appeared to be little respect for him as such. The only thing Captain Lilley had to say about Togbe Howusu in his handing over notes was: 'He is educated but I would not call him able or far-seeing, though he does his best for the interests of his State'. [99]

As I noted in the introduction, in order to make their administrative procedures easier, the British insisted that various traditional areas be amalgamated into State Councils and that they choose one leader as their 'Paramount Chief'. The chiefs that were to be amalgamated met and decided to make the Bankoe, Afede Stool their paramount one in recognition of it being the original one from Notsie and Asor as being the one who led them all out of the walled city. However, Captain Lilley disagreed, claiming that Afede was just a local chief. Moreover, he said that he believed that Howusu, an Asafofia, could lead the people in a much better manner and would be doing do so in accordance with custom, despite the fact that it had been Togbe Afede who had installed Howusu as the Asafofia in the first place. Ho – Bankoe began petitioning and complaining as soon as they realised that a junior chief was about to be made 'paramount' over the amalgamated chieftaincies. They invoked tradition and ancestral authority in an attempt to show the British that they had been the founders of the area and were the recognised spiritual leaders. Togbe Anku Satchie

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[98] Ho Native Affairs – ref NA 1/SF.15, 'Petition of Togbe Afede Asor II, Dufiaga of Ho, the Elders and Counsellors and the People of Ho Bankoe to His Excellency, Sir Charles Noble Arden Clarke, Governor of the Gold Coast.
[99] Lilley,C (Captain) 1938, 'Handing over Report to D.N.Walker', p24 (emphasis mine).

of Ziavi was particularly vocal in disagreeing with the promotion of Togbe Howusu to such a position, something that has been verified both in the archives and in an interview with Togbe Kwaku Ayim IV, the current Fiaga or Paramount Chief of Ziavi Traditional Area, whose maternal grandfather was Togbe Satchi. However, by 1935, eighteen districts had been amalgamated and by 1937 even Togbe Satchie brought Ziavi into the amalgamation.[100]

Nonetheless, from around 1937 onwards, the people of Ho, becoming angered and insulted by the turn of events, began to set up arbitrations and other legal actions. A committee of elders was appointed to investigate the affairs and present a report. This committee was chaired by Matius Klatsu and the decision taken was that the occupant of the Afede stool was the most senior chief within Ho. However, even this decision was unable to change the position Howusu had been wrongly assigned by Lilley. This, in the end, led to Commissions of Enquiry and, in particular, the Apaloo Commission of 1954 in order to solve the problems and disputes. In 1958, judgment was given in favour of Togbe Afede (Togbe Afede Asor II and Herman Ladzi Akpo, the then Paramount Stool Father were the joint defendants).

From that point onwards, Togbe Afede Asor II and his elders made several moves to re-unite the various divisions of the (then) Asogli State into the one body they had previously been. The amalgamated traditional areas quickly responded to the invitations and the Asogli State Council (now the Asogli Traditional Council) became active again. However, the period of hope did not last very long because those opposed to Togbe Afede disagreed with the decisions of the Apaloo Enquiry, which led to the later Agyeman Badu Commission of Enquiry. It too ruled in favour of Togbe Afede. Further Legal actions emanated from such disagreements until 1977, when the Supreme Court of Ghana finally ruled in favour of the Afede Stool.

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[100] Captain Lilley's 'meddling' was confirmed, also by Togbe Kwaku Ayim III, Fiaga of Takla, probably the oldest chief in the Volta Region and a living witness to Captain Lilley's era. In an interview, he confirmed that Captain Lilley had made it such that gunpowder could only be purchased through Togbe Howusu and by chiefs who accepted him as their paramount (interview, September 2008). During the German era, gunpowder was sold freely.

Competing Claims [101]

Long after the Hoawo had settled in their current place, the seven original 'Domes' had been discovered by Togbe Dekortsu of Heve (another of the five divisons of Ho) during one of his hunting trips. It was actually the then ruler of Ho, an ancestor of the current Togbe A̲fede, who settled the Dome people within the middle of the town (hence their name), and provided them with women from the other areas. This was why in contemporary Dome there were a number of surnames which had originated in Bankoe and, to a lesser extent, the other divisions. Togbe A̲fede (A) had insisted that instead of being killed, the newcomers should be settled in the middle of the town so that they could learn the Ewe language. They had come from Oda in what is now the Eastern Region of Ghana so were unable to speak Ewe at the time. Hence the Domes accolade up until today has been '*Eveseawo*' meaning those who have learnt the Ewe language through listening. After settling and multiplying, the Dome population had grown and were in need of a leader. According to Togbe A̲fede (P), a leader was appointed but he was not a chief because the Domes had no stool at that point. [102]

One of Togbe Howusu's (P) arguments however, was that in recognition of his ancestor Howusu's actions which brought about the Hoawo's defeat of the Akwamus, the ancestral Togbe A̲fede had handed over his position as 'headchief' to Howusu. However, this account of events was disputed by Togbe Afede (P). According to him, because a head chief could not be at the battle-front himself and because the Domes were the strangers within Ho, they were pushed forward into the war. Settlers were most often assigned the most tedious or dangerous tasks. Hence the saying: '*Edzro koklo wo tso yia busu yi'* which can be translated as: 'It is the strange fowl that is used in pacifying or cleansing an evil omen'. It was after their successful defeat of the Akwamus in the name of the Hoawo, when Togbe A̲fede (A) realised the key role that

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[101] In order to avoid too much confusion with regards to current and deceased chiefs who share the same name, I shall refer to the chief involved in the case with as present (P) and his ancestors as such (A). This sentence, for example, would read: '*Togbe Howusu's* (P) argument had always been that in recognition of his ancestor *Togbe* Howusu's (A)….' In addition, I should like to make it clear from the outset that Togbe Afede is chief of Ho-Bankoe, the first and oldest division of Ho. Togbe Howusu is chief of Ho-Dome, a much younger division and the only one whose ancestors did not travel with the Ewes from Notsie. Because of the numerous different arbitrations and people involved, I will, for the reader's ease, at times simply refer to 'the Domes' or 'the Bankoes'.
[102] Agyeman Badu Commission of Enquiry; 1973, 13/12/73,30th Sitting.

the Domes had played, that he decided to give them the position of *Asafofia* or *Avafia* (war chief). In addition, Togbe Afede (A) decided that when an animal was slaughtered for customary purposes, Dome should receive the chest/breast where previously, Togbe Afede (A) had taken it. Togbe Afede (A) would continue to take the waist, indicating his paramountcy or his position as the 'seat' of the Ho people.

Togbe Howusu and the Invention of Tradition

One of the main arguments put forward by Togbe Howusu (P) was that Togbe Afede (P) could not make any claims to the Paramountcy on the basis of history and tradition because in Notsie and up until the British arrived, there were no 'chiefs' or 'Paramountcies' at all and the people of Ho only had *ametsitsiawo* (elders). Togbe Howusu (P) argued that it was one of the Dome people who had been forced to stay with the *Akwamus* for a while, who introduced chieftaincy to the Hos and that until then they had no chieftaincy or stool to speak of. However, another of his arguments was that the Bankoes had given over their position as head chief to the Domes after the Domes gave up one of their sons to the Akwamus during the war. Togbe Afede (P), quick to pick up on this contradiction, questioned Togbe Akpao, who was representing Togbe Howusu (P), as he cross examined him. He said: '*Yesterday, you said Agbenyoxe, as the Ametsitsi of Ho, had no stool and he knew nothing about chieftaincy*' to which Togbe Akpao said '*yes*'. Togbe Afede went on: '*But you said that it was Agbenyoxe who transferred his chieftaincy to Adzie Kwasi (Howusu)*', the question being that if Agbenyoxe was just an elder and not a chief, then how could he have relinquished his position as a chief to Howusu? In this sense, Togbe Afede (P) arguably caught Togbe Howusu (P) contradicting himself through his own argument that there were no chiefs before the arrival of the British.

It had been Togbe Afede's (P) argument that the roles of the *Ametsitsi* Agbenyoxe were in fact the same as the roles of the 'Paramount Chief' of today and that he enjoyed the same piece of meat and was in charge of the same customary rites. Togbe Afede argued that these characteristics of leadership, along with the ability to show their place within ancestral history and tradition, would reveal who was

Paramount Chief, rather than the English title itself.[103] Togbe Afede (P), in a triumphant letter to Togbe Howusu (P) wrote 'you can keep the 'Paramount Chief' title given to you by the white man. As for me, I know that I have the ancient and original Afede stool that was brought by my ancestors from Notsie and has since then been here in Bankoe'. This was the central basis of Togbe Afede's (P) claim to the paramountcy; that the Afede stool did in fact come from Notsie and that it was the only original stool. He said that if the original Ho stool could be traced and found anywhere else, he would go to worship it there but that he refused to serve anyone who did not own an original stool. [104]

In the end, perhaps it was the Dome's unfaltering faith in the *yevo* and *yevonya* that let them down. Throughout arbitrations and court appearances, many references were made to '*Die Ewe Stamme*' by both the Bankoes and the Domes. However, it was the Domes who often used it as their only witness and made repeated reference to it. Indeed, during one Commission of Enquiry, Togbe Howusu stated: 'I have no witnesses other than the 'Ewe Stamme''.[105] Unfortunately for him, it was proven to be thoroughly unreliable, contradictory and biased. Rev. F.K.Fiawoo and Mr K.A. Quarshie of the Apaloo Committee said:

'We hold the opinion that the book 'Ewe Stamme' is self-contradictory in several instances. In some instances it is conflicting and not clear enough. The writer is not a native of Ho; he could not get all the facts. It is evident that he collected his data from different persons and put them down as he got them without taking the pains to check them up with others and to harmonise them. The evidence of the ancient stool from Notsie corroborates this. One statement has it that this ancient stool, the sword and other things were left with the old man near the Asiato-kpe, and there fell into the hands of the Akwamus. Other statements in the same book have it that the ancient stool, the sword and the other things arrived safely at Ho'.[106]

Fiawoo and Quarshie noted that *Die Ewe Stamme* on page seventy-five, stated

[103]Agyeman Badu Commission of Enquiry; 1973, 13/12/73,30th Sitting, p9
[104]Togbe Afede, 1953, Ho Native Affairs – ref NA 1/SF.15, viii.
[105]Togbe Howusu, Ho Native Affairs – ref NA 1/SF.15, pIV of 'An arbitration between Ho Bankoe and Ho Dome'. 1953 px.
[106] Fiawoo, Rev. F.K. and Quarshie, K.A. Ho Native Affairs – ref NA 1/SF.15, 1953

that Agbenyonuxi[107] handed over his generalship and chieftaincy to Lakle and that this was the basis of Togbe Howusu's claim to the head chieftaincy of Ho. However, they also noted that on the same page, *Die Ewe Stamme* made a number of statements, whose combination, gave rise to contradiction. Firstly, Jakob Spieth had claimed that Agbenyonuxi congratulated Lakle and handed to him their (the Domes) right to the breast. Spieth also argued that Agbenyonuxi made Lakle his Fieldmarshall and that from this point onwards, Afede never went to war but always sent Lakle as his general. However, Spieth had also claimed that people still went to Bankoe to have disputes resolved and to deal with all civic matters.[108]

Fiawoo and Quarshie decided that a number of questions arose from this information. Firstly, they wondered whether, if Agbenyonuxi had handed over his head-chieftaincy to Lakle, he would then have any more right to make him his Fieldmarshall. Secondly, whether he would also still have the right to send him to war, whilst he remained behind. Fiawoo and Quarshie also went on to question the logic of Spieth's claim that Agbenyonuxi had handed over his headchieftaincy to Dome and had become a subchief under Dome, but that Dome had, since then, continued to go to Afede's court for cases for the hearing of cases and the resolution of civic cases.[109]

During the 1953 arbitration, Fiawoo and Quarshie became increasingly frustrated with Howusu's refusal to answer Afede's questions himself; he continually referred the panel to specific pages of Die Ewe Stamme instead, asking for them to be read as his answer.[110] Indeed, one criticism made of Howusu was that he was unnaturally influenced by the *yevo* and *yevonya*. As has already been discussed, Howusu was known as the special 'friend' of Captain Lilley during the amalgamation period and throughout Lilley's time in the Volta Region. Togbe Afede, on the other hand, had been recognised as thorn in the flesh of the British. He often asserted the authority of ancestral knowledge over that of the *yevonya* and *agbalenunya* (book knowledge) when it came to local affairs. Talking of Bankoe during one arbitration he said: '*It is we who have every power, by reason of our direct connection with Notsie that, on paper, are inferior before the whiteman*'.[111] Howusu, on the other hand, during

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[107] The name of the particular elder who 'sat' upon the Afede stool at the time.

[108] The page numbers are those given during the arbitration and refer to an earlier edition of the book.

[109] Fiawoo, Rev. F.K. and Quarshie, K.A.Ho Native Affairs – ref NA 1/SF.15, 1953 page number not present.

[110] ibid.

[111] ibid pviii

arbitrations often asked rhetorical questions such as: '*Does the English government which is ruling us at present know that Afede is one who rules the seven towns of Ho State?*'[112]

Togbe Afede's Arguments

Let us take a closer look at some of the arguments that Togbe Afede Asor II used to secure Bankoe's position as the Paramountcy.[113] One argument, was that despite the failings of the majority of the chiefs to persuade Captain Lilley that Togbe Afede should have been made the Paramount Chief, they had insisted that the new amalgamated state should be named Asogli. That is, even though, in Togbe Afede Asor II's words, '*the friend of Captain Lilley*' was made head of the State Council, all the members of that council knew it was his ancestor Asor who had led them out of Notsie and so decided to commemorate this shared history when they named their new State Council 'Asogli State Council'[114] The name Asogli is comprised of two words: Asor and Gli. While Asor referred to the name of the third male child of Kakla, Gli referred to wall. Thus together, the name means the walls of Asor. Asor, having led the exodus as the leader of the people, was now coming to settle with his siblings and be their protective wall. All their descendants were Asor's people, or '*the children or Asor who came out of the wall*'.[115] A further interpretation was suggested by Togbe Afede Asor II, one which had a more spiritual meaning. Togbe argued that upon settling at Komedzrale (near what is now Akoefe), Asor was spiritually encircled and protected from enemies, by the sword that had been used to break the walls of Notsie, the Afega, the market shrine and the rain God. Within this understanding of the term, the wall was not only physical but also spiritual.[116]

In addition, it was widely understood throughout the Asogli Traditional Area that the meaning of Asor's name was itself generated under Agorkorli's wicked rule in Notsie. The story many people told me was that during a period of communal labour

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[112] ibid pxvi

[113] Togbe Afede Asor II was himself a highly educated administrator within the Traditional Council.

[114] Ho Native Affairs – ref NA 1/SF.15, 'Petition of Togbe Afede Asor II, Dufiaga of Ho, the Elders and Counsellors and the People of Ho Bankoe to His Excellency, Sir Charles Noble Arden Clarke, Governor of the Gold Coast, paragraph 13.

[115] Agyeman Badu Commission of Enquiry; 1973, 7/12/73,28th Sitting, p4

[116] Agyeman Badu Commission of Enquiry; 1973, 7/12/73,28th Sitting, p6

when the people were mixing mud, the mud was mixed with sharp instruments including some thorns called Asor. While working, information came to the workers with the news that Kakla's wife had just given birth to a son. Everyone responded to the news with a mixture of happiness and anguish, noting that another son had been brought forth to join them in their painful labour. The new-born son was called Asor to remind them of the atrocious conditions they had to survive under Agorkorli.[117] Togbe Afede Asor II argued that it was this shared understanding and acceptance of Asor as the person who led the Ewes on the exodus and who came to settle at what is now Bankoe that had led to all the chiefs insisting upon calling the colonially imposed State Council the Asogli State Council, even if the British refused to allow the descendant of Asor, Togbe Afede, to head it as the new 'Paramount Chief'.

During the various arbitrations, inquiries and court appearances, Togbe Afede Asor II made continual recourse to the pre-colonial period. He argued that Togbe Kakla had been the leader of one of the suburbs of Notsie called Agbogbome and a much respected *Ametsitsi* (elder) who, as I already mentioned, minted the liberation dagger used to break through the wall which was still in the hands of the people of Bankoe. Togbe Kakla struck down the walls with his dagger and commanded: '*Mie ho*', meaning let us move out. This meaning was confirmed again by Togbe Afede Asor II and others during the Agyeman Badu Commission of Inquiry of 1973. Togbe agreed that it referred to an act of vacating and the act of moving away with all of ones belongings; in short, it referred to the exodus.[118] It was argued therefore that the name Ho originated from the command of Togbe Kakla on Hogbe (the day of migration), when, as we have just seen above, he commanded to all the people '*Mi ho*'. Prior to this, the people were called Agbogbomeawo because Agbogbome was where they were residing in Notsie. Interestingly, it was during the dispute period that Togbe Afede Asor II took on the title of *Agbogbomefia* (chief of *Agbogbome*), a clear example of how new ways of confirming connections with the past were introduced and incorporated into tradition.

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[117]Agyeman Badu Commission of Enquiry; 1973, 7/12/73,28th Sitting, p5. See also Fianu, D. 1986: 'The Hoawo and the Gligbaza Festival of the Asogli State of Eweland: A Historical Sketch', Legon, p16.
[118]Agyeman Badu Committee of Enquiry: 28th Sitting, 7/12/73, p2-3; see also Fianu, D. 1986. 'The Hoawo and the Gligbaza Festival of the Asogli State of Eweland: A Historical Sketch', Legon, p14 and Ho Native Affairs – ref NA 1/SF.15, 'Petition of Togbe Afede Asor II, Dufiaga of Ho, the Elders and Counsellors and the People of Ho Bankoe to His Excellency, Sir Charles Noble Arden Clarke, Governor of the Gold Coast

A Dispute between the Stool and the Book?

Togbe Afede Asor II's arguments, as outlined above, reveal the ways in which he was able to win the case by showing that the alien and imposed 'Asogli State Council', a symbol of colonial interference, could also be recognised as something local, authentic and backed by ancestral authority. He had been able to argue that even if the structure of the chieftaincy institution had been a colonial invention, those holding positions within it today could be shown to have held (or not, in the case of Togbe Howusu) ancestrally imbued positions of leadership in the pre-colonial period. Moreover, he was able reveal the nuances of language and his knowledge of the reasons why his ancestors had named positions and people in particular ways in order to reflect recognised roles and positions within history. Assuming that claims to holding authentic traditional positions were primarily an issue of language commensurability, Togbe Howusu had simply argued that the position of 'Paramount Chief' had been a colonial invention and, as such, had no obvious Ewe equivalent. This allowed him to assume that the structure and history of pre-colonial leadership could not imbue the paramountcy with authenticity, and certainly not within legal proceedings which were still, at some earlier stages, controlled by the British.

As we have already seen, Togbe Howusu had insisted that Bankoe people could not make any claims to the paramountcy on the basis of tradition because in Notsie and up until the British had arrived, there were no 'chiefs' or 'paramountcies' to speak of at all and the people of Ho only had *ametsitsiawo* – elders. In short, Togbe Howusu and other leaders from Dome, were asserting that the chieftaincy institution was no more than a structure and set of titles and that because they had been invented by the British, they would continue to be recognised by the British and their postcolonial successors on that basis. However, in the end, even if being the 'special friend' of the colonial administration had allowed his predecessor to be put into a position of power, relying only on a colonial understanding of tradition and employing a book written by a German missionary as his only witness fifty years later, failed to ensure that he would remain in that position.

As such, it might be more helpful to understand the aspects of the dispute which I have chosen to highlight, as a dispute concerning traditional knowledge and, indeed, what constituted knowledge of tradition. For Togbe Howusu, knowledge of tradition was knowledge of an invented tradition while for Togbe Afede, knowledge of

tradition was knowledge of the ancestors. That tradition had been a British invention was key to Togbe Howusu's argument and he used this argument to discredit his opponent's claims that knowledge of tradition was knowledge of the ancestors. However, Togbe Afede was able to argue that colonial interventions did not need to be denied in order for tradition to be authentic and ancestral. He argued that irrespective of the language and titles used, the person who 'sat' on the stool had authority through their connection with the ancestors. Togbe Afede acknowledged both the colonial and the ancestral aspects of the Asogli chieftaincy but argued that if he was recognised as the paramount chief, the colonial invention could be shown as being ancestrally legitimate.

Conclusion

Togbe Howusu, through his argument that the paramountcy was a colonial invention and his reliance on *Die Ewe Stamme*, could certainly be argued to have relied solely upon *yevonya* to make his claims to having knowledge of tradition. As such, the aesthetic of his argument was one through which he made the ancestral and the colonial, and the authentic and the invented, appear as separate entities before placing them into a relationship of opposition. In claiming that the colonial and the ancestral, the authentic and the invented, could actually be revealed as one, his opponent, Togbe Afede, could be understood to have simply combined *afemenya* and *yevonya*. However, I suggest that by invoking *afemenya* he actually invoked *yevonya* at the same time. As we have seen throughout this thesis, the ancestral was not so much opposed to the colonial or the European but was rather capable – through the very ontological constitution of the living dead – of carrying the history of relations between Ewes and Europeans.

Although *afeme* means home and *afemenya* was also described to me as local and traditional knowledge, as we have already seen in the last chapter, the *afeme* was also the home of Europeans and therefore some Europeans were also part of the community of the living dead. Quite apart from the actual presence of European ancestors (although perhaps not many of them British), many ancestors would have been through the missionary or the colonial education and worked in *yevodor* jobs; they would have carried their knowledge of *yevonya* with them to the community of the living dead. In this sense, knowledge of the ancestors was also knowledge of

colonialism. Indeed, it was only from the perspective of *yevonya,* that the two bodies of knowledge were conceptualised as existing in a relationship of opposition to one another. From the perspective of *afemenya,* they had already been mediated through the living dead and existed as part of a relational flow. Let us now turn to look at how *afemenya* and *yevonya* produced different understandings of tradition in the context of performance.

Chapter 6: 'Tradition is not Drumming and Dancing': Competing Time-Shapes and the Performace of Tradition

'It takes imagination and courage to picture what would happen to the West (and to anthropology) if its temporal fortress were suddenly invaded by the Time of its Other'[119]

We return to the *vignette* I opened the last chapter with and the women who were shouting '*Original, original Agbogbomefia…no be duplicate, no be copy*'. After spending some time with the women, they revealed to me that it was not only the dispute that they were referring to with their enthusiastic cries. They told me that there were politicians attending the final funeral rites so they wanted to show those politicians that they recognised the *Agbogbomefia* as their authentic leader. He was not like Ghanaian politicians who were simply trying to copy the Western system of administration. Chieftaincy, they told me, could not be copied. Probing further, I asked the women to translate 'copy' into Ewe and provide some examples of its use in Ewe. One woman explained: '*Copy in Ewe is fefe, it is the same as playing. If you want to copy something you have to study it – it is something that has been learnt (enusrornu) so you can act it out again. That is why we call drama and acting fefedidi. It is playing and learning how to make a copy but it is not the original one. It is not authentic*'.

