

Tradition, Urbanity, and “Colonial Legacy” at the Ghana National Museum¹ Arianna Fogelman

Introduction

The predicament of African museums is familiar. The hundreds of government, private, and public institutions that dot the continent have fallen victim, over the years, to the same problems as Africa itself: political instability, lack of financial austerity, and an identity crisis brought on by the ravages of post-colonialism, urbanity, and “modernization.” Many of these museums began as cabinets of curiosity for colonial administrators, or were commissioned by local governments shortly after independence as sites for newly emerging national identities. They were envisioned and built as institutions to preserve, for varying reasons, local material cultural heritage.

After several generations of operation to preserve via “salvage ethnography” (Clifford 1986) the vestiges of a rapidly disappearing past, it is widely acknowledged that these museums have themselves become relics (Monreal 1976, Konare 1983, ICOM 1992, Eyo 1994, Ardouin 1996, Arinze 1998, Adedze 2002). The problems facing the institutions are widespread. With few exceptions,² the structures of African museums are dilapidated from years of neglect. Storage facilities are overcrowded and unkept and the rarely registered or otherwise unaccessioned collections kept within them, generally unrepresentative of a nation’s material cultural wealth, are falling victim to conservation problems such as inherent vice, improper care, and neglect (Costa 1992). Individual nations’ cultural resource management legislation largely restrict definitions of material heritage to antiques, and lack enforcement mechanisms to ensure the retention of artifacts, leading to widespread looting across the continent (ICOM 1997, MacEachern 2001). Many museums on the African continent have never changed their exhibitions, displays dating back three or four decades, resulting in vitrine upon vitrine of structural-functionally organized displays portraying elements of local culture in a crude comparative, and often evolutionary, fashion (Price 1989, Ravenhill 1996, Jules-Rosette 2002). The continent additionally lacks professional training programs; the far-reaching aims of PREMA³ were only partially achieved when the program formally ended in 2000, a majority of museum staffs unfamiliar with rapidly changing technologies, museum standards, and emerging solutions to common conservation problems affecting tropical regions of the world. Often catering to tourists, especially as culture is further envisioned and defined as a commodity and untapped resource by the development industry (Sen 2004), these museums are able to offer little in the way of personal relevancy for local citizens in their surrounding urban communities that view

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² Several museums on the African continent have recently undergone extensive renovations, training, and reinterpretation of exhibitions, most notably the new National Museum in Mali (Konare 1983, Arnoldi 1999).

³ Begun in 1988, PREMA (Prevention in Museums in Africa) was an ICOM (International Council on Museums)-administered program corresponding with UNESCO’s World Decade for Cultural Development. Courses and seminars aimed at improving the storage conditions of collections sub-Saharan African museums.

museums as places for “things that are dead” (Konare 1983, Sowah Report 1978). These institutions are unpatronized, underutilized, and underfunded. Countless museums in Africa are literally falling apart.⁴

Like its counterparts across the African continent, the Ghana National Museum has been internally and externally described as outdated, neo-colonial in its presentation of culture, and problematic in its operations (Hansen 1961, Anquandah 1989, Eyo 1994, Crinson 2001, Kankpeyeng and DeCorse 2004). This has led to five restructuring plans over the past ten years (GMMB 1993, GMMB 1996, Cooper 1998, GMMB 1998, Ricerca 2002). Africanist scholars have often placed blame for such situations of stagnation and underdevelopment on “colonial legacy,” or external forces grounded in the colonial era preventing modernization from taking place across the African continent. The colonists built the museums, the argument goes, and the troubles facing the institutions today are from lack of infrastructure dating to that era and contemporary museum staffs blindly following Western ideologies. Solutions are thus typically centered in more funding, bigger and better buildings, and “Africanizing” operations, though this process is rarely defined and resources rarely allocated in a sustainable manner. In this essay I argue that such blame and “solution” can be both short sided, by reducing complex cultural matrices and world politics to “colonial legacy,” and ethnocentric in assuming stagnation and problems in areas that may more closely reflect nuance and local relevance, and in essence envision an end goal in which African museums more closely resemble their Western counterparts, somewhat perpetuating the colonial legacy they seek to remedy.

In light of new scholarship tasking academics to move beyond colonialism and discover the root causes and histories of individual predicaments as well as the internal cultural reasoning for their evolution and continuation (Cooper and Stoler 1997, Chabal and Deloz 1999, Odhiambo 2002, Fairweather 2004), in this essay I demonstrate how external and internal forces and various cultural matrices have, since its inception in 1927, affected the Ghana National Museum. Referencing archival research, interviews with present and former staff members and local museum professionals, site visits, visitor surveys, and collections and exhibition analysis to identify specific historical circumstances, including colonial legacy but expanding beyond it as well, that affect the ways in which the Ghana National Museum operates, I am able offer several specific suggestions from a museological perspective for creating an institution that can handle the changes and renovations envisioned by the governing Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB). However, my analysis also suggests that, from an anthropological perspective considering the museum as a culturally malleable concept, the Ghana National Museum may already be successful, and that transforming the institution may not be the most appropriate or culturally relevant course of action.

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The “Colonial Legacy”: Achimota College and Collecting Ghana’s Past

⁴ While much of the discussion here is pertinent to museums in developing countries more generally, the African continent will be the geographic focus of this paper to avoid over-generalizations, and due to the author’s lack of familiarity with museums in other regions. Comparing the situation of museums in Africa to those in other developing and post-colonial nations, or small museums in the developed world, are topics that have not been explored.

The origins of the Ghana National Museum can be traced to the colonial era when the collections, institutional conceptualization, and exhibitions were first formulated. The next three sections of this paper will proceed in that order (objects, edifice, displays), defining the “colonial legacy” of the Ghana National Museum so that we may answer the question of whether or not Museum operations are still affected by these historical circumstances, and how various other internal and external forces have equally, if not exceedingly, been influential. I begin here by looking at the collection of the Museum and, incidentally, the origins of the museum concept in Ghana.

Although the Ghana National Museum did not exist in name until 1957, its history begins in 1927 at the experimental educational institution of Achimota College. The school, located in the rolling hills of Legon, approximately eight miles from the city center of Accra, first opened its gates in 1924. It was founded by then governor of the Gold Coast (now Ghana) Sir Gordon Guggisburg who believed, counter to many of his contemporaries, that Africans had the mental capacity for formal education. He was joined by the Reverend Alexander Gordon Fraser who also refused to believe the common notion of African intellectual inferiority, and European-trained Ghanaian Emman Kwegyir Aggrey (Agbodeka 1977). Education at Achimota, as Guggisburg envisioned it, was to be infused with local culture and heritage as a basis of education. “At the head of the list of aims” writes Agbodeka in an historical review of the Achimota College, “was the plan to produce a type of student that was ‘Western’ in his intellectual attitude toward life, with a respect for science and capacity for sympathetic thought, and desirous of preserving and developing what was deserving of respect in ‘tribal’ life, custom, rule and law” (ibid: 32). Thus, in addition to scientific and classical subjects, all pupils at Achimota were enrolled in locally inspired courses covering regional languages, history, geography, music, and drama.

Amidst this setting, English-born professor and archaeologist Charles Thurston Shaw initiated what was to become the first formal museum in West Africa and one of the first on the African continent (Braunholtz n.d.: 6). Founded in 1927 to preserve and house the archaeological specimens excavated during the construction of Achimota, the Anthropology Museum⁵ was run by Shaw through 1945 and visited mainly by students and staff of the school (Agorsah 1978: 5). During this same timeframe the museum’s eclectic collection, which can generally be described as miscellaneous groups of donations given largely by colonial administrators and religious missionaries with at best amateur expertise (Crinson 2001: 234), grew to nearly 10,000 objects. These objects covered a wide geographic area, coming from all over the African continent and other colonial territories. In 1929, for example, Lady Willcocks, widow of the late James Willcocks who had served in command of a relief expedition to Kumasi in central Ghana and later in Burma, donated a collection of cutlasses, swords, guns and ethnographical specimens collected during his travels (GNMAR, Book 1).⁶ The collection additionally grew with gifts from local industries, environmental samples coming in from the Gold Coast Geological Survey Department and minerals from Ashanti Goldfields

⁵ The Anthropology Museum is also referred to in various publications as the Gold Coast Museum and the Achimota Anthropology Museum.

⁶ Such small donations of assorted ethnological artifacts were especially typical of recently widowed wives.

Corporation (Agbodeka 1977: 110). Anything and everything thought to be related to the history and heritage of the Gold Coast was sent to Shaw and his growing museum.

The greatest numbers of specimens sent to Shaw's museum came as archaeological specimens. To understand Shaw's and thus the museum's propensity for the archaeological and the amateur, one must first understand Shaw's motivations and rationale as founder, director, collections manager and curator of the Achimota Anthropology Museum. Shaw believed it imperative to collect and preserve the heritage of the Gold Coast to ensure that its future citizens would be able to understand their past and therefore face the future. "A people which has a hazy idea about its past," Shaw wrote, "cannot feel truly self-confident" (1946: 3). For Shaw, an "unscientific history" based on cultural anthropology or oral history, would be insufficient for the task of spurring this confidence. "History based on tribal traditions is of great value and an indispensable adjunct of the more strictly archaeological method, but the warning must be given that it is apt to be unreliable . . . We are forced to turn to archaeological methods to study the past" (ibid.: 4-5). Because there were few people on the African continent scientifically trained to evaluate archaeological sites and specimens, and many artifacts to be collected, Shaw advocated basic training in the identification and collection of archaeological specimens for everyone. "In tropical Africa," he writes, "the nearest expert may be hundreds of miles away from the site of discovery. It is therefore important that government officials, miners, farmers, educated Africans and others should have sufficient knowledge to enable them to observe and record archaeological material on the spot, thus preserving data for others' interpretation as well as their own" (ibid: 3). Any person, Shaw espoused, that could learn the technique for adequate recording, an objective attitude, and the ability to distinguish stone artifacts could benevolently contribute to African archaeology and thus the definition and documentation of the continent's history by sending specimens to the Museum, where a trained expert could properly analyze them.

