

# Disciplined Development

## *Teachers and Reform in Ghana*

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## *Chapter Four*

### Friendly Africans, Deceptive White Men

At a primary school in the Volta Region, a teacher began her lesson by asking children if they knew kente cloth. "Have you seen it on chiefs? Do they wear the cloth I am in?" (She was not wearing kente.) The teacher then told a story about two men from Bonwire in the Ashanti Region who observed a spider spinning a web. This inspired the men to weave the colorful cloth that has come to symbolize Ghana and its cultures. The lesson was engaging but curious, since it contradicted the history of weaving that Ewe children learned from their parents. Ewes believe that kente cloth was originally spun in the Volta Region, and is thus an Ewe invention. The teacher probably knew this, but the need to transcend cultural differences outweighed that of affirming ethnic identity—evidence of her commitment to the national effort to prevent indiscipline.

Besides promoting unity, teachers believed that celebrating their ethnic histories, festivals, and languages, defined as "our culture," helps prevent cultural imperialism by immoral "white men." To achieve autonomy from those who continue to colonize the country, children are urged to study science and technology, produce excess goods, and work hard in their social studies lessons. In this chapter, I analyze the history, culture, and nationalism taught in Ghanaian schools and social studies textbooks. The four through eighth grade textbooks I purchased in 2000-2001 were written by Ghanaians and commissioned by the government. I also obtained a senior secondary text widely used in schools. As fewer teenagers continue on to secondary school, I excerpt mostly from the primary and junior secondary social studies texts that presumably reach more children.<sup>1</sup> For the most part, teachers adhered to the lessons in the texts that were based on the national syllabus and thus reflected a form of nationalism endorsed by the government. The texts for younger children were written as a dialogue between children named "Bedu" and "Abena" and their teacher or elders named "Auntie Esi" and "Uncle Mensah." In 2005, I bought new fourth and seventh grade texts. While many of the themes I noted in the older texts appeared in these books, there were some differences. The most obvious change was that the environmental and social studies text for fourth graders was published by a multinational corporation (MacMillan), not printed in Ghana as some of the older books were. This book no longer used dialogues and story-telling—instead it featured the glossy color images and side bars found in United States texts.

While the book had better editing and printing quality, it was also more expensive.

### Explaining Slavery and Colonization

Though Ghanaians are usually friendly to foreigners, they also retained a skepticism and mistrust of westerners that can be traced in part to the ways they tell their histories of slavery and colonization. Like all “good nationalisms,” Ghanaian nationalism includes a “transnational vision” that extends to all of Africa (Duara 1995, 13). In textbooks and classrooms, children learn about pan-African groups like the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). But distrust and antagonism toward neighbors—such as President Nkrumah’s expulsion of African business people who supported opposition parties—have been repressed. For the authors of the fourth grade text, a change of attitude is all that is needed to end African “quarrels” that are implicitly blamed on whites:

I’m not sure about what would have happened if the white man had not come to do this [form colonies]. What I know is that all Africans are one people. The white man has divided us with these boundaries. But we must not forget that the Africans in other countries are our neighbors. As Africans we should not quarrel with one another. (Tamakloe et al. 1988, 10-11)

Clearly distinguishing themselves from the white men who caused this trouble, textbook authors and teachers assert the ethical superiority of Africans. In a discussion of imperialism, Uncle Mensah explains that Europeans “took the gold, ivory and other goods away from the Africans” by giving “drinks, tobacco, cloth, guns and gun powder” to Africans. The girl, Abena, asks if those things were useful. The authors draw from dependency theory to explain how Ghana became underdeveloped: “Some things are useful for only a short time. Others are useful for a long time. We can see from what the Europeans brought that most of them were not useful for a long time. They did not help the Africans to develop” (Baku et al. 1991, 12). The vagueness of the interaction (theft, trade?) raises the question: Why did their ancestors let the Europeans take these “useful” things?

To answer this question, the textbook authors explained that their “forefathers” were deceived and robbed. In the following depiction, children learn how profits help greedy capitalists get ahead:

They [Europeans] took those things [African products] to the factories in their country and made some new things from them . . . They brought these new things [like chocolate] back . . . and sold them at high prices. They made far more money through selling them to us than they paid for the cocoa . . . As they became rich, they built more factories in their countries. (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 17)

Some of these products were obtained through theft: “In some cases, the things were not paid for at all” (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 12). Echoing this sentiment, one trainee said he wanted to go to America to “bring back what was stolen,” including people, and another said that when he sees white people, he feels “ashamed and angry” because “they took the things away from [Africans] to get developed.”