Hearing our conversation, my friend Edmund came over. In his late twenties, he like many other young people in the town, was wearing his *adewu*, the hunting outfit and uniform of the Asafos. After hearing what we were talking about he became quite annoyed. Pointing at his *adewu* he said: '*This is original. You cannot copy this. We asafos are not here for some stupid drumming and dancing like this ministry for chieftaincy and culture thinks. Chieftaincy is original, it is authentic – it is our tradition that we are still practising now even as the chiefs are asking the ancestors to help us become modern and developed. Culture is only this drumming and dancing, playing and so on – you see these small, small children at the school being taught how to act like chiefs for cultural competitions and tourist shows and it is an insult to the chiefs*'.[120]

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[119] Fabian, J. 2002 [1983] *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object.* p35
[120] There had been a representative of the ministry for chieftaincy and culture at the launching of the rites and her comments about how chieftaincy should be utilised by the government had angered many

Introduction

In this chapter, I return to consider temporal conflicts and tensions between traditional authorities and the state, considering how they have emerged through the different ways that tradition was taught and performed, both in school and within the wider community. In particular, this chapter leads on from the last through a focus on competing ideas of the authenticity of tradition, when informed by the state and the traditional time-shapes. If chapter five revealed some of the ways in which *yevonya* and *afemenya* produced different understandings of the constitution of traditional knowledge, this chapter endeavours to draw attention to the different ways tradition can be performed. Having seen some of the different ways in which the traditional authorities invoked and circumscribed traditional knowledge, we shall now turn to consider how it was learned, embodied and performed.

I visit two performances; the first, in school where tradition was taught in line with the principles of *yevonya* and the second, during the final funeral rites for the previous *Agbogbomefia*, during which *afemenya* was the primary organising principle for understanding and performing tradition. This chapter will suggest that in the context of performance too, different time-shapes gave rise to quite divergent understandings of the original and the copy. I argue that whereas the state's time-shape mapped onto the relationship between the original and the copy an easy opposition between the past and the present, locating the 'authentic' firmly in the original past, a consideration of the final funeral rites and the making of a royal ancestor, suggests that within tradition's time-shape, the temporality of the living dead circumvented the need for the original and the copy as an active opposition, and the placing of the authentic in either the past or the present.

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people. Indeed, it was the bringing together of chieftaincy and culture within a single ministry that I often heard complaints about. In his opening address, the new Minister for the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Culture explained that the Ministry had been created to give meaning to Ghanaian Tradition and Cultural Heritage: *"Our objective must be to re-engineer national focus on our Cultural Heritage in tandem with the imperatives of modernity to enable it contribute to the overall development of the country"*. The Minister went on to say:*"Henceforth we should see Chieftaincy as being inseparable from Culture"*.

http://www.ghanaculture.gov.gh/index1.php?linkid=65&adate=26/07/2006&archiveid=212&page=1

Pentecostalism and a Demonic Tradition

Before I turn to consider how tradition was performed, both in the school and the community context, I shall provide a brief discussion of how tradition figured within the Pentecostal time-shape. Even though Pentcostalism is not the focus of this thesis, Pentecostalism is more than a Christian denomination in Ghana and many of its ideas have become increasingly salient for large numbers of the population. As such, its ideas about tradition and chieftaincy shall be acknowledged here.[121] A great deal has been written on contemporary Pentecostalism in Africa and indeed on the particular understanding of 'tradition' and 'modernity' that it has promoted within Ghana. It has been argued that within Pentecostal discourse, 'tradition' and 'modernity' have been used primarily as temporal categories, with the former located in a demonic past and the latter in a Christian present and future.

Brian Larkin and Birgit Meyer have noted that strong opposition to local cultural and religious traditions is a key feature of contemporary Pentecostal-charismatic churches; like the nineteenth century missionaries, contemporary Pentecostals invoke temporalising strategies, casting local cultural and religious practices as 'matters of the past' (Larkin and Meyer 2006: 292). Within this discourse, the need for rupture has been emphasised; a rupture between 'now' and 'then', 'modern' and 'traditional', 'God' and the 'Devil' (Meyer 1998: 183). Being born again is therefore a 'complete break with the past' (Meyer 1998: 182) and is 'perceived as a radical rupture not only from one's personal sinful past, but also from the wider family and village of origin (Larkin and Meyer 2006: 294). Because Pentecostals believe that Satan operates in the guise of traditional spirits, traditional religion and its main practitioners and promoters – the traditional authorities – are completely diabolised and represented as a matter of the past.

However, while this Pentecostal time-shape promotes a rupture between and a separation of the past and the present, it does not actually leave Pentecostals alienated or distanced from their past and the past – in the guise of witches, ancestral spirits and other demonic agents – continues to threaten the present lives of born again Christians. (Meyer 1998). Meyer has argued that Pentecostalism demands that believers

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[121] It is beyond the bounds of this chapter to discuss directly but Pentecostalism's performance of tradition might best be viewed on television; through filmed church services and, especially, in the many Nigerian and Ghanaian films which often make tradition and the devil central themes.

constantly re-member their past and their past links to 'tradition' as a way of accounting for their various present troubles. That is, only by becoming conscious of and remembering their 'past' can they be 'delivered' from it and become 'modern' individuals (Meyer 1998: 195). And it was for this reason, I argue, that the time-shape promoted by Pentecostalism, provided much less of a challenge to the traditional authorities I conducted research with in Ho than the time shape promoted by the state, as we shall see below.

As we saw in the first chapter and in apparent opposition to Pentecostal discourse, National cultural policies have attempted to overcome the ongoing legacy of colonial cultural imperialism and its imposed ruptures through an emphasis on temporal connectivity and specific links between the past and the present. Pride in Ghanaian history and culture is emphasised as key to the country's 'development' and 'progress' and the construction of modern Ghanaian identities (Meyer 1998: 191). However, despite the more positive rendering of 'tradition' within national discourse and the assumption that it can be promoted for development, Pentecostals arguably attribute more agency to the past than proponents of the Cultural Policy who simply transform it into a reified national heritage. Far from being harmless and something to be remembered and cherished with nostalgia and pride, the cultural past for Pentecostals haunts people and needs to be continually fought against (Meyer 1998: 191). It is a dangerous and indeed ever present threat to be reckoned with, while the government's policies ultimately render traditional rituals part of a secularised, commodified and 'harmless culture' (Steegstra 2004: 312).

Cultural Lessons at School: Tradition through the Book

Cati Coe has argued that missionary Christianity in Africa created a kind of educated person who could appreciate – but was less willing to participate in – particular activities that represented the African past and that this created a mode of relating to culture which continues to resonate for educated people today (Coe 2005: 24). It is this 'time shape', to which I now turn and which I argue provided the strongest challenge to contemporary traditional authority. Since independence, Ghanaian governments have made the teaching of traditional culture central to their educational policies, rendering it an abstract thing to be preserved and promoted as part of a nationalist project of pride and intellectual freedom from colonial powers

(Coe 2005: 9). In addition to class teaching there have been annual cultural competitions in which pupils re-enacted traditional cultural practices and showed their skills at drumming and dancing. Coe notes that the students she conducted research with, continued to define culture as the competitions they had been involved in – the drumming and dancing – rather than culture as a way of life (Coe 2005: 98). Moreover, Coe argues that teachers taught culture as residing in the past; they were always keen to stress that the present was only a deviation from the original and authentic past as it was 'in the olden days', and 'before the whites came' (Coe 2005: 104). Tradition was often described as having broken down, suggesting that it was the responsibility of the state and the teachers to ensure that it was not forgotten or lost forever (Coe 2005: 104).

Therefore, teachers became the authority figures on the meaning of tradition and culture and culture was presented as having nothing to do with the everyday experiences of the students and not even their parents or grandparents (Coe 2005: 104). Within this framework of teaching culture, students were positioned as able to learn the knowledge of their ancestors but also as currently lacking that knowledge, and ancestors and elders were arguably glorified as knowing more than the youth of the present (Coe 2005: 103). However, Coe argues that even though teaching culture as tradition resulted in elevating ancestors and elders, it actually replaced them completely by the school as the institution through which young people come to know about their culture (Coe 2005: 105). This was hugely problematic given that in Ghana cultural expertise was widely understood to be located with chiefs and elders as 'custodians' (Coe 2005: 106).

Culture within this discourse resided with chiefs rather than the secular state and chiefs argued that employees of the state did not have access to secret knowledge and so could not be valuable transmitters of culture (Coe 2005: 107). The logic of teaching culture in schools therefore went against the local and more selective system of knowledge transferral whereby only those who had reached a ritual-political position were able to learn certain things (Coe 2005: 136). Nonetheless, Coe argues that the fact that the state did teach culture in schools and hosted cultural competitions with little or no input from the chiefs and elders, provides an example of the way in which the state has appropriated chiefs' cultural authority as a way of challenging their power (Coe 2005: 108).

Coe's argument certainly makes a lot of sense in relation to my own research in

Ho. However, I suggest that the conflict between the state and the traditional authorities over the teaching of culture in schools and the government's cultural policies more generally, was not simply over who had the authority to appropriate and transmit cultural knowledge and 'tradition'. It was rather that 'tradition' within the time shape promoted by the Ghanaian government, was located firmly in the past and thus worked to undermine its contemporary practitioners – the chiefs, queen mothers, elders and participating traditionalists – whose activities and functions reflected and responded to the particular challenges and conditions of the present.

It should not be surprising therefore, given the government's failure to actually overcome the temporal ruptures imposed by colonialism and missionisation and their consequent perpetuation of colonial temporalising strategies, that the time shape promoted by the Ghanaian government today can provide us with a clear example of Fabian's long discussed 'denial of coevalness' and 'freezing' of peoples in a particular discursive time. Criticising anthropological writing, Fabian described this process as the 'persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse'. In relation to Ghana, we might describe how the the teaching of culture and tradition as 'the past' in schools, similarly placed its referents – the chiefs and elders – in a time other than the present of its producers, the government and school teachers. While 'tradition' may have been rendered positive and something to be celebrated by postcolonial governments, it has remained just as firmly rooted within the allochronic colonial discourse that first labelled it as such and located it in the past.

This brings us to one of the main arguments of this chapter. Certainly, as Coe has argued, we can read the government's appropriation of culture and tradition as an attempt on their part to usurp the overall power of the chiefs. And her study of the teaching of culture and tradition in Ghanaian schools does indeed take note of how particular ideas of time – the past and the present, the traditional and the modern – were used in order that the state may, through its education of young Ghanaian citizens, appropriate culture and so the power of the chief as its traditional 'custodian'. However, rather than making an argument that uses chronopolitics as a means to some other end – in Coe's case, an argument about the appropriation or proprietorship of culture – my experiences in Ho rather lead me to propose that conflicts between the state and the chiefs over the cultural policy, their role in the development of the nation and the teaching of tradition and culture in schools were in fact primarily chrono-

political ones.

A Temporal Tussle between the Chiefs and the Government

After the 2008 annual Independence Day gathering in Ho, attended to by politicians, chiefs, religious representatives and the public, I came to meet the chiefs and elders in a particularly angry mood. They explained to me that as usual, a priest had offered the Christian prayer and an Imam had offered the Muslim prayer. Then, the traditional prayer was introduced and a school boy stood up to offer a libation to the ancestors and gods, rather than *Zikpitor,* whose role it usually was to offer all public libations on behalf of town. The boy was about to start pouring the libation when the chiefs and elders assembled realised what was happening and insisted that it was stopped at once. After having a meeting to discuss what to do about the incident, *Zikpitor* led a delegation to the Regional Co-ordinating Council who had been responsible for the organisation of the ceremony. The Council was fined by the traditional authorities for insulting the integrity of the chieftaincy institution and asked to pay for the food and drink that would be required to pacify the ancestors and gods. They were also asked to put their apology in writing, which they later did.

However, according to those who described the meeting to me, the local government representatives had complained to the delegation that none of the other regions in Ghana had objected to children showing their knowledge of the local culture. To that, I was told that the elders had responded with the proverb: *'Every town cuts its chicken in a different way'*; they stressed that other areas in Ghana could do as they wished but that in Ho, they would not allow such behaviour. They insisted that the government was free to task teachers with teaching its own version of culture and tradition but that if it wished to do so without any consultation with the traditional custodians of the culture – the chiefs and elders – then it should not bring the results of the 'culture lesson' into their midst as a way of insulting them during public gatherings. They stressed that chieftaincy was not something that could be copied and it was not just anyone who could act or play the part of *Zikpitor*.

Therefore, the government's actions, while appearing to celebrate tradition by teaching children how to offer libations to ancestors, was rather interpreted by the traditional authorities as yet another attempt to undermine the whole chieftaincy institution. Chieftaincy as tradition had come to be represented within the state's time-

shape as emblematic of the past and so capable of being copied and dramatised by school children so that they could become modern citizens proud of their traditional heritage but nonetheless emotionally and temporally distanced from it and the living chiefs around them. As one of the elders put it to me: *'How can they do the Christian and the Muslim prayers correctly and then come to insult us as if we are not there? Did a small boy offer the Christian prayer? No!'* With the chiefs and elders present and prepared, along with the Christian and Muslim religious representatives, there had been no need for a child to offer the traditional prayer. From the perspective of the traditional authorities then, allowing a child to act as *Zikpitor* had rendered the chiefs and elders absent in their very presence.

Although in line with Coe's argument, the traditional authorities were angered that their claim to being the 'custodians of culture' was being undermined through the teaching of culture in schools in the first place, I hope my example has revealed that the conflict between the two parties was not always about knowledge and power *per se*, but concerned the fact that traditional authority had been transformed into something which could be copied by children through the promotion of a particular time-shape and chrono-political regime that denied the coevalness of chiefs. Within the government's time-shape, chieftaincy in its original and authentic form had been lost to the past. As such, it had become largely irrelevant whether school children or living chiefs offered a prayer to the ancestors. Therefore, and this is my interpretation, with the original and the copy conceived of as temporally separated – the authentic original located in the past and the inauthentic copy in the present – contemporary chiefs could be represented as mere inauthentic copies of the original and authentic chiefs of the pre-colonial past. In this way, there was no reason why teachers should not teach children how to play at being chiefs as a way of learning about their 'authentic' and 'original' past.

On numerous occasions, friends of mine asserted that chieftaincy as tradition was both original and authentic and not something that could be copied. What this suggested was an understanding of tradition that already contained within it a temporal continuity between the past and the present and indeed a potential future. The reason these same friends complained about the government's cultural policies on the other hand, was because they were based on an alternative temporal rendering of tradition as something fixed in the past and so capable of being copied or re-enacted in the present during school cultural lessons or displays for tourists, albeit as inauthentic version

Figure 5: Looking for the Beast's footprints

Figure 6: The Beast is Dead

Figure 7: The Agbogbomefia after swearing the oath

Figure 8: The Previous Chiefs' Sandals

Enacting a Time-Shape Beyond the Original and the Copy

Using the performance of the final funeral rites for the previous Paramount Chief of the Asogli Traditional Area and Council as an example, I argue below that the traditional authorities themselves provided an alternative 'time-shape' and understanding of tradition. [122]The final funeral rites for Togbe Afede Asor II lasted for nine days during August 2008, 'undoing' the nine days he had spent in isolation before being outdoored as a chief many years before. Although he had been buried in 2002 and his successor Togbe Afede XIV enstooled the following year in 2003, it was left until 2008 for his successor to perform the final funeral rites which would allow him to join the ancestors and his predecessors in *Tsiefe,* the home of the 'living dead.'

In addition to ensuring the safe journey of the previous chief to his ancestors and asserting the continuity of the chieftaincy institution through his successor, the rites worked to reaffirm relationships and social obligations between the four ancestral 'brother' towns of Asogli and their shared allegiance to the Afede stool. As we saw in the last chapter, the four ancestral 'brother' towns of Ho, Akoefe, Kpenoe and Takla*,* all traced their ancestry back to one father, Kakla. Although Akoe (the ancestral 'father' of the people of Akoefe) had been the eldest son, it was Asor (the ancestral 'father' of the people who now call themselves the Hos) who had led the people from their captivity under an evil ruler in Notsie in present day Togo and who 'sat' on the ancient Afede stool. Ever since then, and despite huge population growth, colonial interventions, chieftaincy disputes and the other towns acquiring their own stools at various points, the people of Asogli had continued to recognise the Afede stool as the only ancestral stool brought from Notsie and the chief who sat upon it as their overall leader.

This allegiance would be revealed by searching the town to find the beast that had killed the previous chief and presenting it to the current chief, through a series of what at first I took to be simple re-enactments of the past. The people of Akoefe were the first of the ancestral 'brothers' to confirm their allegiance to Togbe Afede but the visits from the other two towns followed a similar format. At 5.30am, dressed up in my *Adewu*, the brown uniform of the Asafos, I joined the many Asafos from Ho at the

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[122] I would like to note here that I took part in the final funeral rites from start to finish but that I was always out with the Asafos, rather than sitting in state with the chiefs, queen mothers, elders and other dignitaries. My analysis of the rites therefore comes from the perspective of the youth rather than the elders (I do not use these categories to refer to age here but rather positioning).

outskirts of the town to wait for those coming from Akoefe. The Asafos were the standing army of the chief. People were not appointed to the group and every youth was automatically an Asafo, often remaining with the group all their life and well into old age. When I conducted fieldwork, the main role of the Asafos was to accompany and protect the chief wherever he was going; indeed, the presence or absence of the Asafos indicated the level of support a chief had. People explained to me that these days the Asafos were a much smaller group than in the past, due to changes in peoples' lifestyles and the increase in Pentecostal churches, which had successfully persuaded many young people that everything associated with chieftaincy was 'Satanic'. While the Asafos were predominantly men, some women were also part of the group.

The Akoefe Asafos soon arrived in their numbers and began sharing out their gunpowder and filling their guns. Some of the drummers started to practice while others knocked back strong locally distilled spirits to get them invigorated for what was to be a very tiring journey around the town. At the front, we were led by the Asafo gong gong beater who signalled to the people that we were coming. [123]At the back of the group were three Asafos in a line – it was their role to form the rear guard and to protect the rest of the group from any attack from behind. If at any point one of us fell behind them slightly we were quickly forced back to our places by other Asafos lest we be mistaken by the rear guard as the enemy. Others maintained the order of the group by staying at the sides. Within the main group were the drummers, surrounded by the rest of us singing. Those wielding guns held them up high to the sky, showing their preparedness and we set off to the thunderous sounds of gunshots and the stench of gunpowder.

I must admit that despite having known most of the Asafos for almost a year, the first half an hour moving with the group was absolutely terrifying. I felt out of place, recognising some of the drumbeats and songs but knowing none of the movements. I thought everyone was taking normal, if slightly shuffling footsteps but people kept stopping me and showing me that they were in fact imitating the moves of the hunter. Again, I tried to copy them and again I failed; *'you are following the wrong drum'*, my friends kept telling me. Then, just as I had almost mastered one set of movements, the song would change or I would be startled yet again by a series of gunshots behind me. [124]

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[123] The gong gong is the traditional instrument beaten to call the people to a meeting held by the chief.
[124] See Dilley (1999) for a discussion of imitation as part of a process of learning during fieldwork.

As the hours passed, I began to relax and was able to imitate more successfully the movements of the Asafos as they went around the town in search of either the beast that had killed the chief or the chief's body. Moreover, as the moves began to come more naturally and I became less conscious of having to imitate those of my friends, it became more obvious to me that perhaps they were not imitating or re-enacting the past as such either. When the Asafos had initially told me that we were looking for the beast that had killed the chief or at least, his dead body, I assumed they meant that they were re-enacting scenes from the past when they would have done so. I had already been told that in the past, and during a period of war, if a chief was killed it was essential to retrieve his body, lest the enemy took his head and claimed victory. If, on the other hand, the chief had been killed by a wild animal then it would have been equally important for the Asafos to catch the animal before it wreaked havoc in the town and perhaps even came for the deceased chief's successor.

However, we all knew that the chief had been buried six years ago and that there were no longer wild and bloodthirsty animals roaming around the large town of Ho. Neverthelesss, when I began to discuss our activities with the Asafos in terms of re-enactment and imitation of the past, they became quite frustrated and kept telling me that they were not *'making culture, like in school'*. One young Asafo who was in his final year of High School said: *'As for this, this is our tradition. We're not here for some culture competition'*. Other Asafos told me that they were rather showing everyone that they were still as strong as their ancestors had been. They told me that despite all the changes in the town, the present chief could still rely on them to protect him, just as long as he continued to respond to the contemporary needs of his people.

So we continued, singing old songs, about war and hunting, songs which had been passed down the generations. The atmosphere was charged, fuelled by the drumming, singing and alcohol. At various points, individual Asafos began to move like the hunter trailing an animal and particular drum beats and songs evoked well known experiences and stories of the hunt, which were enacted by some of them. Although they were ancestral 'brothers', there was a friendly rivalry between the Ho and Akoefe Asafos, with each group trying to out dance the other, often using knives to show their spiritual abilities and particular old movements to test the knowledge of the others and to see whether the appropriate response could be recalled by them. At various points along the journey, women dressed in red (to mark the dangerous period during a chief's funeral), came towards us singing dirges, lamenting the loss of their

loved ones, as they would have done in the past when they had to meet their husbands and sons returning from the battlefield bearing news of death.

Together, we all went into the Palace forecourt where the chiefs, queen mothers and public were seated waiting for us. Our singing got louder as we approached Togbe Afede and we danced around to greet him. He and the other chiefs all showed us a sign of acknowledgement before we moved on. In the middle of the courtyard, some of the Akoefe Asafos started to act out the hunting of an animal, showing off their techniques. Using a small stick, they began by measuring the footprints of the beast. The master hunter, the *Ademega,* stayed in the middle with his assistants at the sides, prepared with their guns. Slowly, they moved forwards, having located the beast at the other side of the courtyard underneath a tree. Together, they shot it down, shooting the beast of twigs and leaves continually until it fell down; after a few moments, all that surrounded us was a large cloud of smoke and the stench of gunpowder.

After making sure the beast was really dead, the Asafos moved towards Togbe Afede, placing the corpse of twigs and leaves down in front of him, and informed him that by bringing the beast, they were swearing the oath of allegiance to him. Holding a machete forward as a sign of loyalty, the Akoefe Asafo chief came to swear the oath, while all the assembled chiefs and elders put their arms forward and held their two fingers up as an acknowledgement of their presence and to signify peace. The Asafo chief said: *'If we had been at war, we would have responded to your message and helped. So, as we heard of the funeral of the chief, we have been round the town to try and find the body or the beast that killed him'*. In swearing the oath of allegiance, a previous disastrous and collectively shared event – a war – was recalled to show that just as they had been loyal to the chief then, so too were they loyal now, after the death of the current chief's predecessor.