As was standard at the time, both archaeological and ethnographic objects were sent into the Museum accompanied by very little documentation – artifacts, it was thought, could speak for themselves and the cultural origin, use, producer, production technique, method of acquisition, and other contemporary standards for documenting provenance and provenience, were seen to be of little import (O'Hanlon 2000: 2). Thus a very large, poorly contextually documented collection was established and, upon the Museum's resolution, passed on to the University College of the Gold Coast. In 1951 the decision was formally made to establish a national museum, and in 1957 the former-Achimota-cum-University collection was gifted to the Ghana National Museum (GMMB 1973).⁷

Analyzing the rationale and motivation of individual collectors and early institutions has been advocated in recent museology as an important factor in understanding the life history of individual objects as well as evaluating the validity of museum collections as representing the material culture of the locales from which they were obtained.

⁷ This transitional stage for the collection from the University of the Gold Coast to the Ghana National Museum, as well as the relations between the two institutions, will be covered in greater detail in the following sections.

Without such analysis, it is thought, using these objects for research, educational, and exhibition purposes can lead to faulty assumptions and sidestep ethical dilemmas (Rosman and Rubel 1998, O'Hanlon and Welsch 2000, Gosden and Knowles 2001). For the present analysis, it thus becomes important to analyze the rationale and motivations of Charles Thurston Shaw as a faculty member of Achimota College, an institution formulated and run largely by colonists. Despite its temporally unusual positive attitude toward African cultures and support of the radical notions of African education and Ghanaian independence, Achimota College's intentions have been traced to the colonial government. Agbodeka writes of the political gain for Britain in the education afforded at Achimota in that it laid the groundwork for indirect rule, "To cultivate in the student a respect for the customs and traditions of his country was to turn him ultimately into a useful official in the indirect review system, which controlled people through their indigenous institutions" (1977: 33). French West African authorities referred to Achimota as a "tool in the hands of the British colonialist" and made note of the fact that, financially, the institution was completely within the colonial system (ibid: 132). Further criticism came from those that felt it dangerous to circumscribe with such precision the limits and ranges of African education (ibid: 134); both W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey, leaders of contemporaneous movements for Black equality in the United States, publicly spoke out against Achimota (ibid). In the end, insurmountable racism and opposition to Achimota's ideals and progressive policies, combined with a European military takeover of the compound during World War II, led to the progressive decline of the institution.

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Agbodeka writes of the disagreements on the ultimate aims of Achimota as a symbol of the larger tension at the institution between African and European cultures. "Achimota's aims of combining what was good in both cultures meant that the staff must first of all preserve the good part of African culture. *A predominantly European staff could not decide rightly which aspects of African culture should be preserved.* For instance, Europeans could not know whether drumming and dancing and local art taken from their roots in African religion and social life would lose their reality and become 'eye wash'" (ibid: 137, italics mine). These words serve as an appropriate starting point for evaluating the history of the institution as it affects current operations. A museum's collection, and particularly that of a national museum, is meant to preserve what is important in a country's history and for its cultures. The question thus looms: What effect, if any, does a collection amassed largely by colonialists, missionaries, and other foreign amateurs, and thus the preservation of a country's material cultural heritage as defined in a particular period of time by a group of foreign people with, depending on one's opinion, either noble or sinister intentions, have on the contemporary operation of a museum? More specifically, what effects, if any, can be observed at the Ghana National Museum today? The answer of whether or not the Ghana National Museum is still influenced by this history and whether or not it can rightly be defined as "colonial legacy" will be touched upon below and returned to at the conclusion of this essay.

Formulating a National Museum: Braunholtz and The University College

Government records at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) in Accra indicate that correspondence about the establishment of a national museum had begun by January of 1943, and by 1944 three individuals, staunchly anti-colonial anthropologist Max Gluckman, Governor Alan Burns, and eminent biologist Julian Huxley, were in regular correspondence about the museum idea (PRAAD CSO 21/9/23 #4247). A proposal entitled "Research and Development in Archaeology, Ethnography, African Art and Museums in West Africa" was prepared by Huxley in 1944 and submitted to a government committee appointed to research the possibility of developing a museum. Huxley was particularly attentive in this essay to the conservation and exhibition functions of a museum, and called for a series of four territorial and ten to twelve local museums for the Gold Coast. If action was not taken, Huxley argued, both material culture and local traditions were "in imminent danger of disappearing or degenerating before proper record is made of them." The plan, as he outlined it, divided the collection of material culture into categories of scientific interest, historical interest, aesthetic value, and cultural and political value. Together these collections would encompass archaeology, ethnology and art. Huxley proposed that the museums should be closely associated with the University of the Gold Coast, and placed a particular urgency on collecting gold weights that were being purchased by foreigners and melted down for their metal components without regard to their importance in Ghanaian history. Lord William Malcom Hailey lent his support to the plan in May of 1944, but it remained tabled for two years (*ibid*).

In 1946 the British Museum's ethnographer Hermann Justus Braunholtz was invited by the British government "to survey the position with regard to the preservation of West African antiquities, and to advise the governments concerned on such action as may appear to be necessary for their collection and display." Braunholtz made a two-month tour of Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia.⁸ While in the Gold Coast for twelve days, Braunholtz visited Achimota College, toured slave forts and markets in Accra, and traveled to Cape Coast and Kumasi. During his stay he was introduced to a number of foreign and local dignitaries, including the Asantehene, King of the Ashanti people.⁹ Braunholtz, if his seemingly awe-inspired report is any indication, was impressed with what he saw.

Similar to Shaw, Braunholtz emphasized the importance of preserving elements of material cultures as an "indispensable [sic.] means of creating in the African a balanced perspective of his own past, from which will spring confidence in his future progress" (Braunholtz n.d.: 3). Also like Shaw, and like many of his contemporaries, Braunholtz saw African culture as a remnant of an, until recently, unchanging past that would need to be documented quickly by preserving "antiques" before the prehistoric way of life became influenced by modernity. Prehistory on the African continent, Braunholtz writes "extends down to recent times." He continues, "For practical purposes [prehistory] should even be extended to include contemporary ethnography" (*ibid*). To preserve these antiquities

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⁸ All countries were members of the British Commonwealth.

⁹ The position of Asantehene entails, in part, overseeing a wealth of cultural and historical paraphernalia, and ensuring the continuation of oral tradition.

Braunholtz proposed for British West Africa generally a combination of fieldwork, storehouses, staff training, national legislation addressing the preservation of antiques, and the establishment of museums (ibid: 8-9).¹⁰

For the Gold Coast specifically, Braunholtz outlined four primary needs for what he the preservation of antiquities, which can be seen as recommendations for a more general preservation of material cultural heritage or ethnographic documentation: (1) a systematic archaeological survey; (2) the protection of ancient and historic monuments; (3) the collection of archaeological and historic monuments; and (4) the provision of museums as storehouses for conserving and exhibiting the collections (ibid: 25). Focusing on recommendations regarding museums, as these played a significant role in the formation of the Ghana National Museum, Braunholtz suggested one central museum in Accra and three regional museums to be opened in successive years. Like Huxley before him, Braunholtz suggested a strong connection between the emerging national museum and the established University of the Gold Coast. "The amalgamation of the central and the university museum in a single foundation, administered by the University in association with Government representatives," he writes, is "desirable as an economical arrangement, which would avoid unnecessary duplication of collections and personnel" (ibid: 30). Braunholtz finds that the best possible solution to combining the two institutions while avoiding unnecessary duplication would be to use the National Museum as a place for "attractive exhibitions" that are "intelligible to the general public" while reserving the university facilities for serious academic research, more scholarly exhibitions, and storage of collections in "buildings scientifically planned for conservation and reference" (ibid: 31). This proposed relationship between the national museum and the university, as will be explored more fully below, is important in that it went on to become the basis of a healthy and later strained relationship between the two institutions, the source of much internal and cross-institutional tensions, and the cause of architectural decisions that affect the operations of the Ghana National Museum today.

Following Braunholtz's visit and subsequent report, very little official correspondence took place on the matter of the museum before 1949 when the then-Director of Education and Colonial Secretary¹¹ began to engage in conversation with the University about developing a museum (PRAAD 3/1/347). In March of 1949 a four-member committee consisting of Sir. Leslie McCarthy, Professor W.V. Variey, a "Mr. Seale" (an architect with the Public Works Department), and David Mowbrary Balme (then-principle of the University College), was appointed by the Monuments and Relics Committee to examine Braunholtz's report and write another proposal for the formation of a museum. The resultant document endorsed Braunholtz's four specific recommendations, adding a fifth on the establishment of an archive for the collection and preservation of the history of the colony (which later became

¹⁰ Ironically, this is largely the same list of recommendations offered in contemporary literature to solve the problems of the museums Braunholtz helped to establish.

¹¹ Because these correspondences were signed with his title rather than his personal name, I have been unable to identify this individual.

PRAAD). The creation of separate university and national museums, let alone one of the two, was, however, put on hold because the committee felt that the colony was “not yet able to shoulder the resultant burdens” (McCarthy 1949).

It was two years later, in 1951, that the government voted to allocate money to the University College of the Gold Coast to start a museum, which was incorporated into the engineering department, later transferred to the archaeology department, and largely stocked with the 1953 donation of the Achimota museum collection, consisting of some 10,000 objects and 29 showcases (GMMB 1973, National Museum of the Gold Coast 1953). That same year an Interim Council for the National Museum was instated, composed of representatives of national, regional, and educational interests. At its first meeting on 10 March 1953 it was resolved that there should be an exhibition gallery built in Accra as soon as possible. Reminiscent of the recommendations made by Huxley and later by Braunholtz, the new exhibition space cum National Museum was not to be an independent institution, but integrally tied to the university. “In view of the vast number of objects valuable for research but of little interest to the public, it was decided that the bulk of such material should remain at Legon; the building occupied by the Department of Archaeology will also constitute the Research Branch of the National Museum” (National Museum of the Gold Coast 1953). In recognition of this formal link between the new museum and the archaeology department, Dr. Oliver Davies, Reader in Archaeology at the University, was appointed Honorary Keeper of Antiques.