In the sixth grade textbook, the authors explain that exploitation happened because Africans lacked the ability to understand treaties with Europeans: “They [whitemen] did not really mean to be friends to our people . . . Some of the words of the agreements in reality did not mean friendship but our people did not understand the language” (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 16-17). In a description of the scramble for Africa in the fourth grade text, the authors argue that Africans were simply deceived:

[M]en from European countries rushed off to Africa as quickly as they could and started making agreements with the chiefs inland . . . They brought tobacco, drinks, clothes, gunpowder and guns to the chiefs so that the chiefs would quickly sign the *agreements* and *treaties* they brought . . . In the agreements, the Europeans said that their own country was very powerful. They said that their king could help the African chiefs in times of war . . . The white man used the gifts and sweet words to deceive the African chiefs. (Tamakloe et al. 1988, 9; italics in original)<sup>2</sup>

Ghanaian adolescents also characterized colonial tax collectors as “cheating” their ancestors who were at that time “illiterate” (Levstik and Groth 2003, 8). It is true that Europeans reneged on agreements, falsified documents, and engaged in other forms of deception (Carmichael 1993). But neither Africans nor Europeans signed treaties purely for “friendship” nor were all the chiefs so ignorant. Many formed relationships with whites in order to gain favorable trading arrangements or form alliances against enemy groups. But for the textbook authors and students, alliances with Europeans were illegitimate because Africans must have been coerced, deceived, or unaware. This perspective prevents a more complex rendering of history, one that might reveal the greed or disunity of their ancestors.<sup>3</sup>

Bailey found a “deafening silence on the subject of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade” in her country, Jamaica, as well as among the Ewes on the old slave coast of Ghana (2005, 1). In Ghana, the accusation that one’s ancestors were slaves is an insult, and people will change their names to hide their origins. In the older four through sixth grade textbooks I obtained, slavery is mentioned only once, in a statement that Africans were taken as slaves to work on plantations in the Americas (Tamakloe et al. 1988, 8). Teenagers interviewed by Levstik and Groth simply left slavery off a timeline they were asked to fill in because it was “not a ‘good part of history.’” They explained, “With the slave trade we were not free. We did not do things of our own. We couldn’t even fight

for our rights" (quoted in Levstik and Groth 2003, 9). Conflating colonial rule with the slave trade is somewhat misleading, as the slave trade was finally ended as the British began taking control over more and more territories on the Gold Coast in the late 1800s/early 1900s. But this misunderstanding helps the teenagers deflect blame from ancestors. In a discussion of slavery, they mention their "grandparents" only in connection with "what their grandparents did for them [Ghanaians]" to gain independence (quoted in Levstik and Groth 2003, 9). Their other grandparents, those who engaged in the trade, were apparently too shameful to mention. These evasions not only exonerate ancestors from responsibility, it also eliminates other explanations for conflicts between the ethnic groups, such as the importation of guns or European demand for slaves.

The "silence" about slavery in lower grades is perhaps breaking as writers of more recent texts appear to tell a more comprehensive history. A 2002 junior secondary text featured an extensive explanation of the operations of the slave trade, assigning some blame for the perpetuation of the trade to the "greed of some African chiefs and African agents" and crediting some "Christians," including Europeans, for the abolition of the trade (Adu-Gyimah and Odumah 2002, 28-29). In addition, the newer textbooks refer to "Europeans" or "the British" when discussing imperialism—they no longer use the phrase white men. Students also learn more details about slavery in senior secondary texts. In his text, Gadzekpo mentions that the Akwamu were known for their "notorious slave-raiding" and Gold Coast Africans continued to participate in slave trading after its abolishment due to high profits (1999, 135). He also cites a chief who blames outsiders for causing increased warfare: "The trans-Atlantic slave trade shamelessly introduced the use of war with the intent of capturing men to sell as slaves. The Asantehene Osei Bonsu lamented over this practice when he reminded [Dutch trader] DuPius [sic] in 1819 that his ancestors never waged war purposely 'to catch slaves in the bush like a thief'" (Gadzekpo 1999, 135).

The belief that ignorance of European languages and customs facilitated exploitation helps explain peoples' concerns with preventing illiteracy and cheating. Many Africans strongly protested educational reforms in 1925 that mandated instruction in vernacular languages, in part because they feared it would increase exploitation. For nationalists at the time, chiefs' illiteracy made them ineffective leaders. In a 1926 speech, J.E. Casely Hayford declared that the chiefs sitting in colonial assemblies "cannot follow what is going on there" and thus were "not competent to represent the people" (quoted in Newell 2002, 146).<sup>4</sup> What the country needed, by implication, was well-educated leaders who understood the white man's ways.

There is residual bitterness about those who served as indirect rulers. In the fifth grade textbook, the writers portray chiefs as mere pawns of the British: "Only a few [in government] were Africans. The governor chose a few African chiefs also. The chiefs the governor chose were those who would mostly agree to everything he said." When the boy, Bedu, asks why the chiefs were so malleable, Uncle Mensah responds that it was a combination of ignorance and political expediency: "Many of the chiefs appointed by the governor did not fully

understand the laws the whitemen made. So they agreed easily to what the governor wanted to do. They knew also that if they did not agree with the governor he could destool them" (Baku et al. 1991, 24-27).

Today, illiteracy and ignorance are forms of indiscipline that can facilitate exploitation. In 2004, several tutors at Peki expressed concern about a recent statistic showing that a large percentage of primary school teachers do not read newspapers, let alone other materials. According to one, "If you want to hide something from the African, put it in a book." President Kufuor warned that Ghana "would not shoot itself in the foot by freely giving away the nation's resources" after United States Assistant Secretary of State William Lash made "disparaging comments" about the telephone company's failure to fulfill its contract (BBC Monitoring 2002a). Kufuor did not want to repeat the mistakes of past leaders like Kwame Nkrumah who had allowed the country to be cheated when he sold vital resources to foreigners.