As in the past, when the other divisions of Asogli came together to help their brothers fight wars, so too had they come together for the final funeral rites and to look for the beast that had killed their chief. So to the extent that imitation involves a temporal distancing between the original and the copy, the Asafos tracking down and killing the beast was not a *re*-enactment or an imitation of the past at all but rather the enactment of a 'time-shape' in which the past and the present were continuous and the living were invigorated with the agency of their ancestors by becoming synchronous with them. So perhaps in the end, I was the only one doing any imitating and re-

enacting. The Asafos I was carefully imitating were already enacting a time-shape in which the temporal distance between the original and the copy, the past and the present, the traditional and the modern, had been collapsed.

More specifically, the rites worked to transfer the authority and responsibilities from the past chief to the present one while stressing the continuity of the Afede stool. Before the main ceremony on the final Saturday, all the chiefs entered into the room of the previous chief, where all his regalia, photographs and sandals had been put on display. They all stood at the foot of his bed, ready to communicate with him. Togbe Afede then spoke to his predecessor: *'Togbe, Togbe, Togbe Afede Asor. The people have chosen me as your successor. As a cousin, when you died along with the others, we organised a funeral that others are even trying to emulate now. We appreciated your many roles-you worked tirelessly to bring the Afede stool to where it is today. You fought many wars for us and sacrificed yourself for the good of your people. After your burial I became your successor so today, with all the people of the Asogli State, we have come to the climax of your final rites to allow you to go and join the ancestors. Thankyou for all you did while you were alive. Today, as I step into your sandals I plead with you to be behind me and to advise me and give me the wisdom to rule the people in peace. The challenges are not small but as I put my small legs into the big sandals of my predecessor, he will guide me into those big sandals. May you go in peace to sit under the big tree'.* He was then given his predecessor's sandals, before putting his feet in and out of them.[125]

For the tourists I spoke with, all the events they witnessed were seen to be of a similar nature; as entertainment and cultural displays. And, many of the young people there, understood the re-enactments as showing them something of how their Grandparents used to live and some of the things they had been learning about 'culture' at school. However, my emphasis here will be the Asogli subjects/citizens for whom either taking part in or watching the Final Funeral Rites, was less about experiencing objectified culture or tradition and more about taking part in a tradition that was recognised and, indeed, embodied through performance as living tradition. I do not argue that the Asafos' performance was the same as it would have been a hundred years ago. But then the very opposition between the original and the copy that we found within the state's rendering of tradition is largely irrelevant here. In the

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[125] We might consider Mauss's 'personage' here, as discussed by Lambek (2002)

state's time-shape, the relationship between the original and the copy could easily be mapped onto a relationship between the past and the present. Finding the beast that had killed the chief could not be described as such.[126]

Conclusions

An analysis of royal final funeral rites, would not be complete without a consideration of Maurice Bloch's work. Certainly, the final funeral rites worked to reaffirm relationships and social obligations between the four 'brother' towns and their shared allegiance to the Afede stool. For the people involved, the re-enactments invoked and commemorated past events through which the oath of allegiance was created and showed, that despite changes in the social and political environment, the oath remained relevant. And ultimately, the Final Funeral Rites worked to send the previous chief to his ancestral home while welcoming in his successor. The final funeral rites could, therefore, be interpreted in light of Maurice Bloch's analyses of death, funeral rites and the nature of ritual. Bloch observed that royal funerals involved long ritual processes which were integral to the installation of a successor and that in this way they showed death as a source of new life rather than the curtailment of life (Bloch 1999: 8). For the system to appear continuous, the individuality of position holders had to be negated and the funeral was one of the principal means by which this negation could occur. It was achieved by equating the death of the former position holder with his birth into the collectivity of ancestors, at the same time as the birth of the new position holder. The main discontinuous process in the social group – death – was overcome and traditional authority could be recreated as a permanent order. That is, a timeless order was created and maintained precisely 'by collapsing birth and death and by representing them as the same thing' (Bloch 1999: 221). Importantly, Bloch argued, this was achieved through rituals that focussed on the dissolution of time and the depersonalisation of individuals in order to bolster existing hierarchical power relations (Bloch 1989: 14).

However, I suggest that within contemporary Ghana, the 'time-shape' promoted by traditional authority did not work as an an all-encompassing tool of

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[126] Ingold and Hallam (2007: 7) have considered the relationship between tradition and creativity, stressing that the performance of tradition is rarely a case of passively replicating a fixed pattern of behaviour. See also Jackson (2005).

political coercion as such. As Arens and Karp's (1989) edited collection has shown, power and authority tends not only to be multicentred but also multisourced. Within Ho, authority did not emanate from the chiefs alone and as we have already seen, traditional authorities had to share the public space with politicians and pastors, in some cases having to compete with them for recognition from the people as leaders and, in particular, as development providers. Despite my earlier criticism of the NCL, van Dijk and van Rouveroy van Niewaal were correct when they noted that in contemporary Africa chiefs might be sought out for particular social purposes and moments of identification while state institutions and politicians may be consulted for others (van Dijk, van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1999: 8). Moreover, most people I spoke with drew a clear line between the power of the government and the authority of the chiefs, often noting that while the government had powers of coercion, the chiefs received peoples' respect and recognition. As I have argued, one of the reasons that the traditional authorities were respected and recognised was because they were able to provide an alternative temporal mode through which individuals could realistically envisage having access to many of the benefits associated with development and the 'modern package'. As we have seen in previous chapters, this was a temporal mode which did not require that people became emotionally estranged from their shared past.

Most importantly though, my example does not fit in with Bloch's analysis simply because in my own experience of traditional authority in Ho, there was not a complete dissolution of time. Indeed, perhaps my argument that temporal categories were collapsed is not entirely accurate. I argue that there were moments when this was the case – when the Asafos were dancing through the town and killing the beast, for example. However, there were just as many moments in which a particular time – be it past or present – was referenced with the aim of drawing attention to it in its specificity. For example, when the former chief was named and praised by the current one and when the Asafos presented the beast to the chief and swore the oath by recalling past events.

Therefore, change was not denied here but was rather explicitly asserted and shown to have only been possible through the continuity of the ancestors. In the same way, we could argue that even when the Asafos were searching for and killing the beast that had killed the chief, it did not so much allow them to transcend time or collapse categories of time. It may, in reality, have provided the very space in which a sense of heightened temporality was experienced and where both the differences and

similarities between the past and the present were brought to the fore. In addition, if we consider the process through which the former chief was made into a royal ancestor, we see a similar temporal dynamic at work. In order for the former chief to be sent to his ancestors and the current chief to be affirmed as his successor, the change was explicitly asserted. When Togbe Afede XIV stood at his predecessor's bedside and spoke to him, there was no dissolution of time or depersonalisation of him as an individual, as Bloch's analysis would have it. In fact, what actually occurred suggested quite the opposition. If we listen to Togbe Afede XIV's message to his predecessor that day, we are reminded of a particular chief and a particular time in history; Togbe Afede Asor II, the chief we met in the last chapter and whose words are now immortalised by the archives. Togbe Afede XIV spoke to Togbe Afede Asor II as '*a cousin*', both thanking him for his personal sacrifice throughout the dispute, and asking that he would provide his successor with '*the wisdom to rule in peace'*. As Wagner and Weiner have shown, when continuity and relation is the very ground of being, it is rather the task of humans – and in this case the traditional authority holders – to redirect the flow into morally appropriate directions.

From Temporality to Morality

So far this thesis has endeavoured to provide an understanding of traditional authority as a particular form of temporal authority, one through which oppositions between tradition and modernity, the past and the present, the Ewe and the European, the colonial and the ancestral were not so much mediated by individual chiefs and elders but rather already in existence as part of a relational flow within the community of the living dead. I have argued that it was between the living and the living dead that the chiefs had a special mediatory role; through ritual, they were able to draw out the experiences and knowledge of particular ancestors and their historical relationships so that they could bear upon the present situation of their descendants and help them 'move forward' and develop. I have argued that the traditional authorities were therefore able to provide people with a particular temporal mode through which they could envisage attaining some of the benefits they associated with development and the modern package without becoming alienated from their shared colonial and pre-colonial past. The next and final two chapters of this thesis will show traditional authority as moral authority and peoples' desires for development as involving the

moral as much as the material. More specifically, they will reveal the importance of the ancestor/descendant relationship as a model for moral personhood and for relationships of obligation between youth and their elders, chiefs and their people.

Chapter 7 : PHD Syndrome, Witchcraft and the Morality of the Ancestors

'For the ultimate test of the legitimacy of any political system is its ability to provide fertility, to ensure that the crops grow, that the people prosper and are content […] The concern of the ancestors for their descendants will never cease'.[127]

I was sitting on the friendly, if slightly wonky bench at Loving Brother's Store just down from the National Commission for Civic Education office in Ho. Loving Brother's Store was my local drinking spot and one which I frequented almost every day at some stage, usually with Korsi after we had used the office toilet in the morning and sometimes at other intervals throughout the day. Simon's, or 'seeemons' as we came to call it, was a compact wooden structure. With a sitting area around three metres in length and just a couple of benches, it was suited to the quick customer turnover that came with being situated near so many offices, the fire station, prison and water-works company. More often than not, people came in for a quick tot or cigarette, often not even sitting down before returning to work. I often spent some time there, chatting to Simon and various regulars who had become friends. They all knew me and I was perhaps overly familiar with the rhythms of the small spot. Opening at around five am, a steady of people would arrive, coming to fill up their empty plastic bottles with fiery *akpeteshi* to take to the farm. As it approached eight, various workers would pop in, some to have a tot, others simply to buy and smoke a single cigarette. Throughout the day, people came in and out, sometimes staying for a few hours until the evening when Simon could finally have some rest in his personal room next door.

Rarely empty, except for a lull in the afternoons, there were, nevertheless, real regulars and it was these regulars who became close friends and with whom I shared laughter, tears, song, nicknames, a goat and many tots of *akpeteshie.* The living dead were certainly remembered here. This was a place where, in Francis Nyamnjoh's words: 'You can risk a glass too many and make a bit of a fool of yourself without the fear that you might be taken advantage of' (Nyamnjoh 2002: 111). This is a chapter about morality and I shall soon describe some of the animated discussions about morality that took place at Simon's. However, Simon's was also a place of 'moral

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[127] Lan, D, 1999 [1985] *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit mediums in Zimbabwe.* p228.

conviviality' (Fontein 2011) itself. A place where many regulars had tabs going, myself included, where customers could sleep safely if they had to and where lottery wins and wages alike transformed themselves into tots for us all. Although in the first few months, I was often buying others drinks, they all came back to me.

My good friend and one of my adopted grandfathers, Joviality,[128] is sadly now dead. A half blind night watchman, he had lied about his age in order to keep his job and what was left of his salary after loan deductions. Sometimes I helped him with money and food, and sometimes just to see him on his way to work safely. He was constantly in financial trouble and one of the many people whose ignorance appeared to be abused by employers and banks alike. Korsi was often helping him try to resolve these problems. In fact, Simon's was often like a consultancy office, with Korsi drafting letters for people who had not been properly paid or who had been unfairly dismissed or transferred for no given reason. The fact that the NCCE was rarely funded enough by the government to conduct its research and civic education programmes did not stop Korsi. Constitution always in hand, he was ever ready to discuss what exactly being a Ghanaian citizen should involve. Everyone who frequented Simon's was aware of his role in the NCCE and many people knew he was the son of *Zikpitor*. In this sense, people appreciated Korsi as a resource of information and as someone with intelligence and unshakeable principles, some of which, as we shall see later, occasionally landed him in trouble.

The usual figures were assembled at Simon's when a rather interesting conversation began. As with many conversations, this one was a response to what we had been listening to on the radio. Kwame Senyo, a much loved presenter, made the point that now everyone believed Jesus's blood had been shed, there was the assumption that anyone could do anything and then ask for forgiveness. He argued that the uptake of the *yevo* system of administration and justice had been the problem. Where people kept their traditional system of law, he argued, there was order. Once the radio programme started to draw to a close and much to the amusement of the other drinkers at Simon's, Joviality asked us all: *'So, what is the difference between education and civilisation?'* After the chuckling had died down, Fo Nani explained that Christianity started a long time ago. It came from the *Anlo* and the *Fante* areas of Ghana. Not impressed with this response, Joviality asked him: *'You are saying that*

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[128] Named so after he responded to my comment that he looked happy by saying *'yes I am Joviality'*.

civilisation came from the coast?' From behind the bar, Simon interjected: *'We need a dictionary. Eileadh, can you not explain?'* Seeing me looking slightly lost, Fo Nani stepped and said:*'Christianity and civilisation – they move together'*. Becoming increasingly incensed, ordering another tot and offering some to the living dead, Korsi asked Fo Nani whether he was trying to say that their ancestors were not civilised.

Korsi's questioning resulted in further debate. Simon and Joviality claimed that the ancestors were not civilised because they had to pound *fufu* on a flat stone and set fire with stones. Another old man disagreed, arguing that this showed just how civilised they were, adding: *'Now we are paying for mobile phones - those days our grandfathers just looked into a calabash of water to see and speak to the person'*. A woman in her 60s joined in the debate by saying: *'They say that Europeans brought us civilisation but they didn't realise that we were already civilised. With their ideas we have become over civilised and that has led to the destruction of everything'*. A younger man called Lewis then joined us, a friend of Korsi's. He said in a matter of fact manner: *'Look, this is no civilisation. Look at our government. They talk democracy but act dictatorship. Everything they do is only to fill their own pockets. If you talk, someone will make sure you never move forward in your job. They will just pull you down.*

The debate was becoming quite animated by this point, with another man starting to get angry, pointing at the nearby Pentecostal church and complaining that even the churches were corrupt, with 'money mad' Pentecostal pastors running off with money and brainwashing people into turning against their own families. Turning to me, he said: *'Do you think the Holy Spirit is giving money to these hypocrites? No. they are still going in for the same witchcraft and juju to make their money. If you want to get rich quick in Ghana and you are not a politician, just start a church. Or an NGO. Or even better – both!'* This was a piece of advice I had heard before and would hear again.

Finally, Korsi had his chance and he asked for a second time, whether people thought the ancestors were not civilised. Pushing the point further, he said: *'if this system we have now is so civilised, why are people coming to disturb me and the old man with their problems at dawn? Every day, they are coming to the old man, from the police station, the courts and even WAJU[129]. Now they are even coming from the*

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[129] Woman and Juvenile Unit, now renamed DOVSU

churches! Why? Because they know that you don't have to pay a bribe to see justice. We don't joke with the ancestors.' Grinning and offering a small amount of *akpeteshi* to the ancestors, Lewis said: *'As for you Korsi, you know you are right. In the old days if your father told you to do something you did it because that was the law. In fact any elder. They will tell you that every child is my child. But when this democracy came, our elders who were formulating those principles forgot that democracy doesn't come to discipline your child. Now you see these nyamanyama[130] youths stealing and even killing but they will say their money is a gift from God. If you talk they will just tell you are Satan!'* Everyone nodded knowingly. Mention of misbehaving and *nyamanyama* youth quickly brought consensus to the group.

Sitting relatively quietly up until this point, I was trying to keep up with the pace of the conversation. I was dazzled by the movement between 'house level' and 'farm level',[131] and what felt like swift shifts in scale between maintaining some kind of discipline and moral order in the house and maintaining it on a national level. Finally, I asked why, if the traditional system was the best one, anyone bothered with the others. I quickly received my answer. A young woman, Abla, who often came to Simon's in the mornings bragging of her paid sexual services to various local and usually married men, told me: *'The traditionalist has to obey the rules more-this is why the church is so appealing to people. These days we have a choice in which religion to choose and Christianity gives you more freedom. We just go to church for the music and for fucking. As for today, morality is a market! It is our human right to choose and tradition is not easy o. Tradition is colo'.* Lewis interrupted her, tutting: *'As for you young people, all you talk about is your rights and your lefts. What of their responsibilities? Eh Korsi? Their citizen responsibilities?* Not giving Korsi a chance to respond, Abla simply retorted: *'I'm aware',* before sucking up her plastic packet of gin, waving a quick goodbye to me and sashaying out of Simon's.

Introduction

While the first section of this thesis concerned itself with traditional authority as a particular form of temporal authority and producer of an alternative time-shape and temporal consciousness to that promoted by the state and Pentecostals, the second

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[130] Rough and badly behaved
[131] House level before farm level was a common piece of advice to remind people that they needed to get their family issues in order before they tacked anything else.

section will deal more explicitly with some of the moral tensions which arose through the co-presence of these different leaders and their often conflicting claims about moral personhood, as people attempted to navigate their way through the challenges of everyday life. Political leaders and, increasingly, Pentecostal pastors, were often accused of selfishness, greed and involvement in witchcraft – in short, immoral practices which emphasised the importance of the individual, often at the expense of their relationships with others and obligations towards kin. Indeed the perceived proliferation of practices which undermined the values of relational personhood, arguably captured by the logic of witchcraft, was often cited by people as a reason for why the traditional authorities were increasingly being regarded as essential if there was to be any future at all. Unlike other leaders, I was often told, traditional leaders, through their connection to the living dead, were moral leaders. As representatives of the ancestors, they stood for a morality rooted in the ideal relationship between ancestors and their descendants, a relationship which was perceived to stand in opposition to the lone figure of the witch. This chapter will therefore consider traditional authority as moral authority through a discussion of the importance of the ancestor/descendant relationship as a model for moral personhood along with the particular obligations which were honoured through it.

We already have an understanding of some of the reasons why, on temporal grounds, the traditional authorities were increasingly valued as development leaders and 'future builders'. However, the wider aim of this chapter is to show that development, progress and ensuring future well-being was equally experienced by people as a moral project, or, as was often the case, an immoral project. Moral futures were described to me as being as much about the reproduction of good persons and social life as having access to economic and material development and the opportunity to prosper. Michael Jackson's observation that because human existence is always at once social and ethical, fulfillment and well-being consists in our capacity to realise ourselves in relation to others, rings true here (Jackson 2011: 60). Indeed, perhaps the very reason why 'home level' and 'farm level' were moved between with such ease within discussions concerning morality was precisely because the reproduction of good persons was recognised as being imperative if there was to be any viable future at all.

Just as I was dazzled at Simon's by the shifts in scale during discussions about morality, so too have I found writing about morality difficult to circumscribe. Where does morality begin and where does it end? Can morality be defined in any way which makes it distinct from the general notion of the social and, if it cannot, is it, as an analytical tool, analytically vacuous? (Holy 1996: 168).[132] The value of morality as an analytical tool distinct from the social continues to be debated within current anthropology (Laidlaw 2002; Robbins 2007*a,* 2007*b,* 2009; Yan 2011; Zigon 2007, 2008).[133] The new anthropology of morality argues that Emile Durkheim stretched the notion of morality too thinly through his idea of morality as the codified representation of society.[134] In a recent article, Yunxiang Yan pointed out that the new anthropology of morality seems to suggest that an anthropology of morality with a more specific focus is dependent upon a move away from Durkheim.[135]

Attempting to provide some alternative models, Joel Robbins and Jarrett Zigon, while often disagreeing on methodological issues and whether the focus of studies of morality should be individuals or the social/cultural, have nevertheless both agreed that there are two main types of morality or moral experience. The first, which refers to the ways in which people act morally by adhering to the norms of their society, is described by Robbins as the morality or reproduction and by Zigon simply as morality (Robbins 2009: 278). The second type of morality, Robbins calls the morality of freedom and Zigon calls ethics. In this moral space, the people within it recognise that there is no single norm that can guide their behaviour in order for it to be moral. Here we find multiple moralities or various conflicting values, with the people involved aware of their freedom to choose their course of action and their ability to claim

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[132] Ladislav Holy raised this concern about the dangers of introducing new concepts with specific reference to attempts, by some anthropologists, to replace 'kinship' with the more general concept of 'relatedness' but I think a similar argument could be made here even if we acknowledge that morality is certainly not a new concept as such within anthropology.

[133] James Laidlaw's arguments are less concerned with morality and more explicitly concerned with the anthropology of ethics and freedom. Morality for Laidlaw is presented as part of a Durkheimian legacy and one in which 'Durkheim's 'social' is, effectively, Immanuel Kant's notion of the moral law, with the all-important change that the concept of human freedom, which was of course central for Kant, has been neatly excised from it' (Laidlaw 2002: 212).

[134] Yunxiang Yan (2011) provides a thorough and critical examination of recent debates concerning Durkheim, morality and the social:http://aotcpress.com/articles/move-durkheim-reflections-anthropology-morality/. Questioning the extent to which an anthropology can or, indeed should, move away from Durkheim, Yan also proposes more anthropological focus on immoralities.

[135] http://aotcpress.com/articles/move-durkheim-reflections-anthropology-morality/.

particular actions and values as moral ones (Robbins 2009: 278).

Harri Englund has noted that one outcome of the recent focus on ethics as a way of escaping a Durkheimian morality has been the disappearance of studies of obligation (Englund 2008: 34). This, he argues, is arguably a result of the perception that past studies of morality and, in particular obligation, gave rise to an overly simplistic interpretation of social control (Englund 2008: 34). While not proposing a return to Durkheim, Englund is able to recover moral obligation for anthropology, this time through the work of Max Gluckman for whom, Englund argues, moral obligation is not separable from the material and affective practices that constitute persons. The 'existential import', as Englund puts it, which is at the heart of moral obligation, is 'itself contingent on historically specific circumstances, evoking rules and norms that are entirely compatible with conflict and emergent relationships' (Englund 2008: 34-35). Importantly, he argues, what has perhaps been overlooked in studies of morality and obligation is that this existential compulsion may be constitutive of, rather than external to, the givers and receivers (Englund 2008: 36).

This chapter seeks to outline what being a 'good person' (*amenyo*) or a 'bad person' (*amev__or*) involved in contemporary Ho, arguing that underlying various and often competing moral were ideas about the different forms that personhood could and should take. I argue that tensions between accumulation, distribution, freedom and obligation were central to contemporary debates about morality[136] and that it was these tensions that the traditional authorities were often described as being best placed to resolve, through their connection to the living dead. As I argued in chapters three, traditional authority, as a particular form of moral authority was always also a form of temporal authority. It was precisely because the community of the living dead was made up of once living and now living dead kinspeople, who had knowledge and experiences of the particular historical periods through which they lived as humans that they were able to understand some of the moral conflicts faced by their descendants in the present. As such, this chapter suggests that the strict opposition between individual and relational personhood which appeared to be at the heart of tensions between accumulation and redistribution, freedom and obligation, was not so easily mapped onto either an opposition between tradition and modernity or an opposition between *afemenya* and *yevonya*.