By 1954, a site at the corner of Barnes and Castle Roads in Accra had been obtained for building an exhibitions gallery, construction beginning the same year (University College of the Gold Coast 1954: 38). The contractors completed their work on 25 January 1957, and the Ghana National Museum opened to the public on 6 May of the same year (*ibid*). Mark Crinson writes critically of the initial construction of the physical building within which the National Museum is still housed. Focusing on the broad arching dome topping the structure, he laments that the building is entirely alien to Accra’s architecture and building traditions. “The dome, its location and materials mark out the museum as a separate and special kind of institution, a pantheon of the new nation, but they also distinguish it as both a symbol of modernization and an image without an indigenous history, the preserve of an educated urban elite” (2001: 233). The building remains, today, an anomaly of sorts, though its various modernist elements have been reduced to a dilapidated eyesore, which blends quite nicely with sprawling urban Accra.

While Crinson is interested in the theoretical and symbolic psycho-sociological consequences of this modernist domed structure for Ghanaian cultural identity and post-colonialism, my own focus in this section is instead on the dome’s, and indeed the entire building’s, practical ramifications for the Museum today. Returning to the post-Braunholtz Interim Council for the National Museum, recall that the recommendation was for an *exhibition gallery* to be placed in Accra (National Museum of the Gold Coast 1954); the majority of the collection and the entirety of the research facilities were to be located at the University College of the Gold Coast. As a consequence, the building at Barnes Road was constructed in a particular fashion. The storage facility at the new Accra exhibition hall (the Ghana National Museum) was, for example, understandably quite small. This would not have been problematic had the

majority of the collection not eventually been transferred to the National Museum facilities. Today much of what is kept in the storage facility has deteriorated beyond use due to improper care, sunlight, dust, and overcrowding (see photos 9 – 12). The original building also contained no offices for administrative staff (which was remedied in 1960), or spaces dedicated for use by the museum's curators and technical staff (carved out from the already inadequate storage space also in 1960), as these persons were proposed to be based out of Legon (see photos 5 – 8). Today there remains inadequate space to accommodate typical museum functions such as curation, conservation, research, and collections management, and museum staff has dwindled as of 2004 to three curators, two technicians, two educational staff, and a handful of security guards. All are crowded into three offices, taxed with almost entirely administrative responsibilities by the GMMB, and face a situation of shared resources in which, in the end, the GMMB always receives priority.

Even at the very beginning it was evident that the building would need to be expanded. In his speech at the museum's grand opening in 1957 the Minister of Education was already mentioning the need for expansion (GMMBAF 0045), and requests for more storage, exhibition, and office space are continuously referenced throughout the GMMB's annual reports. The situation led to collaboration with UNESCO in 1963 to expand the museum to include three large galleries, a conference hall, cinema facilities, a library, and a museum school service department (GMMB 1966, Minissi 1965). Famed museum architect Dr. Franco Minissi was invited to the facilities in 1964, with final consultation in 1965. The renovations were slated to be complete in 1969. But although plans were submitted and construction begun, the expansions never materialized; a coup overthrew the Nkrumah regime in 1966, UNESCO aid disappeared, the museum was transferred in a period of three years between four different government ministries and departments, and new leaders were both unable to finance and uninterested in continuing the construction of the cultural institution (Green 1998). As a result, half-built concrete walls surround the Museum; a memorial to what could have been [see photos 13, 14]. Moving beyond Crinson's hypothesized social-psychological dissonance between the building's domed structure and the peoples of Accra as a symbol of the enduring colonial legacy of the edifice and the institution as a whole, it seems that inheritance of a building constructed as an exhibition hall rather than a museum, and dependence on foreign aid and assistance (MacEachern 2001), are the historical circumstances that have an impact on museum operations today.

Independence Exposed: Opening the Exhibitions Hall

The Ghana National Museum opened to much fanfare as part of nation-wide independence celebrations in May of 1957, the first nation in a series of colonial strongholds to be handed over for native rule. Ghana's National Museum was also one in a series, multiple museums subsequently erected in former colonial capitals to promote nationalism and unity in diversity within the fledgling states. Building upon the earlier discussion of the Ghana National Museum's initial collection and edifice as they help to explain the institution's contemporary operations, I will

focus in this section on circumstances that have affected the Museum's exhibitions. Like the museum's initial collection, these displays were largely determined by foreigners who, while having, in some cases, the advantage of formal training, were in an awkward position to be responsible for representing the history and culture of Ghana to Ghanaians and to the world, especially in an overwhelming context of nationalism. In this section I will also examine how Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism may have also influenced the museum.

The Ghana National Museum's exhibitions were prepared for the Museum's opening gala and were curated and installed under the direction of the British husband and wife team Ralph and Lysbeth Webb Merrified, an arrangement made through the Museums Association (GMMBAF 0045, Hebditch 1995). The original theme of the exhibitions was "Man in Africa" and they encompassed a range of specimens arranged in comparative fashion – a series of stone, wooden, and metal bracelets and bangles from around the country and around the West African region, arranged largely from "simple" to "complex" forms; a spiraling tower of wooden stools. In a summary of the museum's activities in 1957, the "Man in Africa" focus, as well as ideas for future exhibition expansion to further the comparative theme is outlined:

The scope for the present exhibition is 'Man in Africa' with special reference to this country. Most aspects of this vast subject are more or less adequately represented but the following gaps remain to be filled – There are no masks from Liberia; some could perhaps be obtained through the Liberian government. There is virtually no material illustrating Arab life of the East coast of Africa, particularly Sanzibar [sic.], and an attempt to procure exhibits by correspondence has led to no results. There is not enough material illustrating Moslem life either in North Africa or in the region of the French Sudan. (GMMB 1957).

This exhibition structure and plan is reminiscent of the recommendations made by Braunholtz, who envisioned similar themes in his ca. 1949 report, writing that the public gallery "might well include material from other West African countries also, or even from all parts of Africa, so as to give a broad view of the general character and regional diversity of the indigenous cultures and art styles of the whole continent" (Braunholtz n.d.: 31). Huxley before him had also envisioned the museum as encompassing all African cultures, with a focus on the West African region (Huxley 1944). Although there are no records available detailing the exhibition plans as drawn up by Mr. and Mrs. Merrified, given the similarity of their work to these earlier documents one can assume that their work was informed by them. Seeing as the general exhibition scheme of the Museum has largely remained unchanged in nearly fifty years, one can assume that the exhibitions figuratively continue to be informed by these two documents, and can sense the relationship of the exhibitions with the colonial ethnography that guided their formulation.

The exhibition themes also match closely with the Pan-African and cultural ideals of then newly appointed President Kwame Nkrumah, the source of a debate over whether or not the revolutionary's philosophy played a role in shaping the Museum. During the Nkrumah era, the government of Ghana as a whole was very much shaped by the leader's emphasis on the positive value of Ghanaian culture, its rural roots, and its strength in diversity. Working within the Berlin Conference framework of artificially drawn borders, Nkrumah focused on similarity to unite his diverse population rather than their cultural differences as the British had in order to better control the peasantry

(Green 1998). Although no primary documentation was found by the author to indicate that Nkrumah took any particular control, or even interest, in the Museum or its exhibitions, a formal link has been proposed by several authors. Janet Hess, for example, references notes from Nkrumah's Cabinet meetings and those of the Interim Committee for the Arts Council of the Gold Coast to characterize Nkrumah's stance on cultural institutions. In the end she finds a probable connection between Nkrumaist principles and the museum's displays, writing that, "The assemblage of assorted cultural elements in exhibitions would appear to have advanced not the uniqueness and legitimacy of specific regional cultures, but their incorporation within a national political context." Hess concludes that, "The appropriation and exhibition of art forms in Ghana signified a new social and political context for purportedly anachronistic or fading 'traditional' forms, a context dominated by the political objectives – and physical presence – of Kwame Nkrumah" (Hess 2001: 67). Indeed, the similarities are undeniable.

The speculation in the explicit connections, however, is revealed in the counter perspective of Mark Crinson who looks to the person of Kofi Busia, a British-trained Ghanaian anthropologist who was closely associated with Arnold Walter Lawrence, the Ghana National Museum's first Director. Busia was a leading opponent of Nkrumah and, in fact, took over Nkrumah's position as government head at the former's overthrow in 1966. Crinson concludes by way of this connection of the Museum and Nkrumah's political nemesis, "at least that Nkrumah might have regarded the Museum with some equivocation." Crinson reviews Nkrumah's difficult task of creating a coherent national identity "out of an area that included what had been the colonially-administered Gold Coast, the indirectly-ruled Asante and Northern territories, as well as the lands of the Eve [sic.] people divided by the new border with Togo." Accordingly, Crinson writes, Nkrumaist ideology viewed "the wealth of traditional cultures . . . [as] best consigned to museum shelves" (2001: 240), but denies Nkrumah's active interest in the actual content of those shelves. Adadze, one can assume based on his more general findings that museums are inadequate tools for promoting nationalism in Africa, would concur with Crinson. Most African nation-states, Adadze argues, are multiethnic states which create too fluid a concept of "nationalism" to be captured in museum displays; "[S]ince nationalism in its European conception is a fluid notion in Africa, it should not be the concept by which museums are associated because more often than not such a concept represents a ruling body that is not universally popular" (1995: 63). Adadze specifically mentions as an example of such a one-sided reading of national culture the preponderance toward things Ashanti in the Ghana National Museum's displays, from its opening through present day (ibid: 60), a theme Crinson notes as well, citing display techniques to present only the Ashanti artifacts as a sign of Museum bias (Crinson 2001: 245). Further downplaying the significance of Nkrumah's interest in cultural heritage, Adadze reminds his readers that, "throughout history all political systems have used material culture to inspire nationalist feeling in their peoples" (1995: 59). If such is the case, how unique is Nkrumah's interest in national heritage to presuppose a connection with the exhibitions at the Ghana National Museum, and how *national* can such a national museum really be? Whether or not there is a true correspondence between the organization of displays at

the National Museum and Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-African ideals cannot be determined based on available evidence. It does begin to support, however, the idea that assignment of "colonial legacy" to account for the contemporary operations of African museums may be a bit myopic. Although exhibitions at the Ghana National Museum are likely affected by the work and ideals of Brauholtz, the Merrifields, and contemporaneous anthropological notions of evolutionary and structural-functional methodologies and analyses, influence from post-colonial sources such as the political legacy of Nkrumah's nationalist ideals cannot be excluded from an analysis of the historical factors influencing African museums today. Though the roots of operational problems of African museums may appear on the surface to be in the colonial era, historical analysis reveals them to be much more complex phenomena. The remainder of this essay will look at the continued influence of the specific colonial era phenomena discussed above as well as post-colonial influences on the operations of the Ghana National Museum today.

