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Draft for a session paper at the ESSHC in Valencia 2016

Patrik Hettula

“The welfare of our land we have sincerely at heart”¹

The following appellations: *educated natives*², *educated elite*³, *mulattoes*⁴, *Euro-Africans*⁵, *West African merchants*⁶, *merchant elite*⁷, *Western-educated community*⁸, *Western-educated intellectuals*⁹, *Western-educated African elite*¹⁰, *Western-educated coastal elite*¹¹, *creole community*¹², *Westernised Africans*¹³, *Gold Coast elite*¹⁴ are but a few that have been used by scholars to describe the social group on the Gold Coast that made an impact in the social, economic and political sphere during the mid to late 19th century and early 20th century. The variety of names listed above shows that there has not really been a focused scientific debate about this society, but rather different point of views depending on the research topic in question. Commonly the terms *educated*, *elite* and *intellectual* are used when describing the people involved.¹⁵ As Roger S. Gocking points out, the different terms carry different meanings to describe this society. The descriptive, sociological concepts, like "elite" and "class", differ a lot from the ethno-cultural category "Euro-African". This in turn has made it rather hard to differentiate between "what was a relatively small core of 'Euro-Africans,' Sekyi's 'Anglo-Fantis,' and a much larger 'Afro-European' majority".¹⁶

¹ Gold Coast Aborigines 1.1.1898

² Reynolds 1974, 255; Kimble 1963, 87-88.

³ Edsman 1979, 18; Baron Holmes 1972, 401; Tengkorang 1974, 166.

⁴ Boahen 1996, 504; Decorse 1992, 173; Lever 1970, 253; Everts 2012, 81.

⁵ Yarak 2003; Gocking 1999, 7; Ray Jenkins 1985, 42-90; Parker 2000; Doortmont 2006; Quayson 2014

⁶ Dumett 1983.

⁷ Boahen 1975, 103; Parker 2000, 32.

⁸ Gocking 1990, 601.

⁹ Curtin 1972, 242.

¹⁰ Gocking 1999, 3.

¹¹ Rathbone 1995, 57, 59 fn 21.

¹² Gocking 1984, 601.

¹³ Baku 1987, 7.

¹⁴ Gadzekpo 2001.

¹⁵ Kofi Baku reveals some less commonly known names that were used to describe them: "deluded hybrids", "the curse of the West coast" and "collaborationist petty bourgeoisie". Kobina Sekyi also launched terms that sometimes appear in discussions: "De-Africanised Africans", "Afropeans" and "Anglo-Fantis". See Baku 1987, 17.

¹⁶ Gocking 1999, 7.

I will attempt to present this Euro-African society from yet another point of view by using a few examples from both the 19th and 20th century. My take on the Euro-Africans is that they represented an urban hybrid society that used several tactics to gain leverage against the British colonial powers. From a spatial point of view they occupied an abstract space of "double vision"¹⁷ from where they were able to portray a social position. The British interpreted their behaviour as mimicking the English ways, while the indigenous Africans and Euro-Africans interpreted it/them as a counter-force against the colonial powers.

Euro-Africans can indeed be portrayed as a westernized merchant community, but they were also multilingual cosmopolitans, inconspicuous consumers and early nationalistic activists who influenced the future of the Gold Coast both directly and indirectly.

"We want Educated Fantis, not europeanised natives."¹⁸ – The Gone Fantee movement

The Gone Fantee movement was a socio-cultural reaction against the anglicizing tendencies that supposedly alienated the westernized Africans from their African roots. The phrase Gone Fantee was used by Europeans to describe the eager participants of the *Mfantasi Amanbuhu Fekuw* movement.¹⁹ David Kimble asserts that the phrase was attached with a feeling of ridicule and superiority against Africans who had diverged from the British habits and decorum that had become commonplace on the Gold coast, especially among the educated community.²⁰ Samuel Tenkorang, however, implies that there is some level of obscurity about how the phrase was coined. According to him Attoh Ahuma popularized its use connected to the movement, but that the phrase was

¹⁷ Bhabha 126.