In the textbooks, the portrayal of chiefs as illiterate puppets helps establish the British as tyrannical and harsh. After learning that 300 people who were protesting the poll tax of 1844 died after Governor Hill mobilized a British warship, Abena asks why the Ghanaians did not remove this governor. Uncle Mensah replies: "The people had no power. They did not make him governor. They did not have powerful guns. They did not make their own decisions. The governor had big guns" (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 15). According to this story, the British ruled purely by force and Ghanaians were helpless against their weapons. But in addition to their roles as indirect rulers, Africans exerted their power by refusing to pay the poll tax, which was repealed, boycotting British products, and protesting a land distribution law that was also repealed.

By making a stark contrast between British and indigenous rule, the authors legitimize rule by Ghanaians, who, simply by being African, are expected to rule fairly. In the sixth grade textbook, the rule of chiefs is fondly remembered as a democratic form of government. Bedu asks his uncle if the first British governor appointed in 1872 was a chief and is told: "No . . . the people of Ghana did not select him . . . the people can remove a chief if he is not ruling well. But . . . they could not remove [the governor] even when they did not like some of his laws" (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 14). Any government by Ghanaians is better than rule by foreigners. The authors defend the government—at that time, led by Rawlings who had seized power in a coup in 1981—because Ghanaians allegedly have a voice in government: "We are all part of the government because we all help to put the members of government into office." Military rule is represented as differing from civilian rule primarily because of elections: "During periods when we are not ruled by soldiers, all adults, who are at least 18 years old, vote to choose those who would become law makers and Head of State . . . But during the period when soldiers are ruling, no voting is done. All officers [ministers, secretaries] are selected by the Head of State and his Council." More important than the type of government is that Ghana has "regained her self-rule" and "we have our own people as rulers" (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 42-47).<sup>4</sup> A teenager also expressed a preference for any form of Ghanaian govern-

ment, as long as it was rule on "our own": "We are not under any colonial master, we are just free on our own, because we are not being ruled by any other person, we are being ruled by a Ghanaian, so we know that he cannot do anything to us, but will rather help us to go forward so that nothing bad will happen to us" (quoted in Levstik and Groth 2003, 11).

For the authors of the sixth grade textbook, racism (which is implied but not mentioned) is an "even more serious" issue than Britain's illegitimate rule:

The whitemen made us believe our own things were not good enough. They made us feel that our own names were not good . . . The whitemen told us that our religion was not good, so they brought their own religion called Christianity. They also said that our music was not good to be used in the church. Our people were not allowed to wear African clothes when they preached in church. The whitemen said that our medicines were not good. (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 22)<sup>5</sup>

As Greene notes, colonization led to "profound epistemological shifts" in the way people "understood themselves and their physical environment" (2002, 134). But while exposing psychological damage missionaries and colonists caused, the passage cited above also conceals African resistance to, as well as acceptance of, European things. For example, Christian converts were supposed to cease participating in "pagan" rituals and the British tried to abolish or regulate certain religions. However, since "many Christians were simply unwilling to sever themselves completely from indigenous beliefs about the body . . . virtually all the Christian denominations in Anlo [in the Volta Region] . . . had begun to overlook, if not accept, a blending of Christian and indigenous beliefs and practices" (Greene 2002, 106). Today, African institutions persist alongside European ones. For example, Ghanaians will go to hospitals as well as herbalists in search of cures. Many people have three or four names—a name based on their day of birth, an ethnic name, a Christian name, and a family or last name. People wear traditional clothes to church as well as to Parliament, and African drumming and dancing are common in Christian churches. These are some of their "creative adaptations" to colonial rule (Greene 2002, 6).

Racism is also addressed in a senior secondary textbook, in which the author provides a fascinating explanation of ideology. Gadzekpo notes that white superiority was challenged during World War II: "Before the war it had been Britain and France who ordered and policed the world. In the war . . . France was defeated in Europe, Britain was defeated in Asia by the Japanese, a 'coloured race' and was dependent upon America for her salvation [sic]." He explains how ideologies changed as white people struggled to retain power: "Britain and France, and later America indulged in propaganda expressing their belief in equality and the fundamental rights of all peoples to self-determination [sic]. They (Britain and France) turned sweet-tongued to win colonial subjects against German imperialism" (Gadzekpo 1999, 172). Through such analyses, students learn to be suspicious of westerners, like a seminar participant who

asked in his written reflection, "We would like to know why this seminar, since some people see the whites as people who explore [exploit] the blacks for their own benefit." While in the past white men were openly ruling them, it is not clear why aid workers and scholars are still coming. In a discussion on religion, another trainee feared that some kind of theft was still taking place: "They are now coming to take ours [African religions] . . . white men they see that something is good in Africa and they try to take it away from us whilst giving us [their religion]."