Beyond Achimota: Expansion of the National Museum Collection

As mentioned above, the Museum's initial collection, as passed on from Achimota via the University College to the Ghana National Museum, was an eclectic mix of archaeological and ethnographic artifacts amassed largely by foreigners. "The colonial collections were at best unrepresentative of the territories under their administration" Adedze writes generally of collections amassed in such fashion, and may as well be writing directly of the Ghana National Museum. This bias, he continues, has not generally been corrected by post-independent African curators. "Most of them simply became the guardians of colonial museum heritage; and hardly made any new collections to strengthen an area or for the sake of diversity" (1995: 60). True to form, collecting activities at the Ghana National Museum slowed significantly after independence in 1957, save additions by archaeologists who were required by law to deposit any discovered artifacts in the Ghana National Museum. General donations slowed due, in part, to a decrease in colonial administrators collecting "curiosities," and also to an increase in the presence of antiques dealers who were willing to pay for the objects the Museum asked for as donations, which were then sold for great profit overseas (Myles 1981: 155; MacEachern 2001: 866). Political instability, a worldwide economic downturn in the late 1970s, and the resulting International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment stipulations further hampered government interest in or ability to support cultural heritage and the arts. MacEachern explains briefly, "The economic and political climate under which nascent African CRM [Cultural Resource Management] programmes existed changed rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s. Global economic crises, and especially the structural adjustment packages mandated by foreign lenders from 1981 onward, severely damaged the ability of African states to support the infrastructure needed for such programmes" (ibid: 867-868). At the Ghana National Museum accession records completely cease as of 1986 and since that time new accessions have been logged only twice,

once in 1997 with a government confiscation of Komaland terracotta figurines, then again in 2002 with a donation by René David of the Walu Gallery in Switzerland (GNMAR, Book 10).

This tapering paucity since 1957 had one significant exception for a period of several stable years in the early 1960s. While Nkrumah's arts policies still governed, the Ghana National Museum was adequately supported and actively engaged in collection and education. Beginning in 1962, the Museum undertook an extensive national tour to raise awareness of national cultural heritage in rural communities. As a part of this project, local collectors were appointed to keep track of and amass examples of traditional cultural heritage. The "collecting experiment" is described by former Museum Director Richard Nunoo, and held up in the publication *Museum* as an example for other museums in developing countries to follow. The Ghana National Museum, the publication recalls, selected a series of candidates for regional areas and then interviewed and selected from that pool its regional collectors. Successful candidates underwent a training course in which they learned what to collect and how. "They are taught," Nunoo describes, "how to write up information, how to store objects properly as an interim measure, how to run a small office, and what to do about surface finds." The publication goes on to describe the methods for collecting:

Collectors start off by going from house to house and asking people what they might have to offer. With luck, they may obtain quite large quantities of objects, although the first round of visits usually serves to get people to decide what objects they are prepared to give. Subsequent visits keep up interest and ensure a regular response. Collectors often have to travel long distances in order to reach people in the remote parts of their areas (Nunoo 1971: 178).

The project added significantly to the Museum's collections. The objects were, however, accessioned without digression, and while the project may have done wonders for establishing valuable community relations (though this is arguable), it created a collections management nightmare within the museum itself. As mentioned, storage space at the museum was tight even when the institution first opened in 1957. Additionally, the training that the field collectors received appears to have prescribed very particular pieces of material culture that should be collected. The result was thus an increasingly homogenized collection limited to such staples as stools, gold weights, Akuaba figures, kente cloth and beads.¹² In this respect, the localized collection activities did little to diversify the colonially collected objects already in the Museum's collection, but rather repeated them. This limited definition of cultural heritage is further illustrated in a poster from the same era, produced to request donations to the Museum. Pictured are pottery, funerary terracotta, "God's axes", gold weights, beads and combs (see photos 17,18). As a result the museum received donations of . . . pottery, funerary terracotta, "God's axes", gold weights, beads and combs.

Kwasi Myles, an employee of the museum at the time of the community collections projects, writes in retrospect on the strengths and weaknesses of the program. While one strength was that more people were made aware of the museum's activities, he writes, "It should be pointed out that after some time the collector appears to have exhausted the resources in his district. No new types of exhibit come in, and the old and familiar types dwindle in number."

¹² Comparing the collections of the Ghana National Museum made under colonial and local supervision was initially a major component of this research. Comments written here are in reflection of manually entering accession records of the time period into a database (which was later lost; see footnote 4 for further details).

Myles continues, "Another factor is that the collector himself feels that he would like to have a change of area; but our experience showed that transfers were not useful as the collector was regarded as a stranger if he were transferred" (1981: 157). Myles also discusses the proliferation of antiques dealers, and community respect and response to older versus younger collectors as additional concerns. Collectors, he adds, often became less effective once they realized the poor pay and lack of opportunity to advance within the Museum which increasingly plagued the Museum after Nkrumah left office. Nevertheless, without funds or other resources dedicated to the collection of material artifacts, it was much through these community visits and local collectors, and memories of them after the program ceased, that the National Museum's collection initially grew beyond that which was inherited from Achimota. And it is these objects that remain in their repetition overcrowding the Museum's storage facility today.

Beyond the Rural and the Past: Spotlight on Urban Culture

One area of the Ghana National Museum collection that has never seen growth is that of contemporary, post-colonial, and urban material culture, a common critique of African museums. As Adande, former Chairman of the West African Museum Program (WAMP) wrote in promotion of the organization's 1996 workshop *Spotlight on Urban Culture*, "The widely established museum intellectual traditions in West Africa reflect a vision of culture and history confined to the restricted field created by ethnography." This restriction limited ideas of culture to "the past," hence the salvage ethnography paradigm explicitly and implicitly visible in the early observations and recommendations of Shaw, Huxley, and Braunholtz. Adande believes that this colonially-defined academic pursuit and classification is what has led to the absence of urban culture from most African museum collections, lamenting, "Limiting the museum's scope to rural ethnography has led to us leaving out the city as a significant specific social and cultural environment." As a consequence, he explains, and it is worth quoting at length to establish the true paucity established by a lack of urban culture as represented in African museums:

First of all, this has led museums in West Africa to leave out of their scope centuries of history of West African pre-colonial urban cultures; i) Ancient indigenous urban centers; and ii) urban centers related to European trade and settlement . . . Secondly, very little attention has been paid to colonial urban centers. This is an important gap not only (and mainly) because they have played a significant role as administrative centers, but because of their place in the economy and the social and cultural evolution of the colonial society. As social and cultural melting pots, they developed specific cultural patterns and processes that hold a strong influence on inland areas and even on other colonial territories. This is reflected in the material culture, in photographic materials, and in other media . . . The significant place of contemporary urban centers in all spheres of the contemporary evolution of African societies can hardly be over-estimated. Numerous sociological, anthropological, art historical and historical studies were carried on various aspects of life and of the organization of these centers. However, this knowledge is rarely made accessible to a wider public, and is not reflected in the school curriculum. Apart from a very few experiences (eg: two exhibitions dealing with urban crafts were set up by the *Musee National du Mali*, in 1986 and 1989), museums in West Africa have not paid significant attention to these issues (Adande to Debrah 1996, GMMBAF 0250).

Emmanuel Arinze, another former-Chairperson of WAMP, along with others (Konare 1983, ICOM 1992, Luhila, et.al. 1995, Ardouin and Arinze 1995), questions the relevancy of museums for African people if urban culture continues to be left out from museum collection and exhibition plans. There is a tendency in African museums, he writes, "to be more inclined to the mere collection and exhibition of antiques consisting of ethnographic and

archaeological materials that make up our culture history . . . Consequently, one critical problem confronting museums in Africa is that of being able to identify, cope with and reflect the urban phenomenon in their activities” (Arinze 2002: 99). The article builds on themes expressed in earlier publications. In a 1998 article Arinze writes critically, “Museums seem oblivious to . . . critical events which touch on the lives and the very existence of the citizenry. Rather than promote new ideas and strategies to meet these changes, they cling to the past, showing little motivation and no clear vision of what they are expected to be doing nor how to respond to contemporary society” (1998: 33). A 2002 WAMP publication, *Museums and Urban Culture in West Africa*, discusses various ways in which urban material culture can be incorporated into collections and exhibitions. History and culture, Arinze et.al. are saying, are not confined to a colonially defined past, but are ongoing and ever evolving, and an important topic for museums to embrace in order to escape their colonial intellectual legacies. In 1996, the Ghana National Museum was given its chance.

WAMP is a professional museum organization run out of Dakar, Senegal with a mission to contribute to the development of museums in West Africa by strengthening their capacities and develop a network of museum professionals that can transcend linguistic and geographic barriers. WAMP has, since its inception under the auspices of the International African Institute in 1982, been a strong force for change in West African museums. The influence of WAMP is felt largely through publications, training programs, and seminars on current and emerging topics of African museology. One such seminar put on in 1996 was to address the importance of museums incorporating aspects of the urban economic, social, political, and cultural history of West Africa (GMMBAF 0250). To be held at the Ghana National Museum in Accra, Alex Adande wrote to then-Acting Director Isaac Debrah requesting that the Museum put on an experimental exhibition addressing the topic of urban culture in Accra to visit and evaluate as a part of the workshop. Issues to be addressed by the exhibition included:

- Are specific urban cultural patterns and processes reflected in material culture?
- Can material artifacts help understand the culture of the past and contemporary urban centers?
- What is the documentary and educational relevance of the material culture?
- What are the documentary resources available to museums?
- How can museums collaborate with scholars to address urban culture in terms of research, collection building, exhibitions and outreach programs?
- How can the results of current research in this field be made accessible to wider national and school audiences?
- What are the methodological interests involved with that option?
- What priority programs can be developed in relation with urban culture?