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[136] The Ewe words for morality can be literally translated as a good or bad way of living: *agbenor_nornyuie/agbenor_norvordi*

The State and PHD Syndrome

It can be argued that the immorality of the state has intensified the perception of the traditional authorities as the most moral authorities. As my opening *vignette* endeavoured to highlight, multi-party democratisation and human rights discourse has not, as was predicted, left people with a sense of moral stability. It has perhaps rather left Ghanaians with the sense that like everything else, morality can be a marketplace and that a particular brand of freedom is being sold which may be more imprisoning that emancipatory (Englund 2006). Certainly, a growing number of people in Ho expressed their frustration with a the rhetoric of rights that focussed primarily on freedoms. I cannot recount the number of times at Simon's, during discussions after an NCCE workshop or simply in everyday conversation that people felt it imperative to remind me that just because they had been named a 'coup free' rather than 'coup prone' country, did not mean that they had a democracy. In the run up to the 2008 elections, the emphasis on free, fair and transparent elections, with the constant newspaper threats of 'another Kenya', were actually interpreted by many Ghanaians as attempts by politicians to divert people from the real and important questions of how Ghana was going to move forward, both socially and economically.

Development and future building have themselves become topics 'tainted' by accusations of witchcraft, corruption and greed; individuals and groups alike pursuing greed rather than need (Nyamnjoh 2004). Although my research was conducted predominantly among Ewe speaking people in Ho, I would like to situate this chapter within concerns about the morality and immorality of wealth and power which were salient throughout the whole country, before moving onto the particular renderings and conceptualisations of traditional morality that I found within Ho. Throughout my fieldwork, discussions about the (im)morality of wealth and power, indiscipline and people failing to honour their obligations to others were never far away. They could be located on a daily basis in the national newspapers, on the television and on the radio, and often circulated around stories of various 'big men'[137] – usually local and national politicians – 'chopping'[138] the country's money or ruining others' reputations and jobs. Such behaviour was debated enthusiastically everywhere from the air conditioned

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[137]See Nugent 1996*b* and Lentz 1998

[138] A common term used to talk about corrupt practices. More widely, chopping refers to eating and in this context to 'eating' public money.

television studios of 'Good Morning Ghana' in Accra, down to the smallest drinking spots, like Simon's, in the towns and villages as people moved in and out throughout the mornings to take their 'tot' of *akpeteshie*.

However, stories about the (im)morality of wealth and power did not just focus on the 'big men'; 'small boys', the civil servants, farmers and market women, were equally embroiled in stories and gossip about the justified and unjustified means through which they had acquired even their relatively small amount of power and/or wealth and, equally importantly, whether they had or had not made use of it well and in the case of wealth, distributed it according to traditional principles of care, obligation and reciprocity. During my first few months in Ghana, I found this almost constant discussion and criticism slightly worrying. Was everyone corrupt, greedy and desperate for power? Realising that similar criticisms and rumours circulated around the 'small boys', I became disturbed by the notion that it was impossible for anyone to buy a new car, receive a small promotion in their job or even sell more tomatoes than their friends in the market without others suspecting foul play. That were, it seemed, only people trying to pull each other down in a Mbembeian world of illicit cohabitation and mutual zombification (Mbembe 1992; 2001).

Very quickly, I realised that there was not only general talk and gossip about 'enemies' and individuals trying to ruin others' livelihoods and reputations; this particular behaviour actually had a name and was described as a condition gripping the whole nation, making it 'sick' and 'diseased'. It was called 'PHD Syndrome'(Pull Him Down Syndrome) and, it seemed, everyone was at risk. People could be accused of having it because they were recognised as having intentionally disrupted another person's chances of success, while others used it to combat this very accusation, as a form of counter PHD syndrome. For example, when politicians were being questioned by the public for the misuse of funds (and when the public were accusing the politicians of pulling them all down by doing so), politicians often responded by saying things like: *'A society which looks at everybody with suspicion, a society which wants to pull everybody down My Lord, cannot move this country forward'.*[139] This was a comment made by the former Chief of Staff and Minister for Presidential Affairs, Kwadwo Okyere Mpiani, when he came under intense scrutiny for more than three hours at the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, being probed into how funds

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[139] http://www.modernghana.com/print/245712/1/mpiani-drilled-at-ghana-50.html

had been used for Ghana's jubilee anniversary celebrations two years before. As it was reported by the press: *'The former Chief of Staff entreated Ghanaians to desist from what he described as the "Pull Him Down (PHD)" syndrome and allow people entrusted with national duties the opportunity to do their work'.*[140]

Another news website noted that the syndrome was almost everywhere: *'at work places, within political parties, in villages, in families and even within religious organizations'.* PHD Syndrome was said to involve both physical and spiritual forms of attacks, with witchcraft often described as one form of PHD Syndrome.[141] Described as a 'moral disorder', one online blogger asked: *'how can a country so immersed in such terribly vibrant religious activities be simultaneously entrapped in the vicious Pull Him Down disease, an indication of spiritual crises?'*[142] We shall return to this question in the next section on Pentecostalism and PHD syndrome; the fact that PHD syndrome was described specifically as a 'moral disorder' or 'moral disease' is of immediate interest.

In Ho, stories which circulated about PHD 'attacks', both spiritual and material, tended to revolve around the perceived immorality of the 'attacker's' wealth and, in particular, the way it had been accumulated. When I spoke with friends about PHD syndrome, they explained to me that it flourished because Ghanaians were so desperate to become wealthy and get rich quick that they entered into spiritual pacts to do so. And just as some people were said to use witchcraft to better their lot at the expense of others, literally 'pulling others down' by causing their illness or death, so too did people accuse others of witchcraft and occult practices as a way of tarnishing their reputation and bringing about their demise. I suggest that for PHD syndrome to truly flourish in both action and gossip, it required that its afflicted – both the 'victims' and the 'perpetrators', took on the roles of players within a zero-sum game, through which individuals could only succeed at the expense of others. But what cures were available for this moral disease? It is to this question that we now turn.

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[140]http://www.modernghana.com/print/245712/1/mpiani-drilled-at-ghana-50.html

[141] A great deal of anthropological literature focussing on witchcraft and, in particular the modernity of witchcraft has emerged within the last twenty years. I referred to this body of work in the introduction. While witchcraft as stories and accusations within these analyses resonates with my own research, like Englund, its framing within the meta-narrative of modernity fails to acknowledge that witchcraft claims and discourses reveal, first and foremost, understandings of morality, personhood and obligation.

[142]http://www.modernghana.com/news/114524/50/the-pull-him-down-syndrome-and-developmemt.html

Pentecostalism as a Cure for PHD Syndrome?

As I noted in the last chapter, it has been argued that Pentecostalism in Africa speaks specifically to those disillusioned with daily realities by offering a complete break from the past – of familial obligations, traditions, and state - and entry into a forward looking global community (Diouf 2003: 7; Geschiere and Rowlands 1996: 552). In addition to its promotion of global connections, the Prosperity Gospel is central to Pentecostalism and both deliverance and healing usually tended to be focussed on material well-being and success in business. It has been argued that Pentecostalism promotes economic individualism and the spirit of capitalism, providing 'an imaginary space in which people may address their longing for a modern, individual and prosperous way of life' (Meyer 1999a:163). Pentecostalism today makes it clear that riches should be recognised as a blessing from God upon his true servants and in this way, it is usual for Church leaders to drive Mercedes Benz cars and live in mansions (Meyer 1999b: 155) and for them to argue that their prosperity is evidence of God's Word and desires for his people to prosper (Gifford 1998: 79).

On the other hand though, contemporary leaders of the old mission churches set up in the nineteenth century show great contempt and mistrust towards the Pentecostal churches and what they see as excessive and corrupt consumption. They repeat what the missionaries argued all those years ago, that Christians should live sober lives, and as 'true' Christians they should not be tempted by this-worldly pleasures (Meyer 1999b: 155). In response, Pentecostals argue that the early mission's message of Jesus as the poor man was an attempt to try and keep Africans from striving for better conditions (Gifford 1998: 79). The early missionaries clearly came from a wealthy place with modern equipment, new buildings and clothes and according to contemporary Pentecostals, it simply did not make sense that this lifestyle could not lead them to 'proclaim a gospel of prosperity' (Dijk 1999:80). As such, it is argued that the Bible has been misinterpreted by white people and some prominent Pentecostal pastors proclaim that they have now entered the the time of the 'black church' (Gifford 1998: 84).

Brian Larkin and Birgit Meyer (2006) have argued that within contemporary Pentecostalism in Ghana, the prospect of prosperity is linked with deliverance from perceived evil forces such as witchcraft, ancestral spirits and other demons. For young

people especially, such a message is appealing; they are determined to progress and have often been left feeling that the only way that they might is by way of a miracle (Larkin and Meyer 2006: 290). The churches often claim that they are becoming more popular because they speak to the needs of the people and, unlike the older mainline churches, they emphasise the Holy Spirit over discipline, prayer and healing over bible reading and have a strong belief that occult forces do exist. Larkin and Meyer argue that Pentecostal churches provide ritual services to protect and deliver congregants from Satan and his demons so that they do not have to secretly seek spiritual protection outside the church as was often argued to be the case with orthodox church members (Larkin and Meyer 2006: 291). Since the 1980s, many orthodox churches have tried to accommodate local elements – such as the pouring of libations – into Christian worship. However, the Pentecostal churches have opposed this altogether, arguing that pouring libation brings people into contact with the realm of the occult and that these occult forces of 'the past', such as ancestor spirits, prevent people from progressing in life. The Pentecostal moral self should neither be mislead by the world of consumer capitalism nor misguided by the outmoded world of tradition. The Pentecostal self is rather filled with the Holy Spirit alone (Meyer and Larkin and Meyer 2006: 296).

A Counter Critique

While there is a great deal of literature on Pentecostal perspectives of the occult, through which we learn that traditional authorities, stools, ancestors and other local gods are perceived as satanic, there are very few anthropological analyses of how the traditional authorities have responded to Pentecostalism and its claims and, their own perspective on witchcraft.[143] There is very little writing on what, I would argue, might best be described as a growing backlash against Pentecostalism. That said,

[143] Peter Geschiere (1996) has written about chieftaincy and the containment of witchcraft in Cameroon. However, his findings do not tally with my own in Ho, where ancestors and the stool were seen to stand in opposition to witchcraft and other spiritual forces for much the same reasons that traditional authorities were seen in opposition to the political leaders - because they were perceived as moral. Just as politicians could be bribed, so too could individuals pay to make indiscriminate use of witchcraft and *juju.* Ancestors and their living representatives could not and, indeed had the power to override other spiritual forces if they were being used negatively. I heard of many cases in which the traditional authorities had to deal with witchcraft claims and saw the punishments that were dealt out to those caught engaging in practices intended to deny the productive capacities of others.

Daniel Jordan Smith has written about Pentecostalism in Nigeria and the growing critique of some of its practices, an analysis which resonates strongly with my own experiences in Ghana. He argues that Pentecostal churches in Owerri, where he conducted fieldwork, stood in a somewhat paradoxical position because they promoted a morality that condemned corruption and idolatry, but equally provided a moral justification and, arguably, provided the very foundation for individual ambition and accumulation (Jordan-Smith 2001: 591). Pentecostalism therefore both addressed and exacerbated tensions between individual desires and continued obligations to kin and community.

During a period of rioting in Owerri, Pentecostal churches and their members were targeted and, in particular, the most successful young elites. Jordan-Smith argues that although popular interpretations of public anger focussed on a specific brand of wealth allegedly accumulated through satanic means, one of the main problems centred on what was done with that money; the beneficiaries of this 'fast wealth' flouted customary obligations of the 'haves' to the 'have-nots'. Rather than re-inscribing social ties, they acted to exacerbate differences. The targeting of Pentecostal Churches in the Owerri riots and subsequent complaints about Pentecostalism suggests, Jordan-Smith argues, that Nigerians actually find prosperity unleashed from the obligations of reciprocity at times, as problematic as the burdens imposed by continuing ties to kin and community (2001: 591). Although the targeted young elite lived lifestyles to which many young Nigerians aspired, they were accused of satanic practices and specifically targeted by the mob because they had failed to fulfil the reciprocal obligations of patrons prescribed by a morality rooted in kinship (Jordan Smith 2001: 593).

In Ho too, I found a similar counter-discourse emerging. Pentecostalism was often blamed for creating moral degradation in society because of the promotion of money seeking and, indeed, it was often the so called pastors who were at the centre of stories about witchcraft, ritual murder and 'bloody money'. One friend claimed: *'The reason we have crime now is because of the breakdown of our traditional system of justice and values. Those days you could leave your bag on the street for a week and no-one would touch it apart from taking it to the chief. Now you will find a Pentecostal who finds it and thinks that god has blessed him!'* The claim that Pentecostal churches provided ritual services for their congregants so that they did not need to seek outside spiritual assistance was seriously challenged by many people I spoke with in Ho, some

of whom had at some point 'gone' Pentecostal but had since *'taken off their robes and put their sandals back on'*, and returned to *'drink from the cup of Satan'* once more.[144] These people often argued that Pentecostal pastors sometimes worked hand in hand with *juju* men and witches and that Pentecostalism's focus on prosperity had only encouraged people to seek material and spiritual ways to pull each other down.

As both a Stool Father in his village outside Ho and a lifelong member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EP), which was the first church established by missionaries (Bremen) in Ho, Nufiala[145] expressed to me the common sentiment that the Orthodox Churches were based around love and morality while the Pentecostal churches were based on the generation of money. It was this focus on the need to make money fast, and the belief that even if one made it through corrupt or bad ways one could go to church to be forgiven and 'delivered', that Nufiala argued had been leading many people to *'misbehave towards each other'*. Shaking his head, he told me that in the past, money was *'not the end'* in Eweland but that the influence of Pentecostalism and Nigerian ways of living had negatively affected the minds of Ewe people. He told me a story which had made headline news about a church in Kumasi called 'Amazing Grace Church' where the pastor tried to sacrifice his own son by cutting the back of his tongue and cutting off his testicles. When he was caught in action, the pastor claimed the sacrifice had been necessary to help the growth of his church. By this point Nufiala was becoming angry, asking me repeatedly: '*Can you believe it? Adzo? Can you?*' He insisted that the 'white man' never brought this type of Christianity. The white man, I was told: '*brought the pure type of Christianity where the brother is your keeper and behaving well is so important, just like in our traditional system*'.

Members of the Orthodox Churches, self proclaimed traditionalists and others who had abandoned Pentecostalism, often talked about it in relation to 'bloody money', arguing that Pentecostalism made people so obsessed with money that they ended up doing anything to get it. Bloody Money was believed to be money acquired when people sacrificed their own children or children close to them. I heard many different versions of 'bloody money' stories but within in each of them there was

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[144] There were quite a few people who had been very active in the town and were very involved with the activities of the traditional authorities. Some had 'gone Pentecostal' for a while, only to return to the community where they were welcomed once more, but not without a few jibes.

[145] Nufiala means teacher in ewe. Nufiala was my Ewe language teacher and we used to meet every day for a few hours for many months. He was a retired Ewe teacher, a large man with a naughty sense of humour and certainly not afraid to speak his mind. He knew what I was studying and so taught me the language via my interests.

discussion of bad spirits which existed, feeding off childrens' blood and giving money in return to the person who had provided the children. The person would become very rich but, equally die relatively young. As Nufiala put it: *'that is the deal'*.

Nufiala recounted to me a case of ritual killing in a nearby village called Hodzo, in which an uncle killed his own nephew for bloody money. It was revealed that the man had taken out his nephew's heart and some of his blood and buried his body in a very shallow grave near to his house. The youth of Hodzo, upon discovering the body of their peer, had attempted to destroy the village and send everyone running. Nufiala explained that if one person from the village can kill his own nephew then any one of the villagers may also be capable of it. And the unnecessary deaths of young people and women pained people the most because their deaths were seen as premature and unnecessary. The Hodzo youth then initiated the youth of Tokokoe to join in. Nufiala, who hailed from Tokokoe, told me that he had been very worried because *'we are no longer living in the days when revenge killings are accepted – now there will be conflicts with the police if such a thing is attempted'*.

When I met him again a few days later, he explained to me that on the day the youth of Tokokoe were supposed to help destroy the village – with around three hundred of them travelling from Tokokoe armed with pellet guns – there was an accident which prevented the destruction taking place. One of the youths accidentally shot his fellow in the shoulder. The man had to be rushed to hospital and the whole event was called off. Nufiala said that if he was being honest, it was a blessing in disguise and that it had prevented a lot more trouble, which he as a Stool Father and elder in Tokokoe, would have to deal with. He said that the ancestors had intervened because they understood that times had changed and that the police would not spare those involved in destroying the village.

The events described by Nufiala, emphasised both the temporal basis of ancestral morality and revealed the ancestors as figures concerned primarily with the well-being of their descendants. Ancestral morality was revealed here not as a system of abstract and absolute rules created in a timeless past but rather as constituted through the living dead as once living kins-people, some of whom had in their own lifetime experienced the very challenges faced by their descendants. As such, ensuring their well-being involved, first and foremost, acknowledging the social and political contexts in which their descendants lived and the particular challenges and conflicts of interest which had emerged through it.

Discussion

It can be argued that the state in many African countries has fetishized the rights bearing individual and, indeed, individual personhood to the point where many people, once attracted to the state's rhetoric of rights have found them bargained away (Nyamnjoh 2004: 34). As Nyamnjoh has put it, '[d]eluded into believing that autonomy is a demand affordable by all and that there is such a thing as freedom per se, individuals have tended to overemphasise personal survival to the detriment of relations with others (Nyamnjoh 2004: 35). Equally, many of my friends in Ho found Pentecostalism's celebration of the born again individual, cut off from their familial ties and obligations, while at first alluring, ultimately disappointing. In Ho, I interacted with a growing number of people attempting to 'distance themselves from liberalism gone wild' (Nyamnjoh 2004: 36). I suggest that underlying both witchcraft beliefs and accusations *and* PHD Syndrome, were particular moral claims about ideal personhood as relational personhood. As we have seen, while not all PHD attacks had to be spiritual attacks, the spiritual attacks we considered above could be understood as examples of PHD Syndrome in that they were based upon the logic of the zero sum game, through which an individual could prosper and succeed but only at the expense of others.

Obligation and the Morality of the Ancestors

In the first section of this thesis, I discussed the gradual disappearance of ancestors and tradition in Africanist anthropology with the end of colonial rule and theoretical developments in anthropology which left tradition invented, imagined or reframed as an alternative modernity. Also recognising the demise of studies of ancestors and elderhood in independent Africa, Richard Werbner has taken note of a corresponding demise in the ethnography of obligation, responsibility, trust and piety. And, along with this demise, the notion that ageing is a 'moral and political accomplishment in the public sphere' (Werbner 2004: 134). Werbner argues that with the rise of feminist studies, patriarchal authority came to be described or indeed dismissed, as undemocratic, if not authoritarian (Werbner 2004: 134). He goes on to argue that even postcolonial studies which focussed on generational power studies, failed to really account for the ethics associated with elderhood. The focus instead, was

the youth and their various attempts to protest and resist (Werbner 2004: 134).[146] Werbner argues however that if anthropologists are to understand the public sphere in its full postcolonial complexity, they must realise that elders' claims become a force in the making of a very different future, given the presence of new uncertainties and tensions in the public sphere (Werbner 2004: 135).

In contrast to the state and Pentecostal leaders, traditional authorities in Ho were perceived to promote moral values which were not underpinned by zero-sum logic but rather by the ideal relationship between ancestors and their descendants. As I intimated in chapter three, this was a relationship of reciprocal care and obligation and one through which all descendants could potentially benefit from the blessings of the ancestors. As once living but now dead historical kinspeople, the ancestors were said to continue to take a keen interest in their descendants' lives. Indeed, it was the primary desire of the ancestors that their descendants – the people living in Ho today – flourished and prospered and that the town that they founded after fleeing Notsie over three hundred years ago, developed, both materially and morally. The living dead had the ability to protect and assist everyone within the town in so far as they were behaving morally and reproducing good social relations. In this way, the failure of Western attempts to impose centralized and democratic forms of government on African nations should not automatically be attributed to a supposed native incapacity or the corruptibility of African leaders (Jackson 2007: 59). It should also be considered in light of a preference for the politics of familiarity over the impersonality and hegemony of the bureaucratic state (Jackson 2007: 59). Here we find that an ethos of care is central to administrative authority, one which can integrate the morality of kinship with the exercise of chiefly power (Jackson 2007: 60).

The ancestor/descendant relationship was a relationship which emphasised the value of the potential and of relative positions of youth and elderhood. As we saw in chapter three, just as the living were obliged to remember their living dead elders, so too were the youth obliged to remember their living elders as the people who had invested in their growth. Obligations to elders were reckoned through the care and guidance that parents and older members of the family had bestowed upon a child or young person. However, the family here was not a reference to the 'short-sleeve' or

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[146] See Berliner, 2005; Cole, 2004; De Boeck and Honwana,2005 ; Diouf, 2003; Gable, 2000; Nyamnjoh, 2000; Weiss, 2002, 2005.

nuclear family but rather to the extended and 'long sleeve' family.[147] Within each family originating from Ho, there was a head of family, who was usually the eldest male. There were also principle members of the family who were appointed on the basis of their commitment to and knowledge of their family. For example, within the Royal Akpo family, *Zikpitor* was the head of family and his son Korsi one of its principle members.[148] The role of the father but also all adults in the family, both male and female, once they were of an age of potential parenthood, cannot be overstated here. It was their responsibility to bring up the younger children and young adults. This emphasis also explained why any person, not originally from Ho, coming to live there, needed to be given a traditional father. It was the role of the traditional father to counsel and guide the person on what was accepted as good and the correct way of relating to others. [149]

A Temporally informed Morality

As we have seen throughout this thesis, the temporal dimension of traditional morality was one which saw the past remembered and the future anticipated in particular acts of obligation and reciprocity, both in action and aspiration. To explain the reciprocal obligations between parents and their children and elders and youth, people often used to recall a story about a *chachakpole* bird. As the story went, when the mother bird's eggs hatched, she kept the young hairless birds in the nest and fed them until they were strong enough to fly on their own. When that time came and the young birds flew the nest, the mother bird also pulled off her own feathers and proceeded to stay in the nest waiting for her children to bring her food, look after her and keep her warm. The story was recited to me in order to help me understand that as

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[147] The Ewe word for family is *fometorwo* which literally means from the same stomach but is extended to include those who are related because their parents or grandparents were in the same womb. With parents often having up to ten children, families can become relatively large.

[148] The head of family is accountable to the rest of the family just as a chief is accountable to *Zikpitor* and the Council of Elders. Equally, there is no shame in either a chief or head of family asking for advice from those technically below them. The maintenance of family and social stability was deemed to be of greater importance than individual over-lordship.

[149]The Ewe word for accepted ways of everyday behaviour is *besiagbenornor*. *dekornuwo* refers more specifically to local rites and practices. When people were seen to be behaving 'out of line', they were often asked whether they did not have a lazy chair in their home (*akpasa mele afewo meoa?)*, lazy chair in this case acting as a reference to the father or grandfather who could often be found relaxing in one.

young people grew into adults and the old became weaker, it was the responsibility of the younger generation to help look after them.