While they are angry about feelings of inferiority wrought by white men, the textbook authors equate western science, technology, and written literacy with progress and development. In the following passage, a description of the "good things" white men did tends to reinforce the notion that Africans lacked systems of education, medical care, and transportation prior to the arrival of Europeans: "They [white men] built schools . . . So our people learnt to read and write. The whitemen built hospitals too . . . They also built roads, railways and harbours" (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 22-23). Moreover, in the following story of exploitation, African peoples' roles in the changes taking place during colonization are minimized:

Before the whiteman came our people themselves made the things they needed. But the whitemen brought new things to our people . . . These things replaced some of the things our people were making themselves. Because of that, our people came to like the new things . . . they stopped . . . growing their own food. They wanted the whiteman to bring more of their own type of food. They rather grew [cash] crops which the whiteman used in their factories. (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 21)

Though the authors cannot completely blame Europeans for the decline of indigenous products and food crops, they construct sentences in ways to avoid blaming Ghanaians. Foreign items "replaced" home-made things, people "came to like the new things," and peasants "rather grew crops." Contrast this perspective with Dzorgbo who says that cultivation of cocoa spread rapidly due to the eagerness of farmers to profit from the crop (2001, 122). Then as now, trading often brought greater benefit to Europeans, who resorted to tactics such as dumping cheap products, but it is likely that some people found foreign goods more useful or adopted them as symbols of status.<sup>6</sup>

The sixth grade textbook authors yearn for a single, uncorrupted Ghanaian "way of life," insisting,

But it is not true that all our things are bad . . . For example, we have many types of music which are excellent and very moving too. Our kente cloth and batakari are very well made. They are beautiful. We wear them on important occasions. We have our own rich languages . . .

Now that we are ruling ourselves we have to change the wrong things that the whiteman's rule has done to our way of life. (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 22)

By preserving Ghana's diverse cultures, people hold onto their African identities and drive out the "wrong things" white men have done. Though the authors do not make clear what these things are, some of my students' concerns recalled those of colonial African and European elites. Imitation of European dress is no longer viewed as ludicrous, but the students felt that provocative dress, equated with western styles, was a sign of moral decline. Many of the trainees were also alarmed that U.S. and European societies allow so many social freedoms. In my classes, I was asked if all Americans were "homosexualists" and whether satanic worship was common. For some, these dangerous ideas were spreading throughout Ghana. A teacher worried, "Even in the remotest village, people seem to have adopted European culture and even prefer it. Our culture is at stake" (quoted in Levstik and Groth 2003, 6).

Educators' concerns with distinguishing between bad/western and good/African cultures led to ambivalence toward institutions and things retained from the slave trade and colonial eras. For example, though Christianity had ended some "bad practices" such as sacrificing slaves to bury with chiefs, the trainees believed it caused such problems as teenage pregnancy and complained that their "forefathers" were "confused" and "deceived" when they converted to Christianity. Destiny explained how Ghanaians came to prefer Christianity: "They [Europeans] came and infected our brains with it [religion]. First they came with the Bible and told us our religion was wrong and way of living was inferior. So many of us believe it about ourselves too." Destiny's metaphor protects ancestors from censure for their actions during the colonial period, portraying them as overtaken by an infection over which they seem to have no control. Yet Christianity is widely practiced and prayers are common in schools and at public or official events. Many trainees viewed atheism and agnosticism with suspicion and were confused that I did not attend religious services, often inviting me to their churches and giving me religious flyers. In class one day, a student held up a bible and asked, "This came from you. Why don't you go to church?" Acknowledging a belief in one god and practicing Christian morality was a way to fight historical and contemporary representations of African paganism. In explanations of their culture, educators stress that Africans were monotheistic before Christians came to proselytize. For example, the Right Reverend Dr. Peter Sarpong insists in his book on Ghanaian cultures that "the African possesses an abundance of values which require only a little polishing up to be 'christian'" (1974, 64).

After I asked my seminar group why Christianity was so popular given its unpleasant origins, some conceded that their ancestors converted for "business" purposes or because they preferred Christian belief systems to others. One of the trainees, Raymond, explained that Ghanaians had "traditionalized" Christianity after colonization ended: "Gone were the days when they used organs and piano, those were western values. But today we use drums, whereby the Africans will know that, yes, this is part of me and this is what I'm using to worship my God so they have married the culture[s]." His explanation illustrates the difficulty of capturing a single, pure Ghanaian culture that educators and others yearn for.

### Practicing "Our Culture"

As in other postcolonial African nations, Ghana's religious and ethnic diversity frustrates the "quest for coherence or unity" in the nation (Kramer 1997, 537). In telling each group's history, textbook authors cannot avoid the various conflicts among the groups, as in this story: "King Okai Kwei did not allow the inland traders like the Akwamu to trade directly with the Europeans. The inlanders traders [sic] paid more for the goods they bought from the Ga. The Akwamu did not like this" (Tamakloe et al. 1987, 103). While they try to remain neutral about each ethnic group, Tamakloe et al. seem to admire the Asante, the group that formed the largest empire and put up the longest resistance to European rule. According to the authors, in creating their empire, the Asante "brought" together other Akan groups "who were . . . not strong enough to defend themselves" against the "heavy taxes" of a "hated" group, the Denkyira (Tamakloe et al. 1987, 96-99). The Asante are therefore "remembered" for defeating an unpopular ruler and forming a kingdom by "forgetting" (Anderson 1991) that many Africans resisted the Asante's efforts to gain control of the gold and slave trade. Even when the Asante were defeated, the authors try to find a positive result—"The Asantehene, Kofi Karikari, was very sad . . . But he was able to extend the empire to Eweland"—for a war whose cause seems to be aggression—"They [Asante] wanted these areas [Ewe] to come into the Asante empire too" (Tamakloe et al. 1987, 102).<sup>7</sup>