Museum records indicate that the exhibition was given much thought by Museum and Ghana Museum and Monuments Board staff (GMMBAF 0250). While WAMP retained an advisory role in the exhibition development process, exhibition content was largely in the hands of Ghana National Museum curatorial staff. In the end, in the eyes of WAMP, the resultant exhibition was a failure.

University of Ghana geography professor K.B. Dickson dates urbanity in Ghana to the sixteenth century (Dickson 1970), though the sprawl of urban living in Africa has raised exponentially only since 1950 (Bocquier 1999).

Much of the resultant material culture can be characterized as being influenced by both internal and external factors of political, cultural, and socio-economic change. Given this extensive history of urbanity in the nation, it was wise for the Ghana National Museum to limit and define its undertaking in developing the Spotlight on Urban Culture exhibition for the WAMP workshop. Unfortunately, in narrowing the topic, Museum staff seemed to have missed the basic theme. In developing the exhibition, staff proceeded to solicit artifacts for the exhibition by writing to the directors of an assortment of economic, government, and specialized occupational organizations in Accra, resulting in a quickly compiled collection of financial documents from Barclay's Bank, plans drawn up by a local architectural firm, and other various "artifacts" illustrating contemporary business practices as conducted in Accra (and the rest of the world's major cities, see photo 20). WAMP heavily criticized the exhibition, Arinze dismissing it as "merely propaganda for Ghana's fourth republic" and stating that it completely misunderstood the theme of urban culture. In an attempt to appease him, Museum staff quickly added sections to the exhibition on traditional architecture, African contemporary hairstyles and costumes, and fishing activities, but these additions amounted to little more than pinning up dated educational posters on a separate wall near the exhibition (Quainoo 2000). Artifacts were retained in the museum's collection and the exhibition was, in many respects, a sign of the continuing definition of cultural heritage outside of "urbanity."

The case of the WAMP-inspired exhibition "Spotlight on Urban Culture" offers a useful case study for evaluating the evolving, or possibly stagnant, mentality toward material cultural heritage at the Ghana National Museum. To the Museum's staff, "urban culture" signified the incorporation of Western technology, policy and procedure, and a formalized economy into the business practices of Accra. This view does not incorporate the many nuances as outlined by Adande. In consideration of the Spotlight exhibition, the museum's continued search for relics of the past in its collection strategy, and a sustained comparative and structural-functional approach to exhibition display, it seems that the definition of Ghanaian culture at the Ghana National Museum remains one restricted to a past that is defined by colonialism. This gives the impression that Ghana was unchanged prior to colonialism, and that changes since colonialism are unrelated to that ephemeral term "culture." Alternate theories to this "stagnation" are offered below, following a review of the post-colonial operations to exhibitions and administrative structure, and a museology-inspired analysis of strategies to alleviate current shortcomings at the institution.

Rearranging the Past: "Changing" Exhibitions at the Ghana National Museum

Beyond such occasional temporary displays as "Spotlight on Urban Culture," exhibition themes at the Ghana National Museum have, in general, remained largely unchanged since the "Man in Africa" exhibition put on in 1957. Cases on the periphery of the circular exhibition space still address the material cultures of the surrounding African nations of Benin, Nigeria, Mali, the Ivory Coast, and Zaire. The inner ring of exhibitions display various elements of Ghanaian material culture also much as it has for the past forty-five years. The addition of two exhibitions on slavery

and one on the Ashanti royal regalia are recent, and only created at the insistence and with the pocketbooks of foreign governments and individuals. One temporary exhibition space at the rear of the museum's ground floor exhibits the work of contemporary artists and others willing to pay a fee for space rental (see photos 1 – 4). The second floor of the museum has, as of 1961 (and, also, largely unchanged since this time), been dedicated to archaeology.

The permanent exhibitions addressing Ghanaian culture are arranged based on object type (bracelets and bangles, clan staffs, currency, climbing ropes, etc.) or method of preparation (eg: iron smelting) rather than culture area, though, as mentioned above, the Ashanti are largely overrepresented in this arrangement. The Ewe and Ga cultures, not coincidentally those ethnicities that live along the coast and with whom colonists were in the most contact with (and which, therefore, lost their ethnic 'purity' early on), are almost entirely absent from the museum's display cases. The vitrines (the same ones donated by Achimota) each contain numerous examples of the same object type, mounted next to one another for the sake of comparison. Jules-Rosette writes suspiciously of such assiduous "stockpiling [of] collections of African artifacts and displaying them as icons of cultural difference" (2002), Sally Price adding that within such displays "aesthetic experiences and beauty are not joined with ethnographic evidence and social curiosity, but opposed to it" (1989: 87). Such displays are reminiscent of the evolutionary and structural-functional typologies popular in ethnography and museum exhibitions in the United States and elsewhere in the decades in which the Museum was first established (Kreamer 1997).¹³

Although these permanent exhibitions appear, and in fact remain, largely unchanged since their initial installation, beyond the replacement of an object or two, the removal of several others, and the repainting of several cases, there have in fact been many attempts at rearranging them. These have, however, been hindered by museum overcentralization, lack of resources, and growing apathy amongst the underpaid and underappreciated museum staff. Museum records indicate that curators have long been required to receive permission from the Director for the most minute of changes – from rewording a label (even to change "Gold Coast" to "Ghana") to correcting outdated statistical and scientific information (GMMBAF 0080). An internal push to renovate the museum's exhibitions led in 1979 to the appointment of James Anquandah, professor of archaeology at the University of Ghana, Legon, to the position of Honorary Keeper (GMMB 1980). A letter from Anquandah to then-Director Richard Nunoo outlines his plans, centered mainly on the archaeological displays but also touching on the need for more diversity in objects and media in the ethnography exhibitions (GMMBAF 0080). "The museum needs a facelift," he assesses plain and simple, planning to spend three days a week at the task for eighteen to twenty-four months. The task was, however, abandoned soon after its initiation. In his office at the University of Ghana I asked Anquandah why he left, to which he smiled and began to laugh:

¹³ Exhibitions on the second floor are arranged based on archaeological site at continental, regional, national, and local levels and were not included in the present analysis.

I was redesigning two or three cases. The Kintampo, lithics, handaxes . . . It was a part time job as a part time curator. Some materials, I brought them from here. I worked there for some time and then . . . it was around 1978 or 1979, I think . . . and then some people were grumbling there. The senior staff and the academics – they were saying that they were there to do that job that I was completing. So why should I be brought in?, they asked. It just wasn't worth my time. So I told the Director that, for personal reasons, I was leaving. And I just did (personal communication, 29 June 2004).

The Museum's Director, Richard Nunoo, Anquandah continued to explain, was very insecure in his position. Afraid that one of his employees would rise in ranks and overtake his position, Nunoo was reluctant to allow any changes to the museum or otherwise allow staff to showcase their academic prowess or creativity. Hence the overcentralization alluded to above.¹⁴ Staff was therefore understandably consternated when Anquandah was allowed to proceed as he saw fit in rearranging the museum exhibitions, and began to complain. Rather than continue to illicit harsh feelings, Anquandah chose to leave.

Current Museum employees recognize the need, for aesthetic and academic purposes, to redesign the exhibitions at the Ghana National Museum. Victor, a Curator at the Museum, spoke to me on several issues, including a need to broaden ethnic representation:

As you enter the museum it is meant to give you a glance, maybe, of our culture. We may just have to think of what to do now – maybe highlight Ga, Akan, Ewe, some parts of the North – some of the specific areas. It's a cross-ethnic state, but all the chiefs use regalia. Some maybe are saying when they walk in now, 'You've left us out.' Even this René David exhibition – some said that it is not a proper reflection; there should have been something on the Ewe, and on others. It is called 'Treasures of the Gold Coast' but the objects are specifically from one collection and represent only the Ashanti. We could have expanded it. Maybe we have to really brainstorm – because this is a *national* institution." (personal communication, 11 June 2004)

Victor also spoke of his desires to pursue his research interest in pottery designs and styles from Northern Ghana. "But the money never comes," he lamented. "We are supposed to be a part of the University. The lecturers there get packages for their research. So it helps them to embark on projects they want to do. But here, it is not so. We are hindered. There is no personal initiative to do things on your own" (ibid.). Co-curator Ben continued on this point, explaining the work culture of apathy at the Museum, his typical workday, which involves nothing of curation, and the resulting image presented of the nation:

When things decay for some time, it changes peoples' attitudes. People are leaving, and we aren't attracting new staff. Those that remain tend to resist any change. We are woefully understaffed, so nothing moves. I get in here and only attend meetings all day, which is exhausting. There *is no* working staff – we are *purely* administrative. Whoever comes in now, he is managing. Instead of spending our time sitting down, thinking, brainstorming . . . that is not done here! We come in and we do our administrative work. Meetings with ministries, petty squabbles to discuss . . . This is the image of the nation! It is a view of the place. A good impression of the museum is a good impression of the country. So, if everything looks standstill, it is not good. If we're not preserving our cultural identity, what it means to be Ghanaian, and we're given an institution without resources for it to stand, we're not killing a single institution, but killing a nation (personal communication, 17 June 2004).

This phenomena of staff apathy and lack of resources was explained to me as "no money syndrome" and will be returned to in the section on administration, below.

¹⁴ This opinion is corroborated in the 1978 Sowah Report that recommended Nunoo's retirement as a qualification for conditions at the Museum to improve.