Using his sister Adzovi's children as an example, Korsi explained to me why Adzovi's son Frank gave his parents money. Frank had recently married and had a child so even though he was still young, because he was now a father himself rather than just a son, it was his responsibility to look after his own children and start helping his own parents as they grew older, as a way of reciprocating the care he had received as a child. Similarly, Adzovi's eldest daughter, Little, was over thirty but had only recently got her first job. Although she was not yet married and had no children of her own, she was of an age where this was a potential so she regularly gave part of her salary to her parents as a way of acknowledging the time and money her parents had invested in her schooling and general care. Moreover, precisely because she had no children of her own yet, but was the eldest of eight siblings, she was expected to help look after her younger siblings by occasionally buying them food and clothes, an expectation that she always met, despite her meagre salary. Indeed, she often helped other younger relations in the household as well. And when she could, she helped her grandparents, the 'old man'[150] and the 'old lady'. Certainly, she ensured that they always had her everyday support and assistance if they needed it. Although she faced numerous challenges herself, through Little's behaviour, I was given some insight into how the ideals of traditional morality could be enacted.

I also noticed that all the children of the 'old man' and the 'old lady' gave what they could to their parents, including those who were living in Europe and America. However, relatively speaking and perhaps playing on their parents' ignorance of salaries in the West, they often actually gave less than their siblings who lived at home. In addition, the parent/child relationship was extended to the community which had helped to grow a person and allow them to become successful in the first place. Family members who had travelled to the city or overseas were often reminded that upon their death they would return to 'their village' to face any consequences of their actions. They were often told: *'the log or the dry wood in the river will never turn into a crocodile', 'Atikpo meno torme zuor lo o',* meaning that however long they stayed in another place and even if they believed that they had become fully European, this was an illusion. When they died, it would be revealed who they had always been. Another

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[150] In the house we called *Zikpitor* 'old man'.

similar *adagana* said: *'no chicken is shy of his or her coop'*: *'koklo x<u>or</u> mekpea u na koklo o'*. The idea behind this was that even the chicken that roamed would eventually have to come home so it was pointless to feel ashamed or to try to distance oneself from one's home.

My friend Saviour told me of a man from Ho who had worked with Kwame Nkrumah through his connections in the community. Having become quite successful, he travelled to Britain to enjoy a very good life and job. He had married and raised a family in Britain but was always trying to avoid going back to Ghana to visit family and friends. Saviour told me that whenever he visited home he always insulted the people if they asked for monetary help or career advice from him. He used to tell them: *'I shit in your mouth! As for me I have plenty European money. What of you? Have you even been there?'* When he grew old and became ill, Britain sent him back to Ghana, where he died. As a result of his misdeeds towards his people at home, his family were fined severely by the traditional authorities. My friend explained to me: *'it is not that yevonya is bad – even we like it – it is like a bonus and an added advantage. But this is why we fine people even more if they abuse their advantage. This man was brought up here – we made him strong and looked after him so that he could end up in Europe but as soon as he made money with his yevonya, he forgot about how he got there. Those are the people tradition fines hard'*. Therefore, travelling to Europe and embracing *yevonya* was not frowned upon at all and was often celebrated. What was frowned upon was when *yevonya* became an end in itself rather than a means to an end; when money made through *yevonya* was consumed selfishly rather that redistributed to honour particular obligations to kin.

Moral Tensions

As we saw in the opening *vignette,* young people perhaps found the ideals of traditional morality more demanding than elders. They often spoke to me of their recognition that tradition was 'the right thing' but also that it was the hardest to follow. My friend Kwasi, who was twenty seven and unemployed told me: *'we know it is the right thing to help the elders who have helped us but these days are not easy and if you make money then you are lucky. When I was having a job, I should have given my old man something small but the temptations…you don't know what tomorrow will bring so you want to have a good time with your friends. It is not like the old days so unless*

you are really neglecting your family, you can get away with a lot. You have to follow your own conscience and sometimes it is not easy o'. Kwasi was from Ho and I often saw him with the Asafo group when the *Agbogbomefia* was in public. We got to know each other well during the final funeral rites of Togbe A<u>fe</u>de As<u>or</u> II and I remember him as the person who never ran out of energy. He went to great lengths trying to keep the group's spirits up, providing us with jokes and Kola nuts as we walked around the town for hours and on a daily basis, trying to find the beast that had killed the chief. Equally, he could often be seen with other young people at the beginning and end of funeral celebrations, erecting and taking down canopies and transporting chairs to the funeral ground. As we shall see in the next chapter, participation in funerals was recognised as one of the main ways through which obligations towards kin were honoured. And, of course, as the event through which people come to know how ancestors were made.

I mentioned all this to Kwasi and told him that to me at least, his involvement in the community could counter some of the elders' complaints about youths' lack of community participation and their disrespect for tradition. He thanked me and said that he would not have time for anyone who spoke badly about tradition. Such people, he told me, '*do not come from any home'*. He went on to say: '*As for me, I am proud to be from Ho and if somebody jokes about Togbe, you will see the way I joke with them! If you look at the things the chiefs and elders do for us, you won't mind the politicians again! But it is not easy always to do the right thing. We know, but it is not easy the way we suffer here, always hussling.* I asked him whether this experience was what the common response to elders' complaints of undisciplined youth, 'I'm aware', referred to. He laughed and said: '*Well, I'm sure some people have just been saying it to annoy the elders but yes…it is like saying we are aware but we don't care… except we do. The elders complain that we don't respect but some of them are not taking the time to teach us. If they don't show us the proper thing, of course we will do what we want. That is my excuse at least'.*

The conversation I had with Kwasi was particularly interesting because it revealed to me that even people who considered themselves to be most attached to and involved in, to borrow Lambek's phrase, the traditional complex, found it difficult to resist the temptation to move out of that same complex, when faced with all the choices that the contemporary 'moral market' offered. That is, it may have been easier for people to identify with tradition and appreciate it as providing an alternative

temporal mode through which to envisage development and progress in economic terms, but more of a challenge to remain committed to that complex's assertion that development was equally a social and moral project, and its claim that for equitable development to be a realistic option, particular reciprocal relations and obligations towards kin would have to be honoured.

Of course, there were also people for whom the traditional complex was rarely considered at all. Praise, a young practicing Pentecostal told me: *'I go to church mainly to meet boys and because all of my friends go. We have more freedom to do what we want there and what can the elders say? We are at church after all. Once I am married and older I will respect out traditions more. When I have a family, there will be problems at some stage and I will turn to the elders for help. As for now, we know our rights and our freedoms. We are free to go to the church and the elders can't force us to carry their loads like in the days of old. I know it is wrong but I am young. Let me enjoy life small'.* While there were many young Pentecostals who rejected absolutely the idea that tradition was valuable, Praise, like many other young people I met, was attending church for pragmatic reasons and had decided to put off, as it were, any attachment to tradition until she had a family and created her own network of kinship relations which, she predicted, would inevitably give rise to disputes and disagreements. However, although taking little interest in tradition in the present, she nevertheless acknowledged its potential future value.

Indeed, many young people not only moved between Pentecostal churches, following the pastor who was known for the best miracles or the boys who might make good husbands, but they moved in and out of different moral communities, often quite strategically and pragmatically to maximise their own chances of a prosperous future. All the while 'aware', they often simply made recourse to the moral system most likely to maximise their gains at any given moment. However, even as young people told me of their moral manoeuvers and revealed their skills in invoking their human right to do almost anything they chose, they often acknowledged that they were doing so simply because they could. As my friend Godfred put it: *'We actually need discipline because we have too much choice now and we don't know what we are doing. Sometimes I understand the elders when they tell us our morals are confused'*[151] This was not such an uncommon sentiment. While it tended to be older people who lamented about

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[151] In Ewe, *etortor,* literally, he/she is like the pineapple, referring to the appearance of the pineapple when it is sliced through.

excessive 'rights and lefts' and a 'freedom run wild', some of the younger generation were also calling for some limits on what was often perceived as an unbounded liberalism. Such calls need be taken seriously because they constitute demands for freedom of a different kind, a freedom which recognises obligation as part of its very definition.

The Burden of Tradition

Being a traditional leader, recognised as the link between the living and the living dead was no easy task. As publicly recognised guardians of ancestral morality, there was always a pressure on chiefs, elders and queen mothers to help others, whether monetarily or with their time. The *Agbogbomefia* was certainly recognised as having honoured the ancestor/decendant relationship through his many development projects. He reciprocated the care he had received from the community as a child and a youth by, for example, building a school, setting up an educational fund and giving young people career advice. However, there were many more traditional leaders who did not have as much money at their disposal and they too had obligations to honour. Some of the queen mothers I interviewed told me of the many women who came to them almost every morning for help with their child's school fees. In order to avoid some of the burden of tradition, some members of royal families or members of families very involved with traditional authority, either 'went Pentecostal' or moved to another town or city. I knew someone who worked in the civil service and quickly applied for a transfer as soon as his uncle died. His uncle was a stool father in a nearby village and he knew that he was a potential incumbent. Korsi too, despite his constant efforts to help people, occasionally became frustrated. Quite aside, from the numerous ceremonial events that chiefs and traditional authority holders attended and oversaw, the everyday work of tradition, for those living in their communities, was not easy and it was arguably as much of a burden as an honour to be a traditional leader. Korsi was 'only' the son of *Zikpitor* and cousin of the *Agbogbomefia* but his involvement in the community arguably involved more than a title could contain. During a phone conversation in July 2011 he told me:

'These people are worrying me. It's not easy – o. You know, when I was in the house, every morning at dawn the old man is calling 'Korsi! F<u>or</u>'. Korsi, va' (Korsi! Get up! Korsi, come). Every morning, some other problem I have to help him resolve

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or some meeting I have to attend. And if I say I have something to do...trouble! Now, even though I have my own place to live, they are still sending people there. The old man is saying I have abandoned him, his friends are telling me that if I don't help him, he will die... Have I not done enough? Am I the only person in this family? Me, I'm supposed to stay here as a poor man, always here to help the community with their problems while all my brothers are living outside or in Accra, enjoying their freedoms. My sister, it is not easy – o. But I will survive. Yes. What was it that we always sung? Will your anchor hold in the storms of life? And as for the birds eh? They can fly over my head but I won't let them make any nest in my head.'

A Refusal to 'chop small'

A few years ago, the people of Ho, backed by the *Agbogbomefia* and fronted by Korsi, demonstrated against the 'paper roads' in Ho, the many roads that on paper had been tarred but in reality had been left untouched and were still full of huge potholes, flooding every time there was a rainstorm. The previous National Patriotic Party government had claimed the work was done and the contracts had all been awarded but investigations had proven that the money was all gone and the roads left un-tarred. This had all been well covered up and its revelation involved a number of people taking huge risks in order to get the proof. As plans for the demonstration (entitled 'Goh must Go') went on, the Municipal Chief Executive behind the scandal, Muwotor Goh, became more and more distressed, to the point where he sent one of his staff to Korsi at his office at the NCCE to threaten him and attempt to bribe him with a significant sum of money. Korsi rejected the bribe and went ahead with the demonstration only to find later that he had been mysteriously demoted. On numerous occasions, the police were sent to arrest him, unsuccessfully. The Bureau for National Investigation were constantly trailing him, and at one point threats were made to his life.[152]

Shocked by his personal sacrifice, I asked him why he did not just take the bribe and he said: '*Me? Take a bribe from them? Never. I will rather die. Let them kill me instead and let me go to the grave with my conscience and the knowledge that I*

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[152] Although I was initially worried about discussing this incident in my thesis, Korsi reassured me that I should, telling me 'comments are free. Facts are sacred. If anyone has a problem they can find all the information at the courts'.

have done what I can for my community. As soon as you take a bribe from these people, how can you face your community again? No, I won't sell my birth right for some dirty foolish money'. Although the demonstration itself had taken place before I arrived in Ghana, it often came up in both conversations and arguments. Sometimes members of Korsi's family told how proud they were of him; unlike politicians, Korsi had principles. He was strong and a good man, I often heard. However, as is often the case with families, in Ghana as much as Scotland, having principles, while celebrated one day could, during an argument the next day, be used as evidence of a person's irresponsibility and even their stupidity. Sometimes when there were arguments in the house, and usually during arguments over money and contributions towards electricity and water, Korsi was insulted by his family as a useless man for not taking the bribe. This was what people would always fall back on when arguing with him about completely different issue: *'You see you are a foolish man. You were offered all that money and you refused it! Refused it for what? Look at you, a grown man still living in his father's house'.*[153]

Despite the fact that almost everyone I spoke to complained about corruption, people did find it hard not to join in if given the rare opportunity and, as they put it, *'a few crumbs dropped down'.* After all, everyone had to eat, children's school fees had to be paid. And, as the above example has shown, those who refused to 'chop small' were, in practice, sometimes described as foolish rather than principled. Clearly then, despite everyone's continued complaints about political corruption and seeming despair about the government's abuse of power, the lived reality made it very difficult to resist the opportunity to make some money if given the rare opportunity. Rather than continuing to fight for the rights of his community to benefit, Korsi should have stopped and taken the bribe, some members of his family appeared to be saying. He had been given the opportunity to stand forth as an individual and 'chop' but he had 'foolishly' chosen to stand forth for the community and now he was going hungry.

As Nyamnjoh has argued, financial failure is often blamed on individual people based on the extent to which they have failed to sacrifice *others* through the sacrifice of history, memory, relations or community (Nyamnjoh 2004: 34). As *Zikpitor*'s son and a trained accountant turned civil servant, Korsi was always the person to whom

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[153] I use this example simply to highlight the real tensions people experience. Korsi's family, while usually standing against corruption, were also highlighting a sense that sometimes principles should not come before the very practical need for money.

everyone turned whenever a community issue or problem arose; he was inevitably pushed forward as the community spokesperson, mediator, letter writer, 'get out of jail' card, to write peoples' business profiles, NGO proposals, end of year accounts, speeches, to resolve disputes, lead 'community' protests and so on. During my stay in Ho I noticed how easy it was for people to bask in 'communal' glory when everything went well. However, sometimes when it did not, those who had acted with community spirit were insulted. Nevertheless, Korsi continued to carry on the work of tradition, the work his ancestors had begun, because perhaps honour and burden in the case of tradition, were not so easy to keep separate.

Afemenunya and Yevonya: The Difference between Relational and Individual Personhood?

Despite the tensions and challenges discussed above, it is tempting to argue that the traditional authorities promoted a form of relational personhood while the state and Pentecostalism promoted individual personhood. The distinction between *afemenya* and *yevonya* could be mapped onto these different models of ideal personhood. However, as I have endeavoured to show throughout this thesis, the time-shape of the living dead prevents such a straightforward analysis. As we saw in previous chapters, the *afeme* in the *afemenya* was the home to many Europeans and almost every ancestor had also been to school and been exposed to *yevonya* and *agbalenunya*. So, even if people did make a distinction between the two systems and suggested that the former was associated with individual personhood and the latter, with a more relational personhood based on the ideal ancestor/descendant relationship, the time-shape of the ancestors as the living dead, already carried *yevonya* and so could not be made to stand in easy opposition to it.

In addition, because the ancestors were understood as the living dead, and were recognised as having lived and experienced historical and social changes, they were well aware of the tensions and, indeed, the practical need to enact individual personhood in various contexts in order to survive. However, they were equally keen to ensure that individual accumulation was kept in check and that the parent/child relationship with its obligation of care was honoured by the redistribution of some individually earned wealth to the people who had invested their time and money on a person's growth as a child. The traditional authorities were by no means 'against'

individual accumulation of wealth and indeed, they often encouraged it; what they did insist upon was that some of this wealth was redistributed to those who, it was argued, had helped to produce it. Those who lived according only to the principles of *yevonya* and failed to uphold their responsibilities to their family and communities were punished by the traditional authorities, either during their life or, upon their death, as we shall see in the next and final chapter.

Conclusions

I have endeavoured to show that as a result of increasing disillusionment with both the state and Pentecostalism as forms of moral leadership, the traditional authorities were often hailed as the 'last hope' for a moral future. As the link between the living and the living dead, traditional authorities were recognised as bearers of a morality which was based on the ideal relationship between ancestors and their descendants rather than the logic of the zero sum game. This was a morality through which obligations of care and reciprocal relations were emphasised as being essential for development and the creation of a more prosperous future. Nevertheless, and despite many peoples' complaints about the state and Pentecostalism, in the context of the contemporary 'moral market', the demands of traditional morality were not always so easy to meet, even for those who identified and aligned themselves with tradition.

That said, I would like to finish this chapter by stressing that even as tensions between accumulation, redistribution, freedom and obligation arose and the ideal relationship between elders and youths was on occasion challenged or simply ignored, it remained as an ideal, and many of my interlocutors both young and old, expressed, in different ways, their desire for stronger moral leadership. In the next chapter, we shall turn to death and funerals, where we will see the processes through which ancestors were made or not made through the traditional authorities' role as the 'police of death'. In life, it was relatively easy to move in and out of the traditional complex, and, as we have seen, the living dead were very understanding of the contemporary challenges that their descendants faced. It was in the context of death, when ancestors and, indeed ancestral morality was made, that the real burden and honour of traditional authority could be witnessed.

Chapter 8: Funerals, the 'Police of Death', and the Making of Ancestors

'the moment at which persons and things are brought into the open is the very moment before they are taken back into a body'[154]

I remember the day news arrived that Steven's wife Abla had died. Steven was a nephew of *Zikpitor* and a cousin and 'brother' of my host family. A soldier stationed in Accra, Steven had been in Liberia on a Peacekeeping mission when his wife was pronounced dead at the military hospital in Accra. She had complained of fibroids in the past and was in hospital on that basis. She seemed to be recovering however and feeling better, she asked her daughter to go home and prepare her some tasty food before bringing it back to her. Upon her daughter's return with the food, Abla was dead. She was not yet fifty.

Hearing the news, we were all shocked and concerned about Steven. As a couple, Steven and Abla had been incredibly close and no-one had expected her death at all. Although he was concerned for his 'brother', the news arrived not long after Korsi had finished dealing with a number of other problems in the community. As the only one of his male cousins who remained in the family house, Korsi was becoming tired. Upon hearing the news of Adzo's death, he shook his head for a long time before lamenting that once again, because his old man was growing too old, all the responsibilities would fall upon him. He then became quite annoyed, complaining that for a large part of her life, the deceased had refused to take part in the affairs of the community. She had often been heard saying that her family consisted only of her husband and her children, all of whom she lived with in Accra. Abla had made it clear that the extended family was of no interest to her and on numerous occasions she had prevented her husband from helping and visiting his extended family and even in some cases, his own brother.

Alex said: *'you see now? All these foolish people who run away to Accra only talking of their nuclear family…what has happened now? The burden of this woman's funeral has now fallen onto us, the extended family who she ignored and insulted all of her life. This is what they have all been doing - the ones that run away to Accra and*

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[154] Stathern, M. 1988 *The Gender of the Gift,* p291

pretend not to know us left at home. But whenever something goes wrong, we are the ones they call'. This was a sentiment I heard being expressed on numerous occasions and by many people who lived in Ho about those relatives who had moved to the cities and overseas without 'remembering' their family left at home until a particular problem befell them that could only be resolved by going home. And certainly, it was during funerals that some of the tensions between those who had gone to live in Accra or 'outside' and those who had remained at home became most evident.

Nonetheless, as Alex put it: '*What can we do? Steven is a brother. These are some of the challenges but in the end, you can run but you can't hide'*. And so we sprung into action; there would be time for meditating over such issues later but for now there were more pressing problems and organisational challenges. For a start, it was agreed that there had to be a new gate for the entrance of the house. Then the whole house would have to be painted before ceilings inside the spare rooms could to be put up. Because visitors would come from Accra to sleep there, it was important that there were ceilings rather than just the bare roof structure. Then we would have to get a new television and hire extra mattresses and chairs for the overnight guests. And the mosquito nets would have to be replaced; in fact the wooden window frames were rotting – we would have to get new ones made.

Quite astounded by this whirlwind of never-ending home improvement plans, I kept asking why all these things were so important all of a sudden. I had been living in the house for over six months by that point and while I had never felt that it was inadequate in any way, I was quite shocked by the plans for the sudden overhaul. I was also feeling sorry for Steven – yes, he was a soldier on a salary but by no means rich and I had given up even trying to calculate all the expenses adding up. So I asked him if some of the plans were not a bit excessive: did we really need a fancy gate with designs of a chiefly stool on it? Was it so necessary? Steven shook his head and smiled at me. '*I understand what you mean*' he said, '*but you have to understand this our system here – soldiers will be coming from Accra and will even be staying in this house. They know we are from the royal family so they will be expecting even more than usual. If there is not even a gate on the chief's house, it is not the best. It will be an embarrassment to the family'*.

I did try to understand but I could not help feeling help feeling that everything was getting out of proportion. But it did not stop there; people began talking about installing a toilet because the public latrines were so filthy. Too right they are filthy, I

thought to myself, slightly cheered by the prospect of a toilet! However, much to my dismay, the toilet never did materialise. The gate did, albeit late and long after the funeral was over. In 2009 and over a year after the funeral when I returned for a visit and stayed in the same house again, the beautiful gate was sitting on its side against the back of house, never having actually been fixed to the entrance.

To return to April 2008 though, the weekend following Abla's death, Abla, his cousin, daughter and other family members who lived in Accra travelled to Ho all dressed in black to start discussions with the family and begin the long and tiring process of officially informing everyone. We went throughout the town, informing all the allied families and even travelled to the deceased's maternal village. I was not only physically exhausted, but completely confused and overwhelmed with information. Many people already knew about the death but it was stressed that informing particular members of the extended family and allied families had to be done officially too otherwise there would be trouble. Needless to say, the whole day was spent visiting and informing grandmother's brother's children, mother's uncle's sisters and so on. Later, we went to the Catholic Church to ask the priest to conduct the funeral because Abla, like many people in Bankoe, had been a Catholic all her life. He agreed but said that there would have to be another meeting to follow up and prepare. Then it was off to the local assembly to pay for a death permit and to register the death. The following day we travelled to the Volta Regional barracks to formerly inform them and to find out how they might assist.

At every given moment, the funeral was being discussed; how and where the posters should be printed and stuck up. What kind of food should be on offer? The soldiers from Accra and other important guests should be given fancy restaurant food rather than the take-away boxes of rice, stew and a piece of meat or fish that constituted the usual refreshment. Some of the women decided that a whole cow should be bought for the guests to eat, comparing the upcoming funeral with a birthday party that Togbe Afede had thrown previously. Although he had asked Korsi to take responsibility of the main organisation and to keep track of the accounts, he always seemed to be handing out money to others – there was no end to the demands made of him. He explained that it was expected – once a family member came home from the city, they should contribute to their family at home in whatever small way they could.