Children are urged to move beyond these conflicts by placing little emphasis on their ethnic differences and thinking of ways to become more united:

Before *colonial rule*, each of the groups, had lived on its own [sic]. Colonial rule and independence brought all these ethnic groups into one nation and as one people. It is no longer very important to see oneself as belonging to this ethnic group or another. What is important is to think of ways by which members of the different ethnic groups can come together and become more united. (Tamakloe et al. 1987, 91-92; italics in original)

In their seventh grade textbook, Adu-Gyimah and Odumah explain that, "Ethnocentrism is bad, because it brings division, wars and conflict among ethnic groups" (2002, 11). To create a "common memory of belonging" among the disparate groups (Eley and Suny 1996, 22), textbook authors declare Ghana's various ethnic festivals, language, and food to be "our culture," since, after all, "most of the cultural practices [in Ghana] are . . . generally the same" (Tamakloe et al. 1987, 105). Similarly, my students noted that it was fine to celebrate the cultures of others because "the way we dress and the foods we eat are almost the same." Therefore, multiculturalism is what unites Ghanaians: "We have these different ways of showing our culture because of the different language groups in the country. It is therefore a blessing that we have many language groups in Ghana" (Tamakloe et al. 1988, 37).<sup>8</sup> The newer fourth grade textbook explains, "we should love each other for our differences as well as the things we share.

We should not say bad things about other religions" (Quartey, Otu, and Forson 2000, 32). A trainee explained how diversity can unite people: "Here, as I have heard the other people speaking their language and I have develop [sic] interest in their language and food, I will connect myself with them so that, I can also know how to speak their language and how to prepare some of their food." In fact, citizens are required to participate in the cultures of others in order to be a "full Ghanaian." Practicing "our culture" simultaneously unifies the nation and distinguishes it from others: "We all like our culture. It brings us all together as a nation. It makes us different from other people. You may be born in Ghana, you may have Ghanaian parents, but if you do not practise our culture you are not a full Ghanaian" (Tamakloe et al. 1987, 105).<sup>9</sup>

In these explanations, Ghana's diverse and fluid cultures are petrified and reduced to their "most obvious superficial and flashy aspect[s]." This "culturalism" (Hountondji 1983, 160) excludes practices and ideas that are viewed as potentially disruptive. When I asked teacher trainees in my classes what connected them with other Ghanaians, one group stressed the importance of participating in each others' festivals, as long as they are legal: "We all have respect for one another's [sic] festival. We all come together to celebrate the festival of any religion as was accepted by the government." Connecting proper national identity with participation in legal and peaceful cultural activities also helps preserve social relations that are being threatened by western practices like homosexuality and atheism. When people attend a wedding or a chief's durbar, they affirm their loyalty to traditional/Ghanaian values such as marriage between men and women, belief in god, and deference to elders. But in other settings, the components of "our culture" remain disputed. For example, traditionalists still practice "fetish" to the dismay of their Christian neighbors, while an administrator at Peki berated worshippers for spending more time at church than at work.

Nationalism is therefore a site of "cultural contestation" as well as "affiliation and establishment" (Bhabha 1990, 5). One group in my class alluded to debates over their national language: "We have many dialect which bring many variation [sic] like the Ewe, Fanti, Twi and Ga, [but] we are still under the auspices of one official language which [is] the English language. This enhances our communication at school, home and other public areas . . . though there is this sense of colonialism which has made us adopt such language as an official language." They were referring to the decision by Kwame Nkrumah to de-emphasize ethnicity in the new nation—ethnic parties were forbidden and English was chosen so as not to favor one language over another. To further erase differences among the groups, ethnic myths, symbols, and heroes are nationalized and provide an "alphabet for collective consciousness" (Berlant 1991, 20). For example, Mama Yaa Asantewa, the female Asante leader who conducted an uprising against the British, is elevated as a national hero—even though she lacked support from other Asante as well as certain ethnic groups on the Gold Coast. Ghanaian adolescents stressed the importance of ethnic symbols like the Asante Golden Stool, noting that, "it serves as a symbol of unity for Ghana. It

was able to unite all of the kingdoms and that is why it is important to us" (Levstik and Groth 2003, 11). Their re-interpretation of Asante aggression as a source of unity elides the discontent that plagued the kingdom.