¹⁸ Gold Coast Aborigines 8.2.1902.

¹⁹ The term was popularized by Reverend Attoh Ahuma; Gocking 241, fn 15.

²⁰ Kimble 1963, 518.

already an official jargon term long before and implied a “relapse” into an African way of life.²¹

In the end of the 1880's, vigorous efforts were made in order to gather folktales and traditions from the Gold Coast. This was led by the Fekuw, a brainchild of John Mensah Sarbah among others, and caught the attention of several Gold coasters through the newspapers he endorsed. *The Gold Coast Times*, the *Western Echo* and the *Gold Coast Echo* wrote extensively on the subject and created a debate about the politics and the traditional cultural life that they considered threatened by the anglicization and westernization of the Gold Coast.²²

The movement did not only contribute through the gathering of old tales and stories about the past of the Gold Coast, but more importantly it sparked a nationalistic and anti-colonial awakening among the educated and active members of the Euro-African society. The movement coincided with several major changes on the Gold Coast, one of which was the increasing discrimination and racial attitudes about the Euro-Africans and mixed-blood members of the society. Another was the tightening colonial, indirect rule that the British were imposing on the country. This was seen as a severe threat against the modernizing and civilizing tendencies that had been in motion before. The indirect rule meant a set-back for the educated community and the society, as the British in a way started to downplay the importance of Western education and the need for professional Africans in colonial government jobs. Michael Crowder has implied that

Indirect rule seemed designed to exclude the educated elite from an effective national role, and was therefore seen as an agency of reaction against the forces of modernisation which colonial exploitation had stimulated.²³

Global events also projected new cultural methods and ideas which inspired the Gone Fantee movement to look to the East rather than expand in the Western direction. This

²¹ Tengkorang 1974, 165.

²² Boahen 1996, 61-62.

²³ Crowder 1968, 213.)

was evident in the adaptation of the Japanese models that spread through newspapers and within the educated community. Beginning in 1868 the Japanese emperor put the Meiji restoration in motion and started to expand the country towards international trade and foreign contacts. However, Japan insisted on applying several principles to its conduct, with the influx of foreign influences, as not to lose touch with the country's traditions and culture. The "Kokutai No Hongi" or the "Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan" symbolized this in practice.²⁴

John Mensah Sarbah had been the first to openly advocate the African robe instead of the three-piece suit that was commonly used. He was of the opinion that, modelling the Japanese, the Africans should reject the foreign clothes and stick to their more comfortable and practical garbs.²⁵ Sarbah and Kobina Sekyi among others started to openly appear in African costume, which caught on and became a custom over time.²⁶ Tengkorang mentions that the legacy of this custom became evident in Ghana where appearing in African costume at social gatherings became "second nature".²⁷

The movement evolved in several directions from its origin. Most importantly it morphed into a political movement known as the Aborigine's Rights Protection Society (ARPS) as a direct reaction against the colonial government's Lands bill of 1897. The bill was meant to enable the British to seize unused land for colonial projects. The uproar against it was done by taking anti-colonial action in order to politically challenge the government. Sarbah had not had this in mind when the Feku was created. His intention was never for the movement to go against the missionaries, Christianity or the Queen of England.²⁸ However, it was apparent that anti-colonial sentiments helped build the idea of national unity among the members of this movement and became a driving force for some of the ARPS' prominent leaders. The importance of building a national identity within the Gona Fantee movement was uttered in the Gold Coast Leader as follows:

²⁴ Langley 1971, 7.

²⁵ Tengkorang 1974, 168–169.

²⁶ Baku 1987, 108–109.

²⁷ Tengkorang 1974, 167.

²⁸ Tengkorang 1974, 167.