However, whenever Steven returned to Accra for a few days, the fights in the house began. There were arguments about food, canopies, brass bands, and so forth,

with some people saying the funeral had to be big so that we were not shamed while others complained about the expenses Steven was incurring. One day, all the maize arrived and was given to a woman who made a particular starchy staple so that she could sell the finished products back to us at a price lower than the usual selling price. However, one of the women in the house took it to her and we heard that she was still going to charge the normal price for each portion she had made, implying that the woman from our house had entered into a private deal with her. Another huge argument ensued, with insults being thrown everywhere about how some family members were just using the funeral to make money for themselves. Finally able to make himself heard through the shrieks and shouts of the women, one of the men in the house got angry, telling them: '*you think that the funeral is just some big party but you forget that you are not the ones paying*'.

This continued for weeks, and everyday brought more problems. Steven's daughter was busy making arrangements in Accra without checking with him or informing the people in Ho. The ambulance we had ordered to transport the body from Accra to Ho cancelled on us at the last minute. We went to check on our plot at the graveyard, only to find it had been signed over for another body and digging had already commenced. I was struggling to organise the funeral posters with all the lists of chief mourners – about twenty Chiefs and Queen Mothers whose names and corresponding places within their lineages had to be absolutely correct lest we got fined for disrespecting them. And then, of course, the man at the computer centre managed to mess them all up. The night after I had put all the posters up, there was a huge storm, ripping them off all the trees. There was discussion of some spiritual forces at work, trying to 'disturb things'.

As the weekend of the funeral drew nearer, we had to hire trucks to pick up all the plastic chairs and canopies that we had hired and then proceeded to set them all up in the palace courtyard, the usual place for funerals to be held within the area. We were accompanied and helped by the local youth, who were expected to help with manual labour during funerals. We had great fun, racing against the clock to get everything set up but having a good laugh at the same time, no doubt eased by the flow of alcohol that we shared amongst ourselves. On the Friday afternoon, just before everyone was about to gather in the courtyard to inspect the body that had been brought from the mortuary in Accra, we were still busy painting the outside of the house, a job we finished in an unusually quick time. The 'old man', encouraged by our

working spirit, cracked open a couple of bottles of gin for us to share and the whole house was painted from top to bottom before the drink had even run out. However, the joy was not to last because as soon as we rigged up the huge hired sound system and speakers, the electricity ran out after about ten minutes. We were on a pre-paid system, meaning that we would have to find more money to keep topping up the electricity every time it ran out. Thankfully we were able to call a friend from the Electricity Company to 'organise' something for us.

My host family and people from the community were excited by all my work and decided that I had now proven myself not to be a weak *yevo*. I wished I could appreciate my moment of inclusion but I felt like I was about to drop dead myself; I had barely slept for days, survived on one meal each evening and consumed far too much gin and *akpeteshie* while painting the house. And the funeral had not even begun.

Introduction.

In the last chapter, I focussed on the role of traditional authority as a particular form of tempo-moral authority, and one whose values and ideas about obligation and moral personhood were based upon the ideal relationship between ancestors and their descendants. I discussed the way that chiefs and other traditional office holders were often described as 'moral police'. However, I also suggested that people in Ho lived within a diverse postcolonial public space, with numerous, often conflicting values competing for their attention. This thesis has focussed on the views and practices of traditional authorities themselves and those people who identified themselves with and acknowledged a strong attachment to the traditional complex. However, as we saw in the last chapter, even people for whom tradition provided a strong point of identification and whose attachment to the traditional complex was publicly recognised, sometimes found themselves temporarily moving out of it in order to avoid some of the demands of tradition and, in particular, moral obligations. Funerals may therefore provide us with a window through which to consider some of the moral tensions and conflicts people experienced as they navigated their way through life.

I shall argue below that it was upon a person's death and as preparations began to send the deceased to their ancestors, that the chiefs and elders took on their role as the 'police of death' and the caretakers of ancestral morality. A successful and well

attended funeral was also a performance of good personhood and the morality of the ancestor descendant relationship. As the police of death, the traditional authorities took great care in reviewing the social relations of the deceased, bringing them forth and revealing them in order to ensure that proper obligations of care between the deceased, their family and the community had been met. If particular issues or disputes between people had remained unresolved in life, they had to be made known and resolved before the deceased could go to join the community of the living dead. Otherwise, the living dead would not allow the deceased to join them, punishing instead the living chiefs and elders for attempting to disturb them and for failing in their role as caretakers of ancestral morality. In this way, funerals revealed the processes through which ancestors were made or not made and attending a funeral allowed one to witness the generation of morality, and to participate in its performance.

To these ends, the chiefs and elders oversaw and established new identities between the living and the living dead and emphasised the new ways in which they should relate to each other in the future. This was a process through which the living chiefs and elders, through ritual, made explicit the deceased as a particular person with specific interests, relationships, experiences and attachments. The chiefs and elders, through ritual, enacted transformations upon the deceased's relationships and attachments, transforming them into a part of their new social identity as a member of the community of the living dead. As I described in previous chapters, the community of the living dead was one populated by particular historical persons, perduring alongside one another. To join that community was not to become part of 'the past' in any static or uniform sense. As we have seen, ancestors were remembered at different moments often because they had been particular people whose experiences while alive could now be used to assist the living in their daily lives. Therefore, overseeing the deceased's journey from *Kodzogbe* to *Tsiefe* involved ensuring that the experiences, relations and knowledge of the deceased were explicitly recalled so that they could continue as part of their 'living dead' identity. At the same time though, a temporal transformation had to be enacted so that the living could become living dead. The funeral therefore enacted a simultaneous reinforcement and transformation of the deceased's identity, and worked to ensure that the deceased's personal qualities could continue to be recognised despite the transformation of the deceased's temporal identity.

I admitted in my opening *vignette* that I found it hard to comprehend the

money people spent on funerals. As we shall see in the first section of this chapter, I was not alone. The cost of funerals had become a popular topic of debate. However, living in Ho, I soon found myself attending funerals every few weeks and becoming increasingly active in their organisation. The more I saw of the traditional authorities' role as the 'police of death' and the lengthy and painstaking process through which ancestors – and morality – were made or not made, the more I understood why funerals were so celebratory. A funeral was a celebration of good personhood and making the journey to join the living dead was a great accomplishment.

The anthropology of death

Antonius Robben has argued that western anthropologists stand in a particular relation to death that often leads us to believe that our own societies have a poorer death culture when compared with the apparently more profound and sacred death rituals that we witness elsewhere (Robben 2004: 1). And as Johannes Fabian has warned, there is the danger of describing death customs as overly ritualistic so that they can be located in a nostalgic past, 'which is yet another way of relegating reactions to death to 'the others', or at least the other that has survived in us' (Fabian 2004 [1973]: 53). In addition, Fabian criticises the 'anthropology of death' because it has been a study only of behaviour towards death as it affects those who survive. In short, it has been a study of 'how others die'' (Fabian 2004 [1973] 52). Fabian argues that our progress on the topic of death, is dependent on the extent to which we can free the notion of death from behaviour and customs assumed to help people 'cope' with it. Conceptualisations of death, he argues, must be considered as processes and productive constructions of reality rather than 'disembodied schemes of logic or social control' (Fabian 2004 [1973] 54).

Although not taking up Fabian's challenge directly, more recent studies of death and funerals in Ghana and West Africa have nonetheless moved away from earlier analyses of death (Hertz, Malinowski, Bloch and Parry 1982), which focused on the fact of death itself and how rituals were used to overcome the danger of death and assert the regeneration of life.[155] The main focus of this more recent literature has been the commercialisation of funerals; the ways in which funerals have been used as

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[155] I have discussed what I understand as the problems with Bloch's work in relation to my own research in chapter six.

opportunities for individuals to display their wealth and status and, on the flip side, the huge debts that less well off people are saddled with by trying to keep up with the trend (van der Geest 2000, de Witte 2003, Smith 2004). As Marleen de Witte has argued, in Ghana, money and death are interwoven in the context of the funeral. No expenses are spared during funerals and more than any other life event, a funeral should be grand, contrasting sharply with the daily struggles for life's essentials (de Witte 2003: 532). De Wite argues that while one might expect the importance of a traditional ritual centred on beliefs about death and ancestorship to reduce as a result of globalisation and the market economy, the opposite has happened in Ghana. Technological innovations such as the mass media, and other electronic apparatus, have rather enlarged possibilities and given the funeral new dimensions to the extent that death is a lucrative business to be working in. Nonetheless, the commercialisation of funerals has incited a hot public debate about the disproportionate cost of current funeral practices (de Witte 2003: 532). After a death, the family house, the symbol of family property, is freshly painted and repaired, equipped with electricity, new curtains and other decorations suggesting often that it is the family's status which is at stake rather than the status of the deceased (de Witte 2003: 535). And ironically, a freshly painted house with new curtains is usually a good indication that a death has occured in the family (de Witte 2003: 545).

For de Witte, status is the key to analysing funerals; a brief look at the daily newspapers shows whole pages of funeral announcements, listing the achievements of the deceased, and a list of chief mourners who, if one is well connected, will include influential people such as chiefs, pastors, and other officials. Their presence as chief mourners can enhance the social status of the deceased and their family. Ultimately, advertising death is advertising self and family; bible quotations, lists of family members' jobs and places of work all attest to success and membership within social networks (de Witte 2003: 543). And of course for those who can afford it, announcements can be made on the radio and even on television. De Witte argues then that for the wealthy urbanites, burial ceremonies are opportunities to assure continued identity with one's place of origin, and chances to solidify political bases and 'bask in the recognition of being successful' while for the poor, 'burial ceremonies are chances to enjoy a moment of conspicuous redistribution of resources'(de Witte 2003: 572).

Other studies of death and funerals focus specifically on the rural – urban relations created and sustained through funerals and the desires and expectations of

migrants to be buried at home (Jordan-Smith 2004, Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000). Jordan-Smith argues that funerals often reflect the contradictions and inequalities that exist between those who live at home and those who live away; sometimes helping to resolve them but also serving to highlight and intensify them (Jordan-Smith 2004: 571). People, and especially those who have 'made it' in the city or abroad are both rewarded and resented for their success; they are expected to show off their wealth but at the same time often begrudged for their achievements. Peter Geschiere makes a similar argument and stresses that in Cameroon too, being buried at 'home' has become more, rather than less important. In addition, attending funerals at 'home' is necessary for urbanites to prove their belonging and solidify their political bases there. Most importantly though, a funeral at 'home' reaffirms social ties. If the deceased had been an important figure, that individual's disappearance risked creating a rupture in the network of relations. Funeral ceremonies are used then to ease this precarious moment by affirming the position of those who remain vis-a-vis the dead and one another (Geschiere 2005: 47).

Pricing Death in Ho

According to some of this literature then, funerals are not really about death at all: van der Geest argues, 'death is only an epiphenomenon, an 'excuse', as it were, to celebrate a funeral' (van der Geest 2000: 107). Moreover, he suggests that because the funeral is essentially a social event, it is inherently more social than religious (van der Geest 2000: 107). However, I argue against the notion that funerals are more social than religious or vice versa and suggest that the maintainance of a separation between social and religious 'realms' of action in the context of funerals can be challenged by my own experience of funerals in Ho. Nonetheless, in line with the studies discussed above, the close relationship between money, status and death was also ever present in Ho, and just as Peter Geschiere observed in Cameroon, the funeral often constituted an ideal moment for those at home to get even with their 'brothers' from the city (Geschiere 2005: 54).

Many people I spoke with insisted that it was the responsibility of relatives who had 'made it' in the city or in Europe and America, to 'remember' the family that had brought them up by contributing money towards funerals in their family. On numerous occasions, I heard of large sums of money being donated by relatives

abroad, sums that were much larger than any amount I heard of being sent to individual relatives while they were alive. Such monies were used firstly to enable a grand funeral with a brass band, luxurious coffin, colour printed brochures, advertisements and expensive food and drink, all of which would demonstrate the status of the family. Secondly however, money from abroad or from relatives in the city was used to facilitate the many 'home improvements' a funeral demanded. Some of my friends in Ho showed me houses that had been built entirely from scratch for funerals because the existing family house had been deemed insufficient and an embarrassment to the family. It is important also to note that redecorated houses and other material developments may only have been built because of the funeral but they continued to exist long after the funeral and provided the living with an improved standard of life – a larger house, access to a private toilet, ceiling fans and so on. In this sense then, we might talk of 'development by death' because many of the material transformations that were recognised by local people as indicative of development, were facilitated by death. [156]

Nonetheless, the money spent on funerals in general was always a point of discussion among people. Almost all adults and elders I spoke with complained about the expense, the 'excessive' merrymaking that took place and the way that young people were abusing the all night wakes and seeing them as opportunities to have sex under the cover of darkness. Ever ready to share his opinion, Nufiala told me: '*Formerly, funerals were serious occasions but now it is all just merrymaking and for the young ones to show off their sexy fashions and dancing. People just want to show off how much money they have. They buy food the deceased could never have afforded to taste all his life*'. However, he followed his statement up by saying: '*Still, it is our tradition to focus more on death than life and more on the departure than the arrival*'. Another middle aged woman expressed similar sentiments: '*We Ewes spend all our money on funerals. When your mother is ill no one will give you any money for medicine or hospital bills but when she dies people will make big contributions to show they have money and they know it will be announced to everyone if they make a big donation. As soon as someone in your family dies you might have to take out a big loan and still be paying it off years after the death*'.

One of the reasons why people were so critical of perceived funeral excesses

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[156] I thank Dr Stan Frankland for pointing this out.

while at the same time continuing to perpetuate them was precisely because they recognised, contra van der Geest, that death was not only an 'excuse' to organise a funeral. People rather stressed to me that death called forth an extension of the reciprocal care that adult children had ideally already been giving their elderly parents. This took the form of providing them with a fitting funeral and looking after their corpse. The issue of care and looking after the dead is central and perhaps one that we are not so familiar with. When I asked my 'aunt' Adzovi why people spent so much money on funerals she explained to me that in my country, children had enough money to look after their parents in life and sometimes the parents even have enough money to look after themselves. She went on: '*but here, the way we suffer, always giving any small thing we have to the children for their education. Even now, it is only my firstborn that is having her own job. So here, maybe the children don't have the money to look after their parents in life so when they die, they have to give them a good funeral to....I don't know...to compensate them*'. So I asked her who the funeral was for and she said: '*well the dead spirit will see and be happy but at least all the people who come to the funeral will also see and be happy about what you have done for your father or your mother. They will see that your father or mother was good and that they looked after you in life – that is why you are now looking after them when they die. If you do not give them a good funeral it is a shame on the whole family so you have to*'.

This short conversation that I had with Adzo while we were sitting in the house, was incredibly informative, revealing both the importance of reciprocal relations of care between parents and children in life and in death and the need for these relations to be revealed and made public during funerals. And as we saw in chapter three, relatives who failed to provide a fitting funeral or who failed to 'look after' the deceased could easily be punished. Adzovi's comments further emphasised de Witte's argument for the Akan that reciprocity is the basic principle governing the organisation of funerals within the family. Children, she argues, organised a fitting funeral for their dead parent in recognition of the care they received from him or her during his or her lifetime (de Witte 2003:533) And as van der Geest notes, again in relation to the Akan but certainly applicable to my own fieldwork experience, the funeral is commonly regarded as the ultimate care that the family can provide for its members (van der Geest 2000: 111).

Seen against this background, the money spent on providing a 'fitting' funeral may not seem so excessive and the term 'fitting' might rather be seen as relational.

What Adzovi's comments pointed to was that while ideally, children should reciprocate their parents' care during life by giving them money and looking after them as well as giving their parents a fitting funeral, the realities of being a young adult in 2009 made this difficult. As she told me, even young people who had completed high school struggled to find employment. That said, children should not forget all the sacrifices their parents had made in order to give them an education. If these relations of care could not be reciprocated in life, then at least in death the deceased could be shown to have been a good parent who had done the best for their children.   When people said a shame would befall their family if they did not provide good funerals, it was tempting to interpret this as superficial commercialism without boundaries and a simple case of 'keeping up with the Kwames'. However, in many cases, the shame would be failing to recognise and commemorate the hard work and money that parents had put into trying to better the lives of their children in the face of increasing economic hardships. Certainly when I watched Adzovi, who sold cassava outside the house and her husband, a night watchman at the local museum, take out loan after loan to ensure that all their children could finish high school or start an apprenticeship, her explanation began to make more sense. As we discussed in the last chapter, it was the reciprocal relationship between ancestors and descendants, elders and youth, parents and children, that was recognised as constituting good personhood and good social relations and it was this same relationship that was celebrated and performed during funerals.

Nevertheless, it had become increasingly obvious to the chiefs and elders of Ho-Bankoe, that many people wanted to honour their obligations but had very little money. As a result they were taking out loans that they were often unable to repay. People often expressed their worry that if they did not provide a funeral which was as extravagant as their richer neighbours, they would be insulted. Realising that funeral expenditure had gone beyond providing a 'fitting' funeral and that some people were even putting money intended for their childrens' school fees towards funerals, the chiefs and elders decided to allow funerals only every second weekend rather than every week. This was quite a significant change in the funeral calendar. It might be quite difficult for the reader to understand the intensity of the funeral calendar in Ho and, indeed, throughout Ghana. It was possible for one to attend and be involved in the organisation of funerals every weekend, both in Ho and other towns and villages where one's family was recognised by the family of the deceased as an 'allied family'

through marriage. The chiefs and elders of Bankoe therefore suggested that if there were two or three funerals in the area, the deceaseds' families should combine forces to reduce their expenditure. Each body would be laid in state in its own family home and the individual deceased families would pay for their own burial costs and so on but the canopies and chairs and food required to refresh and host the chiefs, elders and general public before and after the burial in the palace forecourt should be shared among all the deceaseds' families so that each guest was served only once, rather than by each family.

This system was set in place in 2008, despite the complaints of many people who had enjoyed the former system because it had allowed them up to four different 'take away' boxes of food and four bottles of beer or Guinness! Indeed, I heard numerous stories of such people who came to funerals on Saturdays and came away with enough food to feed their families for days; as soon as they had been served their portion, they quickly moved under another canopy where someone else was serving and so on, before leaving the area to move to the location of the next funeral. While the suggestion of the chiefs and elders could have reduced this behaviour and the food costs, I heard that often some of the more well off families did not agree with the concept of sharing the food and drink costs; my friends told me that people who had money often wanted to show their financial status and would not like their poorer neighbours to bask in their glory.

In addition to reducing the costs for people hosting funerals, the decision to only allow funerals to be held every two weeks was also because many indigenes of Ho, now living in Accra or other places throughout Ghana, had complained that the demand to return home for funerals every weekend was becoming too much of a burden. The complaint was that it was simply not possible to be expected to ask for time off from work so frequently and that the cost of travel, food and donations – not to mention all the other monetary demands from family members at home – meant that almost all of one's salary was spent attending funerals. I was told that a further attempt was currently underway to reduce funeral expenses. The chiefs and elders had begun to realise that funerals were becoming fashion shows, for the women especially. The relatively well-off women were often buying a new cloth for each funeral, having it sewn into increasingly flamboyant designs, leaving those who had only one funeral cloth feeling ashamed. Because of the potential shame, the less well off women ended up being forced to buy new cloths at the expense of more pressing issues such as

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paying their childrens' school fees and ensuring that they were fed.

It was therefore not the social significance of funerals that was at issue but rather the unnecessary expenditure that mourners were incurring. For example it had become the norm for every funeral to have its associated cloth so that mourners could buy and wear it in order to show their association with and support of the deceased family. Before the funeral, the family selected a cloth of their choice and bought it in bulk so that people could buy it directly from them. This was in addition to the t-shirts that were often sold, with photographs of the deceased imprinted on them. The chiefs and elders discussed the issue of cloth at a number of meetings and it was their intention to introduce some kind of uniform policy that would gradually reduce what they saw as a trend that was benefiting the few and impoverishing the majority. They proposed that three cloths were made available for the people to buy; one black to be worn for the 'normal' funerals, one red one to be worn at the funerals of chiefs and important elders and one white one to be used at funerals of very old people whose death was even more of a celebration of their long life and timely transition to the ancestral world.

Extended Obligations

Daniel Jordan Smith has reflected on his fieldwork experience in Nigeria, noting: 'Attending burials was something I did partly as a consequence of being in social relationships with people. Presence at the funeral of a friend's parent or close relative is the most obligatory aspect of being part of someone's social network' (Jordan-Smith 2004: 570). As I outlined in my opening *vignette,* this was certainly an experience I shared during my time in Ho but it was one which at, first I found quite challenging. Indeed, when I began fieldwork, I found it quite odd and even disturbing to visit the funerals of people I did not know. However, it was continually stressed to me that once I was living with a family, I was a part of them and so would be expected to attend funerals with them. And my initial discomfort could probably be put down to the fact that I had hardly attended any funerals myself while living at home. More to the point though, and having grown up in the Presbyterian tradition, the few funerals I had attended in Scotland, although often bringing family members together, were characterised more by private grief, at least until people had consumed a few drinks. So I was rather taken aback by the funeral culture in Ghana and initially I found it

quite stressful to visit up to three bodies lying in state on a single Friday evening. I felt as though I must have been intruding into peoples' personal grief.

Even more disquieting was being told I should be taking photos. My feeling of unease could probably also be put down to the kind of anthropological training I had undergone. With its current focus and emphasis on 'ethics', I was more conscious than usual about respecting the privacy of my 'informants' and being sensitive towards them. The problem I faced however, was that early on in my fieldwork, the bodies I was visiting and the bereaved families I was meeting could hardly be counted as informants; I had never even met most of them. And, after a period of time, during which my friends laughed at my reservations and joked with each other that I must have been scared of seeing dead bodies, I realised that my being sensitive to my 'informants' demanded that I force myself to act in ways that I intuitively felt were insensitive. That was the only way that I would not offend the deceased's family by refusing to visit and pay respect to their dead relative. However, being involved in the organisation of Abla's funeral made me feel much more comfortable during subsequent funerals and I had the sense that I was acknowledged within the community because I had shown my commitment by helping both with the planning and the physical labour during a funeral.

Still, it was when I returned in 2009 to hear of the death of an old lady who ran a 'chop bar' serving the best groundnut soup in town that I experienced for the first time the death of an 'informant' as someone who I knew personally and had become close to. I used to eat at her bar frequently and had interviewed her a few times because she had once been a *sohefia,* a youth leader for women. She had told me lots of stories about the good old days and lamented on the dressing of young women today. Before I left Ghana in December 2008 she had been healthy, insisting on still cooking and serving her food despite having many helpers. She always took great pride in her food and I often received an extra piece of meat for free. Unlike other chop bar owners who always seemed in a hurry, Mama took the time to grind extra fresh ginger that could be added to the soup, along with separately cooked slices of okra. She was always keen to tell me that she knew that white people did not like the bony meats and she took great care in finding me a meaty piece of chicken or goat. When I went for my 'last lunch' the day before I left for Scotland, she had a present for me; a necklace and bracelet made from beautiful beads. She said that it would be something that would remind me of her while I was at home. I promised her that it

would not be long before I saw her.