By practicing and preserving a benign version of "our culture," educators struggle valiantly against the lures of outside ideas. Not only is Ghana's culture, and therefore their uniqueness as people and nation, at stake, indisciplined, godless, sexually perverse western cultures threaten to overwhelm their carefully cultivated morality, which is seen as necessary for achieving capitalist development. But there is a paradox in teachers' "romantic racialism" (Frederickson 1995) about the good morality and natural unity of Africans—citizens can repulse western influences by maintaining a distinct African culture, but African customs are also useful for attracting western capitalists and visitors. Ghanaians recognize that their cultures are appealing to outsiders like black nationalists and others who "valorize" African cultures as "the possible salvation" for the problems of western civilization (Hountondji 1983, 157-8). In letters they wrote to my students, many of the trainees wanted to instruct Americans about their customs, for example explaining naming practices ("if a child is born on Sunday, then that child will be called Awusi, Kosi and others") and festivals ("we observe many festivals . . . During festivals libation is poured to thank the ancestors for their protection throughout the year"). Their pedagogy was aimed at appeasing westerners' fears and misunderstandings, as when they mentioned that Ghanaians are "lovely and friendly . . . to your people" and "we live in peace, unity, and stability." When I asked my students what they would like me to teach my students in the United States about Ghana, one wrote:

When you teach about . . . Ghana ["peaceful co-existent of citizens, good democratic dispensation . . . a rich culture in the performance of dance, drummer, our way of dressing with good expensive clothes" (sic)], people from the US would be more interested in coming to Ghana and Africa to . . . correct the impression that we in Africa lived in trees and is full of wars . . . it would encourage people/investors to come down and invest in our economy for mutual benefit to citizens of both countries [sic].

This student skillfully undermines prevailing images about Africans in the United States, and blends the kinds of things investors seek with the exotic things tourists want to observe—social order and democracy, cultural fashions and performances. The perfect balance between tradition and modernity, it is hoped, will convince westerners of Ghana's civility and promise.

Flowing alongside discourses of unity are counter-narratives of jealousy, insults, and competition that threaten to cause indiscipline at any moment. Ethnic tensions have arisen during elections, as when Akan politicians suggested that "aliens" like Ewes (who, like most tribes, migrated from outside the country) should leave the country. Ewe students at Peki complained that Akans sat separately from them in the dining hall. Ewes were apparently derogatively referred to as "number nine" because the Volta Region was the last of the nine regions to

join the independent nation.<sup>10</sup> Conflicts among different believers also flare from time to time. In 2001, Ga people in Accra clashed with Christians who wanted to continue drumming in their churches during a month-long period in May when the Ga ban all drumming. Teachers and textbook writers try to distract children from these conflicts by blaming “white men” for Africa’s underdevelopment and declining moral values. But whites also provide the models of development toward which they aspire.

### Avoiding Disgrace to Our Country

Ghanaian teachers’ acute awareness of their poverty in relation to that of the developed world is not only manifested in daily struggles to make a living, it is clear in the gated homes, fancy technology, and expensive sports utility vehicles of wealthy Europeans and Americans (but also rich Africans, Asians, and Arabs). In their junior secondary text, Adu-Gyimah and Odumah explain the problem: a legacy of five hundred years of slavery and colonization

... led to the creation of a slave mentality and dependence on European nations, which have not yet been broken. [We need to] create a nation consisting of people who feel equal to all peoples of the earth in terms of intelligence, imagination, creative ability, physical ability, and most important, the capacity to manufacture and produce goods and services for ourselves and for export. (2002, 18)

Teachers play an important role in teaching children the attitudes and behaviors necessary for disciplined development. While many believed that Christianity was imposed on their ancestors and could be a conduit of harmful western ideas, certain Christian values were useful for spreading discipline and industry. The fifth grade teachers’ manual combines World Bank rationalism with missionary values to explain the importance of lessons about work: “Training leads to the acquisition of skills which make people work better and faster and, therefore, produce more. Children must, however, be made aware that high productivity also depends, to a large extent, on the dedication of a worker to his work and the sincerity, honesty, and faithfulness with which he works” (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991, 46). This message is repeated in the most recent fourth grade text that offers further incentive to work hard by stressing individual gains: “When people work hard they produce more. This enables them to earn more money. It also makes the country more wealthy” (Quartey, Otu, and Forson 2000, 38).<sup>11</sup> Good values are important as they help prevent “wrong ways of behaving” such as lying, cheating, stealing, laziness, and corruption (Quartey, Otu, and Forson 2000, 67). Without these values, the country will remain poor: “God loves us in Ghana and has given us all these minerals . . . But if we ourselves are not *honest* we shall always be poor. For example, if those who dig the minerals steal some of them, our country will not become rich” (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 53). Children must also engage in honest work to promote international respect:

“We should also not do the type of work that will become a disgrace to our country . . . We all have a duty to protect this respect [of other countries] and not bring disgrace to our country” (1991a, 37).