So when do the exhibitions change at the Ghana National Museum? When it is the idea of someone outside of the institution, when there is some sort of external resource allocation that makes funding the project possible, and, above all, for public relations. When asked about the recent semi-permanent additions to the museum's exhibition fare, two exhibitions on slavery and one showcasing the recent donation of Komaland terracotta and chiefly regalia, Victor recalled the staff's lack of initiative and involvement in the planning, "To the best of my knowledge, all of these exhibitions came to us with help from the outside." For the first of the slavery exhibitions it was the United Nations and a 'Slave Routes Project' conference that served as impetus for the addition. Victor recalled, "There would be a conference, so we were told to put this thing together. We were not given very much time – two, three weeks. It was too much work" (personal communication, June 11 2004). The second slavery exhibition came care of the Norwegian government that was looking for a final resting place for that which had previously been on tour (see photo 19). Finally, the exhibition showcasing the donation of René David was put together only when David allocated ten thousand dollars for the task, and even then the exhibition almost did not come together when the funding mysteriously disappeared (GMMBAF 1926).

For other additions and revisions to the permanent exhibition gallery, we must turn for a moment to the person of Ken, an American Peace Corps volunteer. After a two-year placement teaching pottery making in eastern Ghana, Ken was placed for a second assignment in the curatorial office of the Ghana National Museum. On my first day at the museum I asked Ken what it was that he did there, to which he replied that he was rearranging the exhibitions. I took interest. Who gives you direction for where to start, or approves your changes?, I asked him. "To tell you the truth," he said, "I am on the verge of throwing diplomacy out the window and just issuing commands myself. I stopped asking questions a long time ago" (personal communication, 1 June 2004). In reaction to the staff's preoccupation with administrative tasks, I found out, Ken just began to do what he wanted. This entailed selecting a display case, looking for similar objects as those displayed in the case in the museum's storage, repainting the object stands, retyping the labels with new information he found on the internet, remounting the old and new objects, and resealing the case. On other occasions he would decide that a particular case was uninteresting and replace its contents with a new theme (Ken was particularly fond of leatherwork and, in his own words, "traditional objects that do not show the signs of outside influence that you see in some of the objects on display now"). By August, Ken had drawn up plans for rearranging the whole of the museum, and had begun going on what he termed "treasure hunts" through the museum's storage to find objects he found aesthetically pleasing and thus appropriate for display.

Ken's ambitious pursuits were, however, curbed by the return of Vincent, a third curator who had been on academic leave for two years. Upon his homecoming, at which he was immediately named Head Curator in honor of his recent attainment of a JD, Vincent asked Ken for his qualifications to be rearranging the cases (to which Ken had to admit that he had none), and requested that all changes to the cases be approved before executed. The curator and Ken were in a passionate discussion when I arrived on the morning of 10 August. "You cannot simply rearrange

the things; you have to proceed with caution," the Curator explained. "Anquandah put a lot of time and effort into them. And I am quite fond of some of them!" Vincent continued to explain to Ken that neither of them had enough expertise to determine what was and was not important enough to be on display, and that the Museum did not currently have the resources to be planning extensive changes. Ken was visibly perturbed. I caught up with him several days later. "When I heard the words 'we have to be cautious' it was over" Ken lamented. "I was making real progress up until then. The gallery was beginning to come together . . . Now I give up" (personal communication, 12 August 2004). An anecdote. The story of foreigners continuously being charged with determining the content and planning of the Museum's exhibitions, from the Merrifields in 1957 to Ken in 2004. From the UN, to the government of Norway. The museum's exhibitions have largely remained stagnant unless external forces ask or decide otherwise. This is especially true for use of the temporary exhibition space, which is frequently home to exhibitions put on by the Embassies and Consulates of Japan, Italy, Norway, and Iran. Although Vincent's return put a temporary hold on Ken's arbitrary rearrangements, MacEachern writes on the dangers that have resulted from such dependency on outside public and private aid agencies, "The magnitude and duration of such grants has only rarely allowed for sustainable development (2001: 868). Rather than a colonial legacy, it seems that perhaps exhibitions at the Ghana National Museum have taken on a new role as a tool of international diplomacy.

Overcentralized and Underfunded: Administrative Realities at the GMMB

The Ghana National Museum is one of several institutions under the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB). This governing body was established with the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board Ordinance (no. 20) of 1957, which merged the Monuments and Relics Commission and the National Museum into a single unit. This new body was to be responsible for the protection and preservation of monuments, relics and objects of archaeological and historic interest. The duties and responsibilities of the GMMB were further described in Decree NLCD 387 of 1969, Executive Instrument 42 of 1972, and Executive Instrument 29 of 1973. These documents all focus on the sale and export of Ghanaian artifacts, and deal very little, despite their titles as Museum and Monuments Decrees and Ordinances, with managing the nation's museums and monuments (Sowah 1978: 22, Kankpeyeng 1996).¹⁵

These generic government documents have, over the years, not been supplemented by other more specific policies and procedures detailing the management of GMMB, or any of the individual museums and monuments under its guidance which are left, as is the parent organization, largely lacking in identity, direction and, due to an inadequate funding and management structure, in resources (Sowah 1978: 24, GMMB 1996). The GMMB and its activities are supported by government funds, a status which largely excludes them from receiving other private and

¹⁵ See Kankpeyeng 1996 for a full review and analysis of the history of cultural resource management legislation in Ghana.

public sources of funding. With a lack of interest in cultural heritage by current and former government administrations except where it relates to the tourism industry, the budget for the GMMB and thus the individual museums and monuments in Ghana is chronically low, and staff are amongst the lowest paid civil servants in the country. Museum and monument staffs have, in fact, sporadically been on strike since 1993 (FGMMBAF 0114) demanding pay increases, housing, and allowances for transportation to get to and from work (see photos 15,16). Professional development is also at a standstill; as of 2002 only 30 of 374 staff members at the GMMB were professionally trained (Rannamets and Cullen 2002). The Ghana National Museum itself has not had a permanent Director since 1983, and only reconstituted its Board of Directors within the last year after a hiatus of the same length (ibid; GMMB 1998: 13). Beginning with the overcentralized management style of former Director Richard Nunoo (Sowah 1978: 30), and continuing via lack of clear allocation of duties and chain of command, a culture persists at the Ghana National Museum that encourages infighting, backstabbing and corruption. A staff survey conducted by Price Waterhouse in 1998 revealed predominantly negative attitudes toward the institution by all levels of staff (Cooper 1998); these factors have decreased productivity by museum employees, lead to a high staff turnover rate, and contributed to a general stagnation in museum activities. Indeed, the typical litany of problems facing museums in Africa is undeniable in the case of the Ghana National Museum.

A series of brainstorming sessions, investigations, and collaborations with international agencies have attempted to remedy these problems to no avail. As early as 1978 the national government had appointed a committee of enquiry into the affairs of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board that identified the organization as stagnant, underfunded and underutilized. The committee's final report focuses on overcentralization under Director Richard Nunoo and underqualified and unmotivated staff as the root causes of the museum's major problems, and recommends elevating the Museum to University status as an incentive to attract more qualified staff and thus improve the Museum's performance (Sowah 1978). The committee's recommendations were never implemented, and the issues raised were seemingly forgotten for the next decade. An unfinished report on restructuring the GMMB was drafted by James Anquandah in 1989, but it was in the 1990s that there was a revived interest to improve working conditions and staff performance at the Museum. A series of reports have been drafted, outlining largely the same problems identified in the Sowah Report in 1978 – overcentralization, underfunding, and underqualified staff – adding to this list specific complaints about outdated exhibitions, lack of educational outreach, and inappropriate office facilities (GMMB 1993, GMMB 1996, Cooper 1998, GMMB 1998, Ricerca 2002). Often ambitious in outlining goals and objectives for the institution, these plans and reports have largely not been acted upon.

In 2004 a Steering Committee was appointed by the Board of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board to recommend ways to improve the administration of Ghana's museums and monuments, and recommend new national legislation to facilitate these changes. The committee is made up of James Boachie-Ansah (professor of Archaeology, University of Ghana, Legon), Yao Dzamefe (National Commission on Culture), and Kwasi Agleby

(Tourism and Heritage Consultant, CEO Keban and Associates, Ltd.). The Committee began its work by meeting with the heads of each department at the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board to determine exactly what work each department, and the organization as a whole, performs (personal communication, Dzamefe 29 June 2004). A major component of the work is to determine how best to administer Ghana's museums and monuments – as separate departments under the commission of culture, as university-status institutions under the Department of Higher Education, or otherwise. A report of findings was delivered to GMMB staff on 10 August 2004 for their information and input before recommendations were made to the Board of GMMB on 19 August 2004. At this meeting, conducted by Agbley and illustrated with a powerpoint presentation, activities pursued by the GMMB were outlined and categorized before the final recommendation of a separation of the Museums and Monuments divisions of GMMB was delivered. Staff was visibly and audibly amused by the findings, skeptical from witnessing the litany of reports in the 1990s that resulted in no permanent changes. They smiled and exchanged glances; several staff members shouted out “Sowah” referencing the 1978 report that was tasked with the same assignment given to the Steering Committee in 2004, and which had similar conclusions. Agbley concluded his presentation by stating that new legislation was expected by March of 2005.¹⁶ Whether or not they are successful, the failure of the Committee to take the unique circumstances of the Museum into consideration when drafting their recommendations will surely lead to further problems in administering the Ghana National Museum. Although they recommend elevating the Museum to University status to attract more highly qualified staff, there is nothing in place to ensure that these new higher paid members will not also be continually taxed, as is the current staff, with administrative duties. Should resources somehow be allocated for exhibitions and collections, there will still be no space in which to fabricate the displays or store the specimens.

Accompanying the general stagnation and failed attempts at administrative reorganization at the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, there have been moments of inspired ambition at the project level with a largely similar fate. A plan to develop a Natural History Museum, for example, was identified as a top priority in 1971, and a proposal supported by the government of Hungary was submitted in 1972. Following the death of the mother of Hungarian scientific research fellow and project consultant Dr. Gyorgy Topal, and a refusal by the Smithsonian Institution to help in the failing endeavor, the project's grand plans to “collect and exhibit objects and specimens from all fields of living and lifeless nature in Ghana” were largely forgotten (Endrody-Younga 1972). It is a familiar story at the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board: the GMMB creates a proposal for a museum-related project for which external funding is secured, and then lost. This was first encountered with the UNESCO support of planned reconstruction and building extensions in the 1960s. The story can be repeated for a planned Gold Museum (GMMBAF 19155), Olympic Museum (--. 1986), historic house museum at the home of Isaac Kofi Anti, a legendary

¹⁶ As of August 2005 Agbley expected this legislation to be passed by December 2005 (Agbley, personal communication).

cocoa farmer (GMMBAF 0726), a host of regional museums (planned for Koforidua [GMMBAF 0760], Ho [GMMBAF 0377], Kumasi [GMMBAF 0302], the Northern Region [GMMBAF 0526], and the Upper West [GMMBAF 0525]) and others, including the Museum of Science and Technology.