As soon as I returned in 2009, I heard she was very ill so I went with Alex to visit her one day but her family said she was asleep and asked us to come back later. However she was later sent to the hospital and died there. The funeral was planned for the end of August so I chose to change my return flight to the beginning of September in order to attend her funeral. Unfortunately a bout of malaria intervened and I was not able to be nearly as involved in the funeral as I had hoped. In the end, feeling slightly better after two strong injections on Friday afternoon, I managed to go to visit her body lying in state at around 3am, wearing the beads that she had given to me. For the first time, I felt quite comfortable going in and looking at a corpse because I had known her and all those around knew that. Although the problem of knowing the deceased before joining in the funeral had always been my own one, I enjoyed being able to speak to her family about her and joke about there no longer being any good soup in town. And thinking about it later, I was reminded of Johannes Fabian's comment that 'in order to be knowingly in each other's presence we must somehow share each other's past' (Fabian 2006: 145).

A widely attended funeral that attracted many donations was only possible if the deceased had been recognised to have been a good person, and funerals that were attended by many people generally suggested that the deceased had many social ties and was appreciated within their community.[157] Indeed, people often decided to attend the funeral of a person or not by considering whether they too had supported others during funerals. It was going to other peoples' funerals and offering one's services in their organisation that constituted one of the main forms of community involvement, something that every person was also judged on upon their own death. More than any other occasion, funerals were occasions when I saw the whole community coming together to share in the responsibility and organisation, strengthening the sense of communality and mutual dependence. Involvement in and contributions to the funerary

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[157] This is one of the reasons why children do not have funerals but only burials; there are no social relations to unmake. However, a further reason I was given was that the deaths of children are not seen as natural and so there should be no fuss made. Their death indicates that they were not ready to enter the living world and had been called back to the spiritual world to complete some tasks. Once they were ready, their reincarnating soul would be born into the living world once more. People also told me that if there was a big funeral, the child's spirit would enjoy it too much and every time they reincarnated they would just want to die again in order to enjoy another funeral. In addition, the living siblings might try to die for the same reasons, after enjoying the food and music at their brother/sister's funeral!

process were recognised as ways of showing one's involvement in and respect for tradition and its values. I was struck by this very quickly when I was trying to understand how it was possible that some people, and especially elders who because of their age, had entered into more kinship and social networks than young people, spent each and every weekend going to funerals. Sometimes they had to travel to other cities and villages and they were often faced with a dilemma concerning which funeral it was most important to attend. Family members often had to remind each other about previous funerals within their own extended family, recounting who had attended them and in order to decide whose care they should also reciprocate through their attendance. More so, if people had actually offered their services and help during the funeral preparations in your family, it was imperative that you also offered yours to them. So in addition to the more simple recognition of family ties and obvious community obligations, wider reciprocal relationships also had to be recalled. This involved a process of looking to the past but also projecting into the future: what kind of relations and connections might you need to make with a particular family?

In all the funerals that I witnessed, the immediate family of the deceased were expected to take responsibility for all the expenses but the extended family and all allied families also contributed whether in money, cooking, or labour. The women and the youth of the community were also expected to help with cooking and erecting canopies and plastic chairs respectively. These were roles that people took up without question and, for example, the youth always knew the time to erect the canopies and when to take them down. The labour was never paid but the family of the deceased rather provided the youth with some drinks, palm wine and left over foodstuffs on the Monday following the funeral when the youth were dismantling the funeral ground. I was told that in the past, and perhaps up until the 1970s and 80s, all allied families came to the funeral with firewood and food (a process called *dzo kpe kpe)* and they cooked together within their units. Once all the food was ready, each of the families fed one of the others.

During this process, everyone introduced themselves and drew out the relationships between themselves and the deceased and their family. As time went on, the people assembled started to use particular proverbs and stories recalling specific events to act as a sort of 'kinship password' used to emphasise that the kinship ties they were invoking were real. While this still took place during the period I conducted fieldwork, it tended not to involve such a large and extended group of kinspeople as it

did previously. However, people told me that the main funeral organisation and responsibilities of people had not changed as such and it was still the case that if a woman died it was the responsibility of her husband to organise and fund the funeral because she had married into her husband's family. This was what happened in the case of Abla's funeral, described at the beginning of the chapter. If on the other hand a man died, it was not the direct responsibility of his wife but rather the responsibility of his family; his family head would be in charge of the funeral but of course all members of the immediate and extended family who could contribute to it were expected to do so. And if the surviving wife happened to have a lot of money, she could contribute but only by allowing her children to front for the money.

The Funeral Process

Before I discuss some aspects of funerals in more detail I will outline the main stages briefly. Funerals always took place over the weekend, starting with the transportation of the body from the mortuary on Friday (also known as the mortuary market) in a vehicle painted as an ambulance. The ambulance transported the body to the public gathering where it was inspected and affirmed as the correct body. It was then taken to the family house where it was laid in state throughout the night. Members of the family remained in the room throughout the vigil while people came in to pay their last respects. Until the following morning, loud music was blasted through the streets and young people gathered and danced throughout the night. I was told that in the past, dirges were sung, along with drumming. These days however, pop music 'kept the fox from taking the body'.

On Saturday at dawn, the chiefs and elders of the town, along with the mourners, gathered for a meeting, a process I will discuss separately below. After that, a church service usually took place, before the body was taken to the graveyard to be buried. The actual burials took place at the cemetery with the traditional undertakers (*torvitorwo*) there in charge, supported by the relatives of the deceased. After the church and burial, everyone re-convened in the courtyard, this time with all those who had come from the cemetery on one side with the *torvitorwo*, and those who had not gone to the cemetry, including the chiefs and elders, on the other. The *torvitorwo* usually reported back to say that the burial had gone well. One keg of palm wine and two bottles of gin were then brought as gifts from the maternal and paternal families of

the deceased, in appreciation of all those who went to the cemetery. Food was then served, usually consisting of pre-prepared take - away boxes containing rice, a piece of meat and some stew or in some cases a buffet. The deceased's family usually had to throw out one or two people who were caught returning to the buffet table at least four times, resulting in accusations and insults being thrown between the accused and the family of the deceased. The chiefs and elders were always fed first in a separate room rather than outside under the canopies and they were often provided with superior food. In addition, other guests, sometimes former work colleagues of the deceased or recognised 'big men' from Accra were served separately.

After the food had been eaten or put aside ready to be taken home, a church choir might be sung before the hired sound system swung into action, blasting out a mixture of pop music and older Ewe and Akan songs, with everyone getting up to dance, young and old. Throughout this period, guests made further contributions to the family, both into the bowls placed around the courtyard and also to some of the family members sitting at tables. On Sundays, most people attended church and the deceased's family spent the day greeting and thanking those who had come to the funeral. The following Monday was the day when all the hired chairs and canopies were usually due for return and by dawn, the young people gathered to dismantle them and help to clear up the funeral ground, usually with the assistance of some palm wine and foodstuffs donated by the deceased's family.

From the point of death to the end of the funeral, it was the *torvitorwo*, who are appointed by the chiefs and elders, who performed the funeral rites (they also perform other rites associated with rites of passage). During the burial, even if there was a commercial 'undertaker', they worked hand in hand with the *torvitorwo* who were still responsible for putting the body in the coffin and closing the coffin. The commercial undertaker was only paid to dress the body and set up the room in which the body was laid in state. *Torvitorwo* literally means children 'born of the same father' but in Ho this was not taken literally and instead, a male and female from each of the four clans of Bankoe were chosen by the chiefs and elders to act as *torvitorwo*. As soon as a death occurred, they came and gave the deceased water for their journey before offering a libation, bathing the deceased and then making sure that the corpse was taken to the mortuary. People explained to me that the dead or the spirit of the dead may not be sure of its family members during the limbo period between the physical and spiritual realms but that it would at least recognise the *torvitorwo* and listen to

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their instructions for their successful journey to *Tsiefe*. As I was told, while the deceased was alive, he or she always witnessed the *torvitorwo* as being responsible for rites concerning life and death. And once the deceased was conversant with the roles of the *torvitorwo* while they were alive, so too would they recognise them in their death. Once again then, this further emphasises my earlier arguments concerning the ontological ground of ancestors as 'living dead', as now dead kinspeople who lived during a particular time and in a particular place and who continued to remember their lives and their relations with others.

The Police of Death

In the recent literature on death and funerals on the African mainland there is very little discussion of the role played by chiefs and elders. And although they have not been discussed in detail thus far, my impression from Ho and other Ewe areas was that funerals constituted one of the main arenas in which the chiefs and elders revealed their authority as both temporal and moral. So far, my argument has been that the funeral is an event that reveals social ties and the funeral ground is where the status and connections of the deceased and their family to significant persons at home and abroad can be brought forth and commemorated. I have also discussed how death might be read as a 'home coming', with the deceased travelling to the 'village' (*eyi afe)* - the ancestral village from whence they came and to which they return - even if this description was found on colourfully printed posters and displayed on television advertisements. Because death was conceived of as 'going to the village' in a double sense; literally being buried at home and going back to the ancestral village, the chiefs and elders were recognised as the only people who could oversee that journey.

In addition to their role as the link between the physical and spiritual world, people stressed to me that the traditional authorities, more than anyone, embodied 'home' or the 'village' in the physical sense, providing a sense of local and indigenous identity. Precisely because it was an ancestor of the current chief that was recognised to have originally founded the town of Ho, the physical and spiritual explanations of the 'village' or 'home' actually converged in the image of the chief. I want to emphasise at the start of this section that it was never the choice of the deceased's family to ask for the involvement of the chiefs and elders; once the deceased was an indigene of Ho, even if they had barely lived in the town or had 'gone Pentecostal', a

funeral could not take place without the involvement of the chiefs and elders. They had the authority to prevent families from celebrating a big funeral, or indeed any funeral at all, which, as we have seen already, could be the biggest shame to befall upon a family.

It was for this reason that the chiefs and elders were often referred to as 'the police of death' *(eku policie)*. As gatekeepers of a sort, it was their responsibility to ensure that the journey from the physical to the spiritual world was smooth and that the deceased would not return to haunt the living because of some unresolved dispute. In addition, it was essential that the ancestors did not refuse entry to the deceased on the basis of their immoral behaviour or their failure to maintain good social relations in life. If such 'bad' behaviour went on unpunished by the chiefs and elders, the ancestors would come to punish the chiefs and elders for failing to maintain ancestral principles of morality in the physical world. Therefore, great care and attention was given to every aspect of the deceased's life to ensure that their transition to the spiritual world would not result in even worse repercussions for the living. The 'police of death' had to ensure that the deceased had lived a life in accordance with the principles of *afemenunya*. The kinds of issues that were deemed important and deserving of investigation at each stage of the meeting process involved both the behaviour of the deceased during their life and also the behaviour of the deceased's family and community towards them during life and in death. I was told that in as much as every person should contribute towards and respect their community, they should equally have been cared for, treated with respect and not neglected in their old age. As such, the meeting was described to me as working to ensure that good reciprocal relations had been present between the deceased and their family and community.

As soon as a person from Ho died, the family sat down and discussed the death itself and any issues surrounding it. While news of someone's death usually reached people relatively quickly, the official process of informing others always had to be implemented *(ekutsitsi)*. Once the family had finished discussing issues amongst themselves, the family head informed their clan elders who then also met and discussed the life and the death of the deceased. On the Wednesday before any funeral, the clan elders met with the other three clans of the division (eg Bankoe) where they were officially informed of the death in their division. This meeting was called the <u>xor</u>medalidodo meaning 'the whispering in the room' and only took place once the deceased clan was confident that they were prepared to invite the investigations of the

other clans of the division. The aim of the meeting was to allow the other three clans of Bankoe to go through further investigations and ensure that there was absolutely no more hidden information that could result in them being fined by the other four divisions that would come to the town meeting on the Saturday of the funeral.

From the moment of a death then, investigations were set into motion, first by the family elders, then the clan elders, then the divisional elders and lastly by the elders of the whole town, which was comprised of elders from each of the divisons. None of these groups wanted to be held responsible for a misdeed on the part of the deceased or, on the other hand, the deceased having been maltreated, so each group had to try to ensure that those before them had resolved any outstanding problems. As such, if a problem was not resolved by the head of family then the clan imposed a fine on him. Likewise, if the clan had failed to resolve the issue, then the divisional elders could impose a fine on the clan elders because they knew that if it got to the town level, they, as the divisional elders would be fined for being irresponsible 'parents'. The town chiefs and elders would never hesitate to fine the elders below them because if they failed to rectify the problem they would be punished by the ancestors for failing to maintain moral relationships among their 'children'. What was most striking about this process was the salience of the ancestor – descendant or parent – child relationship and the way that it guided action through each of the stages, with different parties taking the roles of the parent of the deceased 'child' depending on the context.

The *xormedalidodo,* which was always held on the Wednesday prior to any funeral, was hosted by the deceased's clan and was intended to inform officially the other clans of the death of their 'child' and to invite them to interview the elders of the deceased's clan to ensure that they were ready for the funeral. The length of the meetings varied and I recall some that took more than three hours and others that took less than one, reflecting the number of unresolved issues surrounding the deceased person and their family. People often joked after long meetings that while the deceased had been committed to the community in some respects, investigations had revealed that they had also been particularly troublesome in some respects. It was sometimes the case that a particular unresolved issue was known to the elders of the division but had not been brought to the knowledge of the clan by the family at their earlier meeting, thus revealing a disruption or 'jumping' in the line of responsibility that should have gone from family-clan-division-town. In such cases, the clan elders were fined for their negligence and they then fined the head of family for causing such an

embarrassing situation.

As with all public gatherings comprised of the chiefs, elders and people, there was a strict seating arrangement during the *xormedalidodo* which revealed the relationships between everyone present vis-à-vis the deceased. At the beginning of the meeting, the deceased's clan sat on one side with members of the other three clans sitting opposite them, each group with an acting linguist and a spokesperson who was usually the clan head or another appointed representative. Again, even though everyone present was aware of the reason for meeting, the mission statement was given by the spokesperson of the deceased's clan to the other clans assembled, explaining why they had been invited to the meeting. The other clans, through their spokesperson and via the linguist, then began to ask the deceased's clan a number of questions. Questions were asked to ensure that proper arrangements were in place for the funeral; whether burial permits had been acquired, whether the family had sufficient refreshment for their guests, whether the deceased was a paid up member of the division's Development Fund and so on.

Previously, the fund was a funeral fund so that everyone could be helped out by others when they had to host a funeral. It was recognised that many years ago, people contributed to the funerals of their 'brothers' by giving whatever they had; some people would give firewood, others meat, others cooking ingredients and so on. The funeral fund was therefore introduced in a bid to maintain such a system of reciprocity, despite the monetisation of funerals. However, over time the chiefs and elders decided that there was too much focus on funerals to the detriment of the development of the town so the funeral fund was broadened out to a general development fund, of which a small part was still given to those planning a funeral. Paying one's annual fees into the fund was recognised as the responsibility of every member of the town (each division organised its own fund), and I even registered myself and paid the dues. If the deceased or even anyone in their family had failed to pay their dues, they were fined and had to repay all that they owed before the funeral planning could continue.

In addition to inquiring about the development fund, those at the meeting also inquired as to whether a church service had been organised. The church was referred to as a 'club' and the deceased's clan was asked which club the deceased belonged to: *'Ha kame torwoenye ameyinugbea?* There were often problems here because churches complained that members had not paid their dues yet when they died, but the

church was still expected to provide a big service. Sometimes churches agreed that if the lifetime fees were repaid they would provide a service but the orthodox churches had become quite strict on this issue. Nonetheless, sometimes when someone died who had always refused to go to church, their family felt ashamed and hired one of the many independent Pentecostal pastors to provide a funeral service and to give a prayer at the burial site, something which most pastors did not object to, despite being aware that the deceased never went to church and that while they were alive, they would have been described as *abosamtor*, (one of Satan's people). [158]

The clan elders were also concerned to confirm the deceased's kinship ties. They asked the deceased's clan to name the deceased's family so that they could be made aware of who had been responsible for the deceased's care during their life and in death and also to confirm the deceased's position within a network of kin. They asked of the *vitor*, who was the head of the paternal family of the deceased and whose relationship to the deceased was usually well known, then the *vinor*, the head of the deceased's maternal family, whose identity was also usually well known and finally, *Mamagborme*, the head of the deceased's maternal grandmother's paternal family. This final question was very important and the identity of the person was not always common knowledge because of the generational distance involved and the fact that descent was officially reckoned through the patrilineal line. [159] I was told that if the family of the deceased could not name their *Mamagborme* or the person they named turned out to be incorrect, all the kinship connections that they had already called became questionable and further investigations had to be made in order to ensure that everyone played their proper role during the funeral and that everyone who should be accountable for their relationships with the deceased, was.

The most important part of the meeting then commenced; chiefs and elders from the other three clans left the deceased's clan seated while they went to speak to 'the old lady' (*abliwa)* in the corner. There was no real old lady there and it was really just a closed gathering of the three clans. However, people told me that they described

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[158] However, such pastors tended not to have big churches or brass bands so the ideal situation was to actually attend church during one's lifetime - that was the only way that a large and noisy display of church support could be guaranteed at one's funeral. Indeed, the connection between church going and funerals was a strong one and arguably having a big church service with the church band marching through the streets was often one of the main attractions of becoming a church member.

[159] It was always asked because it could provide confirmation of the *vinor*, in the sense that for the deceased's maternal grandfather (part of the family headed by the *vinor*) to have married the maternal grandmother, the man would have had to go, along with his *vitor* and *vinor* with drinks to ask the woman's father, and by extension the head of her paternal family (her *vit4)*

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it as 'visiting the old lady' because old women were respected as having considerable knowledge – both through gossip and age – of the people within the community and could, therefore, whisper to the assembled clans if there were any remaining unresolved issues. Once the other three clans of Bankoe felt that all the issues had been well discussed with 'the old lady' and there had been no stone left unturned, they left her and returned to join the deceased's clan. If, after consulting 'the old lady', it emerged that there was a reason why the deceased's clan should be fined because they had withheld important information that could have got the divisional elders into trouble later, the fine had to be paid immediately or by the next day. If the fine was small – such as four bottles of Castle Bridge gin – it would be demanded immediately but if it was a fine for a very serious issue and the elders demanded in addition an animal and palm wine, they gave the deceased clan until the following day to purchase the items.

A failure to provide the items usually resulted in the suspension of the funeral and a refusal to convey the message of the funeral to the rest of the town, basically rendering the funeral null and void and preventing it from taking place. Because the message was usually conveyed on the Wednesday night there was the need for quick payment because the elders would delay the message until the fine was paid. Sometimes if a part of the fine was paid, they would send the message but demand that the rest be paid by Friday, before the body was brought from the mortuary. If the fine was still not paid by then, the funeral was sanctioned.If the funeral had been sanctioned for whatever reason, but the deceased's family or clan insisted on going ahead, then the final *kudanudodo* or 'death planning' meeting that usually took place at dawn on the Saturday, and involved the chiefs and elders of the whole town, would simply not commence, once again rendering the funeral null and void. If, during *xormedalidodo* held the preceding Wednesday, the divisional chiefs and elders had heard of a particularly bad and unresolvable problem surrounding the deceased, they often preferred to call off the funeral at that stage to avoid facing embarrassment in front of the town.

I remember the death of a lottery writer who lived round the corner from me. During his many years as a lottery writer, Saturdays had always been big days because each 'lotto' writer released their predicted numbers and people came to stake with whichever writer they believed were most accurate. This particular writer had always used this as an excuse for not attending any funeral, and he even refused to attend the

funerals of his mother and sister. He had also refused to be involved in other community activities so when he died there was no wake-keeping or laying in state of the body. It was simply brought from the mortuary on the Saturday morning and quickly buried. At the _xormedalidodo_ on the Wednesday the elders fined him for his immoral behaviour and his failure to honour obligations towards kin. However, they felt that his behaviour had been so bad and that he had been a disgrace to the clan and the division. The ultimate punishment to his family would be to deny them the opportunity to host a funeral. So the Bankoe elders told the elders of the four other divisions in the town that one of their 'children' had died but that there was no need for the _kudanudodo_ meeting on the Saturday. He was a shame to his family, clan and divisional 'parents'. Although the chiefs and elders did not actually give a verbal verdict on where the deceased would be headed, it was clear that this lotto seller would not travel to _Tsiefe._ He had failed to honour ancestral morality in life and so would not become part of its future constitution.

The funeral held for a man from Bankoe called Rasta, was a well known example of the troubles that would result at the town level if clan and divisional elders attempted to hide information from town elders. [160]At the _kudanudodo_ on the Saturday, the town elders said that they had 'heard a whisper about something'. They then proceeded to reveal that the whisper had suggested the deceased had been treated badly by the same family who were giving him the funeral; they had even denied him a space in the house while he was alive because they claimed that he was a wee (_marijuana_) dealer and spent his time with people who smoked it. So the town elders told the brother of the deceased that his behaviour was hypocritical; it would be his wee smoking friends who would visit his corpse in the house. The clan head was fined two bottles of Castle Bridge for concealing the information and the brother of the deceased was fined for the maltreatment and disrespect of Rasta both during his life and in his death.

The clan head was told that as a result of his actions, the spirit of the deceased could have decided to kill any of the chiefs and elders present for allowing his body to be taken into the house where he had undergone such maltreatment. So he was fined

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[160] More often than not, the _kudanudodo_ took place successfully and followed a similar format to the _xormedalidodo,_ except that this time it was the deceased's family, clan and division who constituted the deceased's group and so sat together on one side, facing on the opposite side, the chiefs and elders of the other four divisions of the town. Although the same kinds of questions were asked about the life and death of the deceased, I was told that this time _'the 'old lady' is very strong - if there is any problem at this late stage then you are in shit!'_

one ram, four bottles of Castle Bridge and one keg of palm wine. The elders insisted that the items were brought at once so that Rasta's soul could be pacified before the burial. The brother pleaded for extra time but the elders refused and eventually he brought the drinks. That the ram was still missing angered the elders even more and they told him that fines of this nature were not variable. After a long wait, one of the elders finally said that given the circumstances, he had a ram that he was willing to sell so it was bought and subsequently slaughtered. Finally, and after a libation had been offered to pacify Rasta, the body was taken to the church before finally being buried.