By underscoring the values and practices they believe are necessary for development, teachers hope to free the country from foreign influences. Children are warned about their duty to reduce the country’s dependence on foreign expertise in the fourth grade textbook: “[Adopting solar power] can be done only if Ghanaians themselves train to be scientists and technicians who can make their own machines. If we make our own machines it will be able to work better in our country than machines that are made for us by other people [sic]. We will be able to provide the spare parts when the machines break down” (Tamakloe et al. 1988, 67). In 2002, President Kufuor reminded graduates of the College of Health Science at the University of Ghana that, “As part of the leadership you dare not abdicate your responsibilities to this nation and the people for what invariably turns out to be greener pastures elsewhere” (BBC Monitoring 2002b). The “greener pastures” of developed countries provide the models of economic development toward which Ghanaians aspire. In the section on solar power, children learn that one of their natural resources is abundant sunshine. People in countries where there is “very little sunshine” come to Ghana to sunbathe—“The sunlight makes them happy. It also makes them healthy and strong.” A picture of tourists at a beach is captioned “white people sun bathing.” The authors write that “foreign scientists” have managed to create solar power despite their climate and hint that Ghanaians have not worked hard enough to exploit their sunlight: “All these things [using solar energy] can be done in countries where there is very little sunshine, so here, in Ghana, where we have plenty of sunshine, we must make good use of our sunlight” (Tamakloe et al. 1988, 64-67).<sup>12</sup>

In addition to maintaining attitudes and behaviors that increase productivity and show respect for their country, citizens are expected to take action to defend the country’s interests: “[Patriotism] means that you will have to love your country very much and be ready to defend its interests as much as you can. You won’t sit down unconcerned while some people do things that will *ruin* your country.” Children are enlisted in the national struggle against indiscipline by informing the police “whenever we know of any thieves or other law-breakers. We should not be keeping information away from them [police]” (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 39; italics in original). Work is more than a means of earning a living, it is a national duty that will prevent neo-colonialism. Baku, Ballans, and Omudie explain in one of the longest units in the textbook, “Making the Things We Need Ourselves,” that “we should produce more than we need” as a way to break free from the cycle of borrowing and debt. Sixth graders then learn about the operations of global economics. Uncle Mensah tells Abena, “It is better to produce our own goods to get our own money so that we stop borrowing from other countries . . . when we borrow from other countries . . . we will have to pay more than what we borrowed. And if we continue to do this, our country will become poor. Other countries will not like to give us any more loans” (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 55). In addition to becoming poor

which means "many countries will not respect us," lenders take away self-determination:

The countries from which our country borrows money will begin to tell us which countries must be our friends. They will even tell us the countries which must be our enemies . . . They will tell us how we must use the loans. They will tell us what things we must buy with the money. They can also tell us the countries from which we should buy those things. They might even bring goods which our country does not need. (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 59)

Since investment is preferable to loans, the textbook authors exhort children to work hard and remain orderly in order to produce their own goods, free Ghana from such labels as poor and indebted, and attract capital investment. Industrial capitalism is viewed as their salvation: if Ghanaians produce their own "farm machines, factory machines, medicines, books, lorries and airplanes," they would "make people live happily" and achieve "development" (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 56). When children are told not to expect the government "to do everything for us," neo-liberalism is converted into anti-colonialism that will reduce their dependence. Suggesting that teachers "should lead you [schoolchildren] in self-help projects in our towns and villages," Mensah explains that: "Everybody in the country has to do something to help our leaders to rule. When we do that, we are helping ourselves." The authors recall Ghana's tumultuous postcolonial years of protests, military coups, and economic crises when they urge all citizens to be disciplined:

Farmers, fishermen and traders must sell their goods at low prices so that people will be able to buy them. Drivers must not charge high fares to make people feel unhappy. Soldiers and policemen must not beat up people when they want to keep order. Our leaders themselves must also work hard. (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 49-50)

As the excerpts in this chapter have shown, people in Ghana made creative omissions, deceptions, and compromises as they presented their historical and cultural narratives—discourses of unity became "weapons" against disunity, stories of white exploitation "shielded" indigenous leaders from criticism (Malkki 1996, 448). In looking to their future, educators hope Ghana will achieve the same kind of industrialization as white men but without exploiting others. In fact, exploitation would be impossible because Africans are more virtuous than Europeans. As people who only wanted to be friends, Africans emerge in their histories as morally superior to unfriendly Europeans. African leaders are viewed as incapable of carrying out oppressive practices, as when textbook authors legitimize Rawlings' military regime because it is rule by a Ghanaian. These images of victimization overlook other African roles of collaboration with whites or resistance to colonizers. This essentialism was contested when Daniel argued in a seminar discussion about imperialism, "If we had been in the same position of power we would have done the same." But

other participants disagreed, arguing that Africans are not as intolerant and racist as whites, and re-affirming themselves as different and superior.

### Notes

1. The Ghanaian government commissioned textbooks only for primary and junior secondary schoolchildren. Sometimes these texts were distributed free to the schools, but more often, parents had to purchase them. On the covers of texts I purchased in 2000-2001, a sticker noting "Approved for sale by min of education" covered another statement that said "Ghana government property, Strictly not for sale." Because of their cost, some parents bought cheaper and poorer quality texts written by self-publishers.

2. At least Africans appear as historical actors in the process of imperialism. American social studies textbook writers Farah and Karls eradicate African people during the drive to colonize Africa—Europeans "swallow up" land, "explore" Africa, and "acquire" new territories. A few African heroes are mentioned: Asante queen Yaa Asantewaa is noted for rallying "her people against British expansion" (2001, 485).