The Museum of Science of Technology (MST) is probably the most devastating of these failed projects considering the grand steps taken toward completion, later rescinded, and the inescapable eyesore left standing in the Accra skyline as a monument to the failure (see photos 21, 22). MST was first envisioned in 1963 and incorporated under the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board with NLC Decree 387 in 1969 (GMMB 1973). Building the permanent and extensive facility for the museum began in April of 1973 under the direction of A. Land, Ltd. The building was to be completed by October of 1974 but funds ran short and the contractors abandoned the project (Ardayifo 2002). A new contract was awarded to the State Construction Company (SCC) in 1975 to complete the work, but funds were again depleted and the contractors abandoned the project in 1979. SCC resumed construction in 1985, abandoned the project again by 1992, and repeated the affair once more in 1996 with complete abandonment clear by 1999 (--. 2003). The building is currently in a deplorable condition, windows broken and electrical outittings corroded or stripped for their wiring. The building has been taken over by Frafra basket weavers from Northern Ghana who live, eat, cook, and defecate in the facility. Because the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board does not own the facility, as they never paid the full bill to their multiple contractors, they do not have authority to demand removal of the squatters. In the meantime a temporary MST exhibition facility is located across an open lot from the abandoned building, boasting exhibitions about Man finally landing on the moon and other outdated feats of scientific wonder (see photos 23, 24).

Toward a Cure for 'No Money Syndrome': Recommendations to the Steering Committee

There is a long history to the problems at the Ghana National Museum, and the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board more generally, and there is also a long history of proposed solutions. These solutions have, however, been developed haphazardly, often only in accordance with the requirements of foreign agencies, and seldom with the resources available for implementation. Notably, these solutions have *never* taken into account actual museum functions. At no time at the Ghana National Museum has there, or has there been an attempt to develop, for example, policies or procedures to govern or manage the Museum's collections. Such central decisions as what the Museum should collect, who is in charge of its care, and how often the collection should be inventoried, have never been discussed. Similar lack of attention to ensuring professional development has resulted in the perpetuation of outdated museum methodologies including conservation techniques that have been revealed to actually harm rather than help objects. Resources that have become available as a part of the various restructuring processes have notably never been allocated to exhibitions or collections. And rarely have needs for facilities such as office space, an expansion of storage facilities, and an exhibition preparation area mentioned as necessary for the

Museum to improve in its operations and its outputs, although these are all key elements to allowing for standard museum functions. In all of the restructuring attempts through present, in other words, there has never been attention to identifying problems and finding solutions that would allow the institution to operate at full capacity as a *museum*. Victor commented aptly when asked about the GMMB's overt focus on improving capacities for administrative duties, "Sometimes they forget that there is a museum, even though it is why they're all here!" (personal communication, 11 June 2004), and if past and current attempts at restructuring the institution are any indication, this may be true.

The current Steering Committee appointed by the Board of the GMMB recognizes that they have considerable problems to overcome, but for the situation to improve, I would argue, they must accomplish more than a listing and administrative categorization of museum and monument functions, and pay structure adjustments. Beyond building the infrastructural capacity to support a national museum, there are several other factors that, in light of the history of the Ghana National Museum, should be considered in the restructuring process. Relationships with the University of Ghana need to be consciously amended, strained after years of the two institutions growing further from one another as resources dried up and staff became more disparately skilled. As envisioned by Brauholtz, collaboration between the two institutions would be beneficial in allowing the most innovative and updated information on Ghanaian culture to be presented to visitors via the public education vehicle of the museum. Additionally, the Museum's collection, largely amassed by colonial administrators and amateurs and for which there is little documentation, should be supplemented with postcolonial cultural artifacts as well as expanded to represent those coastal cultures not collected early on by colonial explorers and administrators keen on documenting the "untouched" and "isolated" history of the local people. Likewise, legislation must be amended to further protect the material cultural heritage of Ghana, which is being destroyed or looted at alarming rates, and for which there is no current enforcement mechanism (Anquandah 1976, Kankpeyeng and DeCorse 2004). The physical edifice of the Museum, which is both in disrepair and wholly inadequate for the functions of a museum, by Western or by other standards, must be renovated and expanded to support these changes, the collections storage area upgraded to allow for the preventative conservation of the nation's material cultural heritage, and technologies implemented that take local capacities into consideration.¹⁷ Policies and procedures aimed at specifically guiding museum work as opposed to administrative duties will need be drafted and implemented; a clear separation of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board and the Ghana National Museum would help avoid Museum staff neglecting their work due to administrative assignments. A less structured relationship between the GMMB and the Ghanaian government would additionally open up funding opportunities through which the institution could increase self-reliance in order to achieve sustainability apart from reliance on tourism markets and government subsidies.

¹⁷ For example, blindly relying on air conditioning units for temperature and humidity control can actually be more harmful than helpful where electricity is not a dependable resource

As should be apparent from the discussion above and the summary here, simply pouring money and other resources into the broken system, as some authors seem to imply as a viable solution to the woes of Africa's museums, is not in fact a feasible resolution on its own. As is true for the developing world more generally. Though money and resources are necessary to address any problem, there is a distinct need to localize the problems before attempting to solve them, in this case recognizing the unique history of the Ghana National Museum and prioritizing its current operational problems for funding. The Ghana National Museum, it is apparent through research in administrative, accession, and archival records, was never, actually, intended to be a museum in the sense of a "non-profit making permanent institution . . . which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates, and exhibits . . .," as defined by the International Council on Museums. It was instead intended to be an exhibition facility. Designed as such, the Museum has been unable to expand its collection or update its exhibitions, leading to a stagnant appearance that has decreased attendance, government funds, and, as a result, qualified staff. It remains to be seen how the Steering Committee's recommendations can affect this vicious cycle, if at all, and whether the institution can elevate itself from an administrative body to a national museum.

The Question of 'Colonial Legacy' and the Plasticity of the 'Museum' Concept

The affects of colonialism on the Ghana National Museum have been continually explored, revealed, and questioned throughout this essay. Expanding beyond "colonial legacy," various historical circumstances have been identified as a culprit in contributing to the institution's undocumented collection, inadequate storage facility, dilapidated building, structural-functional exhibitions, and overdependence on foreign expertise. In the few instances where the Museum has made small strides in attempts to overcome various aspects of this legacy, the results have not been inspiring. The exhibition Spotlight on Urban Culture, for example, failed to grasp the guiding idea of culture as something continually evolving and developing outside of the rural past. Community collections experiments yielded objects predetermined to be in accordance with a set notion of culture bearing a strong resemblance to categories of Western comparative ethnography. Present Museum relations with foreign embassies and the Ghana Tourism Board suggest that were a mission drafted today it, too, would likely reflect a pandering to the needs and desires of a foreign audiences rather than the protection of Ghana's material cultural heritage.

But the litany of problems facing the Ghana National Museum, the stagnation of which gives the outward appearance of a mindless following of set patterns and ways established in the colonial era, may, in fact, be more complex. Local and internal phenomena egged on by post-Nkrumah government apathy toward cultural preservation, a work culture rife with infighting and disorganization, overcentralization, and ineffective legislation and policy governing the institution have all contributed to the situation. In other instances what may on the surface appear to be "colonial legacy" may have taken on a renewed internal meaning for the culture and for the Museum. One criticism continually had for African museums, for example, is that they lack explanatory labels for the objects on display. This

is blamed on colonial anthropological notions of material objects as able to speak for themselves. But internal literature influencing the display techniques at the Ghana National Museum reveals the view that labels as elitist and discriminatory against illiterate visitors (GMMB 1957). Asking the Ghana National Museum to provide explanatory labels as a way to recognize that objects do not speak for themselves and to overcome “colonial legacy” could, in this instance, be rather paternalistic and ethnocentric, as it fails to recognize the local rationality justifying the contemporary situation. Further, the dichotomization of culture into ‘tradition’ and “modernity,” reflected in the Ghana National Museum’s disinterest in incorporating urbanity in its collections and exhibitions, could also be disassociated with its colonial roots in Western ethnography; the tradition/modernity split, Roberts finds, has in fact become useful for internal political purposes in Ghana and thus may have a logic to it totally separate from colonial legacy (Roberts 1975), a conclusion supported by Lentz’s recent study of cultural festivals as political arenas used for the popularization of government policies (Lentz 2001). Reading stagnation and “colonial legacy” into these phenomena would thus be false, and prescribing remedies such as an elaborate explanatory text panels or the incorporation of contemporary culture into Museum collection would, in fact, be rather ethnocentric and narcissistic, promoting and perpetuating the very phenomena it seeks to overcome.