What these examples reveal is that the 'police of death' were just as accountable as those they fined. As caretakers of ancestral morality, they were often in an even more precarious position than those they fined for immoral behaviour. Most traditional leaders took their role as the 'police of death' incredibly seriously, in the full knowledge that whenever they acted as 'parent's', they were equally being watched as 'children', either by the level of town organisation 'above' them or, ultimately, by the ancestors themselves. Because there were five divisions and the 'town' elders were made up of the elders of the four divisions who were not hosting the funeral, the constitution of the town elders was always shifting. During a meeting concerning a funeral in Bankoe, the town elders would be made up of divisional elders from Dome, Heve, Hliha, and Ahoe. However, if there was a funeral in Dome, the town elders would be made up of divisional elders from Bankoe, Heve, Hliha, and Ahoe. The same moving structure held for the organisation of divisional meetings. Ancestral morality reveals itself here not as a system of abstract rules utilised by power hungry individual chiefs and elders. It was rather the end product of an ongoing debate from which no person was excluded. The burden of the chiefs and elders was a heavy one; a 'whisper' might be heard at any point, from death until burial and a 'whisper' from a single member of the community was enough to call into question the decisions of the traditional authorities. There was not one rule for the traditional authorities and another for the people. Their authority as caretakers of ancestral morality was dependent on their capacity to enact it themselves.

This was the everyday work of chieftaincy. Attending meetings and conducting thorough investigations into the circumstances of the deceased was hard work and, as the above examples showed, attempts to obviate the correct course could have disastrous results. First and foremost, the traditional authorities were accountable to the people. Funerals were the making of ancestors and, by extension, the making of

morality. Traditional authorities were recognised by people as moral authorities only to the extent that they continued to uphold a morality which people respected, and one which they enacted themselves. As such, they often described their traditional positions as being at once a burden and an honour.

Good Deaths and the Making of Ancestors

In the majority of cases that I witnessed, the town elders were able to commend the deceased for living a good life and enacting productive social relations. It was these relations with others – created through family, jobs, church and other social groupings – that the chiefs and elders had to manage and rework during the funeral process. On the one hand, and as we have already seen, it was very important to reveal the deceased's successful relationships with others and their positions within different social and kinship networks and this was achieved by having a large and well attended funeral. The position and status of the deceased and the deceased's family was revealed through the presence of its mourners. It was quite common to hear the Fire Service or Water Works staff marching around the town or being carried in one of their vehicles, singing songs to inform the people of the death of one of their colleagues. Moreover, being able to advertise locally recognised important figures as 'chief mourners' on funeral posters further boosted both the status of the deceased and, by extension, that of their family.

In addition to revealing the deceased's social and kinship ties to the public, funeral 'work' also involved ensuring that the deceased made the transition from a living member of those groups to the community of the 'living dead' as an ancestor. The aim was to make sure that the deceased made the journey across the 'river' to *Tsiefe,* where they would reside peacefully as part of the community of the living dead and that from this new vantage point they could remember their living descendants and workmates and oversee their progress. This was an important journey which if not completed, would leave the spirit of the deceased 'in limbo', unsure of its status, and always tempted to interfere unnecessarily with the lives of the living. People explained to me that the deceased had to be encouraged to go to the other side and not to come back and disturb people too much. They had to be reminded that even though they could always see the living, they should remain within the ancestral realm as much as possible unless they needed to warn the living about an impending danger.

To explain this process of negotiating the new identity of the deceased as neither living nor dead, but rather 'living dead', I will discuss an example of the funeral of an old Asafo (a member of the chief's 'standing army'). Although the man's paternal side was not from Ho, he was born there and lived in Ho for most of his life. Moreover, he had been a very committed Asafo. The Asafos therefore insisted upon holding a funeral in his maternal house to honour his life. On the way from the mortuary to the palace forecourt on the Friday evening, the Asafos came out in their numbers, drumming and singing Asafo songs. Musketry was fired to indicate the death of an important person. Along the way, we passed the houses of the Paramount Queen Mothee, Togbe Agblatsu, Togbe Afiatsoa, and finally Zikpitor Akpo's, at each point stopping to change the song as a way of indicating our recognition of their positions. When we reached the Palace forecourt, the ambulance was already there and everyone was gathered. The _torvitorwo_ checked on the body and reported back to chiefs and people that yes, it was the correct body that had been picked up from the mortuary. Afterwards, the brass band led us to the house of the deceased. Following the brass band was the ambulance and a large group of Asafos. At the house of the deceased, a large group of people awaited to greet us, including a group of guests from the maternal side.

The next morning, after the meeting of the chiefs and elders, the chiefs, elders and Asafos joined the _Torvitorwo_ to witness the rites that would send the deceased to his ancestors. The body was lying down on a made up bed, in _kente_ cloth and surrounded by lots of plastic flowers. The room itself was covered in lace curtains and more plastic flowers. Women stood inside, wailing and crying. Then Asafo Setsie of Heve and Togbe Deti of Bankoe, spoke to the deceased in order to prepare him for his journey: _'We have recognised the role you have played but now you are no longer one of us as the Asafos. We honour you. You were born in Ho and you have distinguished yourself here and especially among the Asafos. Unfortunately, you have now left us for the other world. Your parents, the people of Ho, have recognised your roles and are now bidding you a farewell. You are no longer a member of the Asafos. If your death has been an act of nature then you should rest in perfect peace. If not, then your spirit should haunt the person who caused your death'_. The _Torvitorwo_ then put a small amount of palm wine to his lips to give him his last drink before Togbe Deti broke the calabash to signify the end and said: _'Henceforth you are no longer in our midst so if we are drinking as Asafos, your portion is no longer here'_. Some money was then

placed into the coffin and the deceased was told to use it to cover his transport costs to join the ancestors.

In this sense then, the deceased's long held membership within various groups and his relationships with particular people had to be unmade, making it explicit that he should no longer attempt to partake in the social activities he partook in while he was alive. People explained to me that in the future they would call on him for assistance and advice and remember him in their offerings but that the initial period after death was dangerous because the dead were often reluctant to make the journey and wanted to stay with their living relatives and companions. Similarly, if the deceased had played a very active role at work, they had to be reminded not to try to come to work again. In all cases then, the deceased's relationships with the living had to be momentarily cut, in order to allow them to make their journey to join the ancestors. Once safely there and with a new identity as an ancestor or member of the community of 'living dead', those relationships could be renewed as part of the ideal ancestor – descendant relationship. Although their personal identity would be recalled in the future, it was crucial that the deceased was reminded of their changed temporal identity as they made the journey from *Kodzogbe* to *Tsiefe*.

Because the transition and journey that the deceased had to make was so difficult, mourners buried the deceased's favourite items with them to give them some comfort. There were always certain items that the deceased had frequently used or that had come to be associated with them and if they were not taken on the journey to the spiritual world, the deceased might miss them and attempt to come back for them. I was told of a man who had died in Ho and his family had forgotten to place his favourite shaving stick in his coffin or into the burial hole. Every night after the burial, his family were disturbed by the footsteps of the man looking for his shaving sticks. It so happened that soon after, his brother died so a libation was offered for the original deceased brother and he was asked to accept the apologies of the living descendants. They told him that they would bury the shaving stick with his brother and that he would pass it on when they met. After that, the family was not disturbed by footsteps again.

In addition to personal items, there were also particular items placed into the coffin by relatives of the deceased that marked and commemorated specific relationships of obligation and care that had been made in life but that should also continue in death. People told me that it was also very important for the deceased to

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feel that they could leave the journey comfortably and in the knowledge that their relatives, and especially their children and grandchildren, would be well and cared for after their departure. The maternal side of the family always put in one yard of cloth called *nor*vor (*nor means mother and v*or* is a shortened form of av*or* which means cloth)* to commemorate that it was the mother who was known to clothe the children. This always took place for any adult who died. The surviving spouse also had to contribute one yard of cloth as a way of noting that throughout their marriage they had always shared cover cloths – whether during sleep or as a cover on the way to shower – so this cover cloth was for the deceased spouse to take as their own to the spiritual world. There was also a further cloth bought for the deceased called *To*do*. This was a cloth bought by a husband if his mother in law died. A small piece of the cloth was tied to the wrist of the deceased and the rest was given to the living wife. This was to remind the deceased mother in law that as a husband he was still capable of looking after and clothing her daughter. There was also a second type of *To*do*. Again, if a husband's mother in law died while her grandchildren were still young, their father had to buy cloth on behalf of his children to give to their deceased grandmother. In this case, small pieces of the cloth were cut and tied to the wrists of the grandchildren by the *torvitorwo* while the rest of the cloth went into the coffin of the grandmother.

People explained to me that when grandchildren were born, it was the responsibility of the grandmother to give a piece of cloth to her daughter in order that her newborn baby could be carried on her back. And as we saw already, when those grandchildren grew up, they were equally expected to reciprocate their grandmother's care by helping to clothe their grandmother in her old age. Because she had died prematurely, before the grandchildren had the opportunity to grow and look after her, they still had to give her the cloth and put it into the coffin to show that their intentions would have been borne out had she lived to see them as adults. That is, the principle outlived those through whom it was enacted. If there were no grandchildren, the husband only had to provide the first *To*do,* which involved his wife and mother in law but if there were grandchildren he had to provide both the cloth for his wife and his children as described above. All these pieces of cloths were given in private and through the *torvitorwo,* in contrast to the general donations that were made in public by mourners. Nonetheless, for each piece of cloth given, an additional amount of money had to be provided for the transport costs; people laughed and told me that just as in the physical world, the heavier the load the more the ferry man will demand to

transport it.

Just before coffins were put into the ambulance for conveyance to the cemetery, the _torvitorwo_ took a portion of the money from the contribution bowl at the foot of the coffin, tied it into a hankie (_takuviga)_ before placing it into the coffin to contribute towards the transport fee. It was at this point that they gathered some of the clothes of the deceased and the personal items associated with them and put them inside so that they could also be used in the spiritual world. Sandals were never given though because just as there was no sun and no salt in _Tsiefe,_ neither was there footwear: _'There is no footwear in the spiritual world so if the dead go there with sandals, they will only keep returning to the physical world and disturb us with their footsteps'._

Conclusion

I hope that this chapter has revealed not only the process of organising funerals in Ho and the particular form that funerals take in the contemporary context, but also the very important role that the chiefs and elders played as the 'police of death' by acting as the living implementers of ancestral morality, a morality which, as we have seen in this and the previous chapter, was based upon the ideal relationship of care and reciprocity between ancestors and their descendants. This chapter has endeavoured to reveal the processes through which ancestors were made or not made, suggesting that participation in the funeral process allowed people to witness the generation of morality, and to take part in its performance. I have suggested that the real work and, indeed, the everyday burden of tradition can be found in the funerary context. Making ancestors and, by extension, morality, was a laborious and painstaking process. As the police of death, the traditional authorities took great care in reviewing the social relations of the deceased, bringing them forth and revealing them in order to ensure that proper obligations of care between the deceased, their family and the community had been met. Importantly, it was not a closed investigation; the traditional authorities were accountable to each other, the 'whispering' public and the ancestors, who could see in the dark.

However, this thesis has argued that in addition to their increasingly sought after moral authority, traditional authority was also valued because it provided an alternative form of temporal authority and one through which people could envisage

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future progress and development as entailed by a tradition that was temporally mediated rather than 'of the past'. To that end, the work of making ancestors did not only involve ensuring that were morally legitimate. It also involved enacting particular temporal transformations so that the deceased could move from their living identity to their living dead identity. However, this transformation was complicated by the fact that in the future, the living dead would have to be remembered as particular people who had lived through and experienced specific events. Even if their relationships with the living had been 'finished' on one level, so that the deceased could enter upon the journey unencumbered, these same relationships and experiences of history would, in time, be recalled and brought forth once more by the living, and used to bear upon their future. The funeral therefore enacted a simultaneous reinforcement and transformation of the deceased's identity, and worked to ensure that the deceased's personal qualities could continue to be recognised despite the transformation enacted upon their temporal identity.

Nancy Munn has written that the memory created by Gawan mortuary rituals, 'contains no intimations of the future, but involves looking backward to something now finished and without potential' (Munn 1986: 170). In Ho, quite different temporal transformations were at work and it was precisely the 'past potentials' of the living as moral persons that would later be summoned from the relational continuity of the living dead to bear upon the future of the living.

Conclusion: Meditations on The Future of Traditional Authority

> Ghanaian chieftaincy is somewhat like one of those half-built storey houses that can be found in towns across the country. Nobody can quite recall what the architects intended when they started. Nobody is inclined to pull the existing structure down, since it meets the needs of people on the ground floor (in this case, the village) […] Equally, nobody is sure how the structure could be completed […] while chieftaincy is arguably indispensable at the village level, the rest of the structure may be too rickety to support anything more elaborate […]The balance of political forces is such that the chieftaincy project seems destined to remain uncompleted for the foreseeable future.[161]

I have found it quiet intriguing, that more than other anthropological topics, chieftaincy and traditional authority inevitably call upon the anthropologist as fortune teller. I have chosen to quote Nugent's gloomy predictions above because they are particularly detailed and contain various sub-predictions, but it is rare to find any full length study on chieftaincy today that does not contain some kind of optimistic or pessimistic prediction about the 'fate of chieftaincy'. Within most contemporary analyses of traditional authority, we find celebrations of its 'resilience' and 're-invention' against the odds. In chapter two I noted the predictions, around the time of Ghana's independence, that chieftaincy would soon disappear, either by being rendered completely obsolete or by being swallowed up by the post-colonial state apparatus. I noted equally, the many authors who, over fifty years later, were able to write of its re-emergence and capacity to survive and occasionally even engender historical change.

The more general debate about the future of chieftaincy has often been framed as though the state and the traditional authorities are players in a zero sum game and that it is only with the retreat of the state that the traditional authorities can really make their entry. There has been the assumption that traditional authority can fill a gap by

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[161] Nugent, P. 1996. 'An Abandoned Project? The Nuances of Chieftaincy, Development and History in Ghana's Volta Region. *Journal of Legal Pluralism* Nos 37-38. p222-223

the state but that if the state is active and providing its citizens with democracy and development, interest in traditional authority will wane. In 1993, Peter Geschiere questioned whether there would be a withdrawal of the state in Africa as some authors had predicted and if there was, the extent to which chiefs would be able to constitute an alternative form of power. Or, as he went on to ask: 'have they already been co-opted in the dominant elite crystallising around the State?' (Geschiere 1993: 152). Almost two decades on, we find that the traditional authorities have become increasingly active and visible both on a local and national level in many African countries. Much of the literature which has responded to this presence and attempted to make sense of it, has argued that we can see a corresponding increase in the importance of chieftaincy as the state has become increasingly inept at providing people with basic services and socio-economic development. In light of the failed African state and the numerous academic analyses of it, it appeared to be obvious why the traditional authorities' importance was on the increase.

There is now no shortage of literature attesting to the failure of states in Africa, the 'politics of the belly', and the 'democratic deficit' within African state structures (Bayart 1993). However, Janine Ubink has questioned the correlation between the failed state and the revival of traditional authority, noting that revivals of traditional authority have tended to take place in African countries where there is a functioning state apparatus, and where traditional authority exists alongside democratically elected councils. Perhaps states like the Ghanaian state, with more confidence in their own political stability, are more likely to tolerate the rise of alternative sources of authority (Ubink 2008: 13). In addition, the adoption of multi-party democracy, democratic decentralisation and a strengthening of civil society can be seen to have given rise to the view that the state is simply 'another actor in an increasingly complex and interwoven global order' (Ubink 2008: 14). The traditional authorities are then, only one of a variety of non-state actors, including Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and churches, filling the development gap left by the state.

However, I suggest that predicting the future of chieftaincy through recourse to zero-sum logic, may not be particularly insightful. I certainly agree that chiefs and other traditional office holders make good development leaders. However, I contend that it is not enough to argue that this is simply the result of retreating or failing states, or, indeed, chiefs' ability to mediate between tradition and modernity. The former argument may be a necessary one but it is not sufficient. If we are to really account for

the increasing activity of chiefs and, more importantly, peoples' recognition of their activity as valuable, we must consider in more depth who the ancestors are and what they offer traditional authority. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard noted the significance of traditional leaders' 'sacred precincts'(Fortes and Evans Pritchard 1975 [1940]: 16). over fifty years ago and I suggest here that the ancestors, by providing their living caretakers with a particular form of temporal and moral authority, provided tradition with that 'incremental something' which can take take us beyond the zero-sum game as a means to account for peoples' recognition and appreciation of tradition.

As I have shown throughout this thesis, the argument that chiefs' success as development leaders is a result of their new-found aptitude for mediating between tradition and modernity, the past and the present, the local and the western, equally misses the point. This argument too, fails to account for the ontological ground of the living dead as once living but now living dead historical kins-people. Because of their very ontological ground, I have argued that the ancestors were able to fashion a tradition which was not temporally opposed to the present or the future, and a tradition whose authenticity was not dependent upon the eclipsing of the colonial and European relations which partly constituted it. Moreover, it was from this relational flow that living chiefs and elders were able to elicit and draw out particular 'past potentials' so that they could be used to bear positively upon the present of the living.

This thesis has endeavoured to provide an understanding of traditional authority as a particular form of temporal authority, one through which oppositions between tradition and modernity, the past and the present, the Ewe and the European, the colonial and the ancestral were not so much mediated by individual chiefs and elders but were rather already in existence as part of a relational flow within the community of the living dead. I have argued that it was between the living and the living dead that the chiefs had a special mediatory role; through ritual, they were able to draw out the experiences and knowledge of particular ancestors and their historical relationships so that they could bear upon the present situation of their descendants and help them 'move forward' and develop. I have argued that the traditional authorities were therefore able to provide people with a particular temporal mode through which they could envisage attaining some of the benefits they associated with development and the modern package without becoming alienated from their shared colonial and pre-colonial past.

However, despite my enthused tone, the 'traditional complex' did not resonate for every person I met during the course of my fieldwork. Moreover, even those for whom it did resonate moved in and out of the complex, revealing various degrees of attachment and commitment to it. Although I have acknowledged some of the other temporal and moral discourses and attachments which arguably competed with tradition for peoples' attention, my aim has been to explain why the traditional complex was appealing to people within the contemporary postcolonial context. To borrow Michael Lambek's wording (2002), I have argued that the traditional complex had a particular capacity to attract and encompass that which it was often claimed to exist in opposition to: modernity, the future, the colonial, and the western. The traditional time-shape – through the living dead – allowed people to engage directly with their past and, indeed, their colonial past, as part of their identity, and as essential for the creation of a more prosperous future.

This thesis has also argued that development, progress and ensuring future well-being was equally experienced by people as a moral project, or, as was often the case, an immoral project. Moral futures were described to me as being as much about the reproduction of good persons and social life as having access to economic and material development and the opportunity to prosper. Unlike other leaders, I was often told, traditional leaders, through their connection to the living dead, were moral leaders. As representatives of the ancestors, they stood for a morality rooted in the ideal relationship between ancestors and their descendants, a relationship which was perceived to stand in opposition to the lone figure of the witch. Or, might I suggest here, the zombie. The morality of the ancestor/descendant relationship might be seen in opposition to Mbembe's characterisation of power in the postcolony as involving the 'illicit cohabitation' and 'mutual zombification of both the dominant and those whom they apparently dominate' (Mbembe 1992: 4).

It was in the context of funerals that we were able to see how traditional authority as a particular form of tempo-moral authority was created. This thesis has argued that in addition to their increasingly sought after moral authority, traditional authority was also valued because it provided an alternative form of temporal authority and one through which people could envisage future progress and development as entailed by a tradition that was temporally mediated rather than 'of the past'. To that end, the work of making ancestors did not only involve ensuring that were morally legitimate. It also involved enacting particular temporal transformations so that the

deceased could move from their living identity to their living dead identity. However, this transformation was complicated by the fact that in the future, the living dead would have to be remembered as particular people who had lived through and experienced specific events. Even if their relationships with the living had been 'finished' on one level, so that the deceased could enter upon the journey unencumbered, these same relationships and experiences of history would, in time, be recalled and brought forth once more by the living, and used to bear upon their future. The funeral therefore enacted a simultaneous reinforcement and transformation of the deceased's identity, and worked to ensure that the deceased's personal qualities could continue to be recognised despite the transformation enacted upon their temporal identity.

The Future

I shall return to Ghana this year to follow the 2012 presidential elections. In 2008, the election period brought forth a great deal of debate about democracy and development and, indeed, the role of traditional authority within contemporary Ghana. For now though, and in the spirit of chieftaincy studies past and present, I too will note my own predictions for the future of traditional authority. I suggest that instead of looking to the state as a yardstick, we might simply finish as we started this thesis and look to the ancestors. I assert here that in so far as ancestors continue to be made, traditional authority will continue to exist. Traditional authority involves more than structural positions and hierarchies and even if, in line with Nugent's argument, the 'architects' decided to pull the existing structure down, I suggest that the forces behind those structural positions – the ancestors – would continue to take an interest in their descendants. This thesis therefore invites further anthropological studies of traditional authority and the role that ancestors do or do not play. If we really want to account for the increasing activity of chiefs and, more importantly, peoples' recognition of their activity as valuable, we must consider in more depth who the ancestors are and what they offer traditional authority. Such studies might help Africanists to make more sense of the particular shapes that African calls for recognition can take and, indeed, how alternatives to multi-party democracy and neoliberalism might be realistically conceived.

Glossary

Ablotsi: Literally 'over the water' and usually used to refer to Europe and America.

Adagana: *Adagana(wo)* can be described as a 'deep' proverbs. They vary from region to region and are not necessarily known by everyone. In particular, they can be used to hide particular pieces of information from others. They do not constitute a fixed body of proverbs and new adaganawo can be introduced.

Agbogbomefia: Togbe Afede XIV's title. Agbogbome means 'within the walls' and refers to the walled city of Notsie. Fia means chief so Togbe Afede's title can be understood as invoking his direct connection with his ancestral father who led the exodus from Notsie.

Ametsitsi: Elder.

Ametsitsiawo: Elders

Afemenya: *Afeme* means home and *nunya* means knowledge. Can be loosely translated to refer to house/local knowledge practices.

Avlime: literally meaning, 'within a shallow place'. Upon a person's death, they pass through Avlime in order to reach Tsiefe, the final resting place.

Dzamawo: Germans

Fia. A chief. Literally, *Fia* is the name for a teacher and this title indicates the responsibilities of chiefs to teach and lead the people.

Fiadudu: Chieftaincy.

Kodzogbe: The physical world of the living.

Tsiefe: The home of the dead within the Ewe life cycle.

Ngorgbeyiyi: Development. Literally, going forward.

Togbe: literally 'the father behind the father', a grandfather. Within the context of traditional leadership, Togbe means 'chief' and highlights a chief's spiritual role as the link between the ancestors and their descendants.

Togbeawo: The plural of Togbe, Togbeawo can refer to both the chiefs and elders and the ancestors as a collectivity.

Togbe Zikpi: The Ancestral Stool.

Vorvlorwo: The ancestors. Literally, the departed ones who are feared.

Yevonya: can be loosely translated as white/western knowledge practices.

Zikpitor: The stool Father.

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