3. While the dichotomy of friendly Africans/deceptive white men simplifies a complex history, and tends to underplay the active role of Africans in making history, there were periods when Europeans took ruthless advantage of Africans. Bailey confirmed an oral account by Anlo-Ewe chiefs in which Europeans and North Americans lured the drummers of the chief with whom they usually traded onto a slave ship in 1856. Prior to abolition in 1833, Europeans and Americans worked through chiefs along the coasts, who traded people from the interior. Abolition created an era of greater lawlessness, reverting the slave trade to its early days of theft and deception so that even former allies were not exempt from capture (Bailey 2005, 27-56).

4. The authors encourage children to take a stand at the end of the chapter by asking students to, "Give two differences between the rule of soldiers and that of civilians . . . Which type do you prefer? Why?" (Baku, Ballans, and Omudie 1991a, 47).

5. Not all missionaries in West Africa were white men. African American churches were established in Ghana and women also came (Weisbord 1973). As TFA and Peace Corps volunteers have learned, Ghanaians identify blacks from the U.S. or Europe as western, calling one volunteer a "black white woman" or "black European" (Zimmerman 1995, 1017).

6. In a contemporary example, Fair argues that the recent adoption of Valentine's Day in Accra is "best understood as a local process imbued with local meanings and values, deliberately and rationally pursued" (2004, 23).

7. According to Iliffe, small states or African "statelessness" could also be a source of strength: "By the First World War, the European powers had, on paper, partitioned the entire African continent except Liberia and Ethiopia . . . On the ground, however, many large and remote areas remained outside European control . . . Throughout the continent smaller groups, usually stateless, defied European overlords as they had defied all previous governments" (Iliffe 1995, 191). Such groups also resisted Asante rule during and after "unification."

8. An adolescent interviewed by Levstik and Groth noted a more pragmatic reason for learning others' languages: "You can't go to a place and they will be speaking another

language you think they're insulting you but if you know something about that, it is better" (2003, 11). The junior secondary text agreed that learning languages helps "remove suspicion" (Adu-Gyimah and Odumah 2002, 12).

9. The creation of a shared culture based on diverse cultures promotes unity but also helps preserve plurality. A group in my class captured the paradox of creating unity out of diversity: "The way we worship God, the interwoven cultural practices like language and dressing among these various ethnic groups and above all the place of migration of our great grandfathers [are] factors that make us see one another as people of different ethnic groups but one." According to Appiah, Ghanaian teachers have to work harder to create a "shared culture" because "substantial differences in language and culture are created outside the state, independently of the media and the schools [in Ghana]. There it is really true that schools need to work hard to create a shared culture, here [United States] it is increasingly true that schools are central in articulating cultural differences [by teaching multiculturalism]" (1998, 49).

10. The people in the Volta Region were worried about their representation under Kwame Nkrumah. They boycotted the elections for independence, waiting to see whether or not they could join with other Ewe across the border in Togo (Amenumey 1989).

11. The 1988 textbook does not mention monetary rewards for work. The 2002 text mentions several times that more education leads to better jobs and more pay (Quartey, Otu, and Forson 2000, 40, 42), indicating the influence of human capital theory. Perhaps in response to ongoing resistance to schooling, Quartey, Otu, and Forson also detail why even farmers and mechanics need to learn math and science (2000, 36-37).

12. The authors do not identify the scientists' origins or the names of the regions "with very little sunshine." My teaching colleagues claimed that they had learned a lot more geography in the past and had to draw a world map from memory.

## Conclusion

### A Model to All of Africa

We all agreed that much dismantling was needed to introduce modernity within our traditions . . . We were full of nostalgia but were resolutely progressive. (Ba 1989, 18-19)

As citizens of the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from their colonizer, many Ghanaians feel a special mission to act as leaders on the African continent. This sentiment is reflected in their choice of national symbol—a black star—and was reiterated by President Kufuor at his inauguration on January 7, 2005, when he declared that, "Ghana has a historic duty to be a model to all of Africa." Noting that it has taken Ghana "some forty years" to achieve stability, he urged: "Let us rededicate ourselves to the discipline, hard work, and effort that it will take to achieve our vision."<sup>1</sup>

Discipline is a local and national concern that often meshes well with global development visions promoted by past and present missionaries. But external reformers' demands are also contested and undermined as teachers carry out their work of nation-building. Ghanaians' simultaneous attraction and aversion to "white men" creates the "fragmented histories" (Bailey 2005, 21) in their textbooks, the contradictions between democracy and discipline in teacher training, and the paradoxes of educators' partnership with donors and lenders. On the one hand, teachers blame white men and the capitalist system for their underdevelopment. Western deceptiveness led to the exploitation of Africans, and the immoralities of whites continue to endanger the cultures of Ghana. As one tutor remarked about Europeans, "Those closest to the Vatican are furthest from God." To prevent cultural imperialism, educators insist that "true" Ghanaians eat cultural foods, speak tribal languages, wear African cloth, and celebrate traditional festivals. Ultimately, however, educators are willing to work within the capitalist system and help carry out donors and lenders' modernizing mission by encouraging children to defer to authorities and work hard. These lessons are crucial to promoting investment and tourism, achieving wealth, and finally gaining independence from outsiders.

Though they cannot dismantle the structures that keep Ghana at the periphery of the global economy, teachers' efforts may not be in vain. The country's political stability, low crime rates, and work force might attract investment and bring some of the advantages of capitalism. Cell phones are widely available, a