O’Hanlon and Welsch (2000) similarly find that analyses of colonial-era museum collections have largely tended to assign too great of import to “colonial legacy,” leaving out the agency of native peoples in collection transactions, though Fairweather questions the affect of this call for action, writing that for many of his fellow anthropologists “it is still all too easy to regard colonialism . . . only as an imposition of cultural values of a dominant foreign power upon a purely local culture” (2004: 20). Instead of the African museums, this suggests, perhaps it is the foreigners, we, the Western tourists, the development consultants, the researchers doing the analysis of African museums and colonial museum collections, that are the ones still misguided and overly consumed by colonialism. Bruner offers the example of the Cape Coast Castle in Ghana at which a debate recently erupted between foreign and local stakeholders over whether the building’s walls should be whitewashed to aid in preservation, or left derelict to represent the structure’s dark past as a British slave fort. Local Cape Coast residents felt that the structure should be renovated: the castle had not just been a slave hold, but used as a part of other economic trades during colonialism, to house a secondary school, as the offices of the Ghana Education Service and the District Assembly, and as a police training academy (Bruner 1996: 292). It was seen as a part of general history, not colonial history. Foreign visitors, however, felt that history itself was being whitewashed by renovating the building, and that the walls should have been left untouched to mirror the dark history of the castle’s colonial use (ibid: 294). Here it was not the Ghanaians but *foreigners* that were holding onto and insisting on the primacy of colonial legacy for interpretive purposes. Although in the end the walls were whitewashed for preservation purposes, it is often the foreigner and *his* fixation on the colonial era and ‘tradition’ that are catered to in such debates. One of the more recent museums to open in Ghana, the Manhyia Palace Museum in Kumasi, for example, is completely aimed at appeasing foreign

visitors who want to learn about Ashanti cultural heritage, or their preconceived notions of what such culture entails. Although the Ashanti people had no internal purpose for a Museum, as objects outside of their performative contexts lose meaning, a Museum was constructed in which to show replicas of the objects foreign visitors. "The Manhyia Palace Museum, in the eyes of the Asante," Schildkrout observes, ". . . served well as a memorial to former kings, and as a place to show videos to foreigners and school children . . . But it was not needed as a place to keep collections as long as the things in the collection still played a role in palace life" (1999 :25). It was the foreigners' requests for a venue in which to learn about traditional cultural heritage that prompted the Museum's construction. Tapping into a growing tourism industry and wealthy foreigners who are interested in cliché cultural experiences and souvenirs is in this case completely commoditized for the sake of providing the market with what it wants.

Considering this idea, then, of a Museum developed for and devoted toward appeasing foreign interests, it is interesting to note also that a majority of visitors to the Ghana National Museum, who are almost exclusively non-Ghanaian, report positively on their visit. Reviewing visitor comments as left in the past three years revealed only twenty-one negative responses, and a visitor survey administered randomly to one hundred museum visitors over the summer of 2004 found similar positive conclusions.¹⁸ Perhaps the Ghana National Museum, like the Manhyia Palace Museum, operates the way it does because it is not today, nor perhaps was it ever, meant to operate like a "museum" in the Western sense of the word, and as defined by ICOM above. Although a museum in the proverbial West and museums elsewhere may each collect, preserve, exhibit, and perform the other functions that museums "do," their disparate motivations for doing so might lead to major differences in operations, some of which those unfamiliar with local rationale might define as "problems." What outsiders see as stagnation and colonial legacy, I am suggesting, may in fact have been infused with new and local meaning. Without a local relevance for the Western museum concept in Ghana, perhaps these institutions and what was defined as "cultural heritage" in the colonial era have been recycled with a new use and are being fed back to foreign visitors because it is what we want to see. Instead of the Ghanaian and the Ghanaian museum as victim, they are empowered by this redefinition to fit local needs.

This seems feasible when considering the dynamic backdrop ~~against~~ which the Ghana National Museum's exhibitions and collection practices have remained stagnant. Notions of "tradition," and indeed the place of traditional culture in contemporary Ghana, are hotly contested both academically and more popularly. Meyer writes, for example, of the growing Pentecostal movement, which considers tradition to be a guise for the devil and advises followers to sever all ties with the past (Meyer 1998). This position directly conflicts with the government's current Culture Policy (NCC 2002), which considers increased pride in traditional cultural heritage an essential element for development and progress while still recognizing the need to celebrate and nurture new forms of urban culture. As the 2004 presidential elections approached, the town of Kyekyewere was a popular topic in public debate; women in

Deleted: within

¹⁸ Although this visitor survey was conducted, the Museum workers' continual strikes during the research period made the results over representative of the opinions of Nigerian college students. Responses from all quarters were, however, equally positive.

the town are traditionally forbidden from crossing over the Offin River on Tuesdays, which would prevent them from casting their votes (-- 2004b). Meanwhile, minority ethnicities complain that *their* contributions to national heritage are being sidelined by government education reforms in favor of majority cultures (Bemile 2000), economists argue that Ghana's culture has actually *stunted* potential for structural and economic growth (Codjoe 2003), and rampant urbanization increasingly alienates younger generations from their cultural heritage (Dei 2003). Culture is far from a stagnant or colonially defined concept in Ghana. Although a national museum purporting to represent, collect, and display *national traditional cultural heritage* could be easily implicated, or at the least included, in such discussions, it simply is not. The Museum, in essence, is left to its own devices and this is because, I would argue, it is simply not, for the average Ghanaian, an important venue for the discussion of cultural themes. The Museum is well recognized as an outdated venue and foreign-catering institution. And that just might be the role that it is there to serve; in this sense it serves its role well and unproblematically.

One must thus be careful when pointing out "problems" and suggesting solutions for Africa's museums, for the problems may not be problems at all, but simply a different way of envisioning the role and purpose of the institution, and the solutions may only *perpetuate* the problems as they are perceived. Indeed, what at first appears a mindless following of colonial standards has in fact been infused with new meaning from within. In closing, I offer the possibility that the museum *concept* may be more of a cultural construct than has heretofore been recognized, and in addition to localizing the problems before localizing the solutions in attempts to "save" the museums on the African continent from their assured dilapidation and destruction, we must first discover if there are really problems at all, or if our perceptions of these problems is simply a product of Western bias. Perhaps it is we, and not the museums of Africa, that are still affected by colonial legacy in our continued paternalistic attitudes toward the African continent; perhaps these "problems" are really not problems at all, but solutions in themselves to solve far more pressing national priorities, that critiques have heretofore failed to grasp as potential motivation for museum actions, or inactions. The approach to "solving" these problems must therefore be changed to localize what may be considered a "locally relevant" course of action, and to move beyond automatically rooting contemporary phenomena within colonial legacy at the exclusion of local agency and more general historical and political circumstances if the operational problems of African museums are to ever be "solved," or at least properly accounted for.

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Photo 1: Ghana National Museum Entrance, Barnes Road



Photo 2: Museum Billboard, Barnes Road



Photo 3: Main Gallery, From Second Floor



Photo 4: School Group Tour, Temporary Exhibition



Photo 5: Exhibition Preparation Area, Ghana National Museum



Photo 6: Curator's Office, Holding Area for New Acquisitions



Photo 8: Director's Office, Administrative Staff



Photo 10: Storage Facility, GNM, Partially Renovated By the EWA

Photo 7: Conservator's Office, Ghana National Museum (GNM)



Photo 9: Archaeological Storage, GNM



Photo 11: Dust on Storage Shelves, GNM



Photo 12: Deteriorating Pair of Leather Sandals, GNM Storage

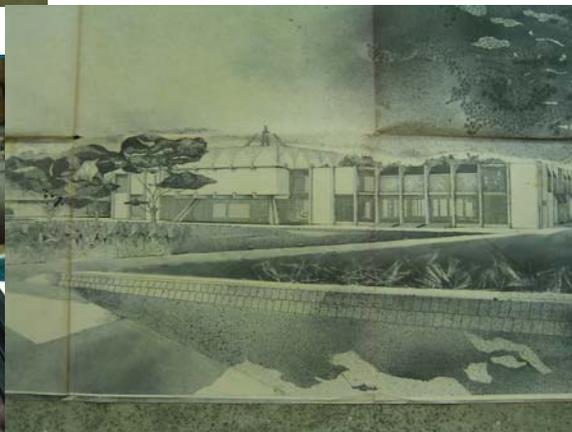


Photo 14: Partially Constructed Walls from UNESCO Renovations



Photo 16: Museum Strike, June 2004

Photo 13: Drawing from Minissi's Renovation Plans



Photo 15: Newspaper Clipping Covering Museum Strike in 1993



Photo 17: Educational Poster for Community Collection, 1990s

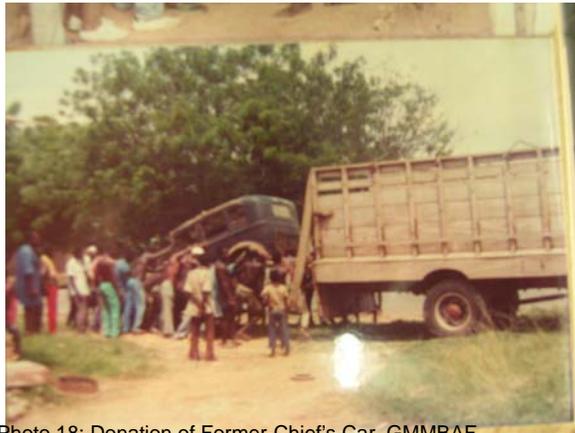


Photo 18: Donation of Former-Chief's Car, GMMBAF



Photo 19: Slave Routes Exhibition



Photo 21: Unfinished Museum of Science and Technology (MST)

Photo 22: Frafra Basket Weaver Squaters, MST

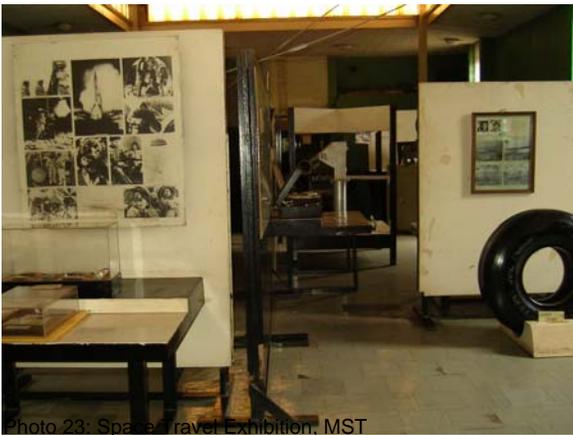


Photo 23: Space for travel Exhibition, MST



Photo 24: Human Biology Exhibition, MST



Photo 20: Spotlight on Urban Culture Exhibition, GMMBAF



Photo 25: Sign For Legon Archaeology Museum



Photo 28: Beads Exhibition, Legon Archaeology Museum



Photo 30: Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Museum, Accra

Photo 27: Komaland Exhibition, Legon Archaeology Museum



Photo 29: Prempeh II Jubilee Museum, Kumasi



Photo 26: Weaving Exhibition, Legon Archaeology Museum



Photo 31: Anokye's Sword Museum, Kumasi



Photo 32: Kumasi Military Museum, Kumasi