To "Go Fanti" means a vigorous protest against denationalisation, a determination to promote and cherish national self-respect, and by means of her Aborigines Society, through the writing and books from the eons of the soil, by strenuous endeavour and patriotic sentiment, Gold Coast has definitely taken a long stride *Forward*, let us see to it that she does not carry or go backward, but *Onwards*, ever ONWARDS.²⁹

The citation above describes the knowledge of its past as crucial for the future of the Gold Coast nation. Hence the founding of the Mfantshipim secondary school that was another very important branch that the movement ended up funding. African history, languages and culture were planned as the main points of emphasis on the curriculum in addition to the normal English training that had already been established as part of the curriculum at all the missionary schools in the country.³⁰ Ray Jenkins also highlights the upsurge of Gold Coast historians as a result of the demand of African written history. His unpublished dissertation discusses the era of early Gold Coast historians, which lasted from about 1874 to 1914.³¹ In it he categorizes the different types of historians that that particular era gave rise to. One unifying trait was that they were all Euro-Africans. Jenkins lists as his selected subjects C.C. Reindorf, J.B. Anaman, J. Mensah Sarbah, J.H. Brew, T.Laing, J.E. Casely Hayford and S.R.B. Solomon (or Attoh Ahuma).³² Jenkins writes that Laing and Casely Hayford were "by 1917, more preoccupied with making history rather than writing it."³³ The Euro-African historians were as such involved in reshaping the Gold Coast identity by actively writing down and producing historical literature as well as being actively involved in shaping the future course of the Gold Coast.

The Gone Fantee movement wished to produce a new generation of Africans who would not be intimidated by the British to follow their laid out path for the colonial subjects. In the educated community's vision, the anglicizing efforts would be replaced by a national consciousness and the proud sentiment of being part of a Fanti socio-cultural movement.

²⁹ Gold Coast Leader 20.4.1907

³⁰ Tengkorang 1974, 168.

³¹ Jenkins 1985, 23.

³² Jenkins 1985, 39. Jenkins has forgotten to mention Casely Hayford in his assertion of subjects, but I suspect it was omitted by mistake.

³³ Jenkins 1985, 40.

This wish was produced in an article in the *Gold Coast Aborigines*, a newspaper that supported the ARPS:

We want Educated Fantis, not europeanised natives. We simply want our Education to enable us to develop and to improve not destroy our native ideas customs manners and institutions.³⁴

After the ARPS succeeded in its campaign against the Lands bill, the party devoted its time to cultural and educational problems.³⁵ Some scholars have argued that no connection between the ARPS and the founding of the Mfantshipim can be found, but this has later been contested as the society's archives reveal several mentions throughout their active period concerning the secondary school and its survival. Furthermore all the trustees of the Fanti Public Schools Limited were active members of the ARPS.³⁶

Imitation and mimicry – the shaming of Anglomaniacs

The vocal and active members of the Gold Coast educated elite, who went through the transformation of becoming supporters of Fanti traditions and culture, had one main problem with the rest of the westernized community. This problem was the mimicking and imitating of European standards and lifestyle. All that was thought of as European or British had for decades been utilized by the Euro-Africans and other coastal communities. The Gone Fantee movement had, however, raised the question of Gold Coast identity and thus made the adaptation of European ways a questionable affair.

The problem with imitation and mimicry has been a central issue for several scholars, and the colonial situation is a particularly interesting one. Homi K. Bhabha has raised awareness about the dichotomy that prevailed between the colonial subjects and their superiors regardless how precisely the subjects were able to project themselves as equals with the colonizers. The inferior position that the mimicking African would have been seen

³⁴ *Gold Coast Aborigines* 8.2.1902.

³⁵ Boahen 1996, 105.

³⁶ Tenkorang 1974, 169.

as having, is described by Bhabha as "Almost the same but not white".³⁷ Nevertheless he continues to discuss a secondary thought, which gives the subject a more reactionary position than an inferior one:

The ambivalence of mimicry - almost but not quite - suggest that the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal [---] Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history. For the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them.³⁸

In this way mimicking becomes a powerful tool for taking control of the mechanisms that are invaluable for the colonizers when asserting their dominance over their colonies and their subjects.

This might also be an explanation as to why some of the members of the Gone Fantee movement spent a lot of time and effort in practically shaming all the Europeanised Africans, while still at the same time maintaining to some degree the Western features they were agitating against. The most notable example of this was perhaps Casely Hayford, who applauded all the investments that were made in the direction of africanization, like speaking Fanti, changing Western-sounding names into African, abandoning the three-piece suits for native costumes or adopting local jurisdiction, traditions and culture where possible. He was, however, gravely influenced by his Anglophile upbringing and seldom appeared in anything else than English clothes. Neither is he known by his African name Ekra Agyiman nor did he break with the English patrilineal tradition.³⁹ While being politically active, he also upheld a cooperating relation with the British, which annoyed some of his fellow Euro-African acquaintances who broke rank and stuck to a non-cooperative principle with Sekyi as their front man.⁴⁰ Osei-Nyame defends Casely Hayford by suggesting that:

³⁷ Bhabha 1994, 128.

³⁸ Bhabha 1994, 129–130.

³⁹ Osei-Nyame 1999, 138–139.

⁴⁰ Gocking 1984, 617.

the pioneering nationalists of African were not merely romanticist in their attitude to tradition, culture, society and politics. The portrait of them as disciples and agents of nativism, for example, exists alongside their conspicuous acculturation into European culture.⁴¹

Even Kobina Sekyi, while radical, was not infallible to the European influences. He would have described himself as an Anglo-Fanti or Anglomaniac before his sojourn in England, an experience which eventually changed his Anglophile views profoundly.⁴² And even while expressing strong Africanist views, he was unable to persuade his in-laws into agreeing to a Fanti customary marriage. Instead he was forced to appear at his own church wedding dressed in a European outfit.⁴³ More to the point is that Sekyi and other educated Euro-Africans often were embodiments of European acculturation, and that their criticism was more directed at the uncritical acceptance of European standards by the *nouveaux-riches* and the Western-oriented Fantis of the Gold Coast. This in turn meant that they perceived some aspects of the European influence as being beneficial to the Gold Coast Africans.⁴⁴

This point is supported by their cheerful interpretation of the Japanese model. Traits of modernity and progress were essential and necessary even for the Gone Fantee movement. An imitation of Japanese standards was not seen as problematic to the same extent as the imitation of European standards.

Japan had astonished the world with its quick modernization and transformation from an agricultural, rural land into an industrial country with modern technologies and military power. The Meiji restoration had been preceded by the Tokugawa shogunate that had been a highly developed feudal society. Those who witnessed the change at first hand explained that it was comparable to having lived in the Middle Ages and then taking a step into the modern society over one night.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Osei-Nyame 1999, 144.

⁴² Baku 1987, 137.

⁴³ Baku 1987, 109.

⁴⁴ Osei-Nyame 1999, 140.

⁴⁵ Strikwerda 2013, 17-18.

Casely Hayford praised the Japanese model and sought to make it an example for the modernizing and traditional principles he was planning for the modern Africans. The Gone Fantee movement and the following statement from Casely Hayford follow the concept that they hoped to implement for the future africanizing of the Gold Coast:

The Japanese, adopting and assimilating Western culture, of necessity commands the respect of Western nations, because there is something distinctly Eastern about him. He commands, to begin with, the uses of his native tongue, and has a literature of his own, enriched by translations from standard authors of other lands. He respects the institutions and customs of his ancestors, and there is an intelligent past which inspires him. He does not discard his national costume, and if, now and again, he dons Western attire, he does so as a matter of convenience, much as the Scotch, cross the border, puts away, when the occasion demands it, his Highland costume.⁴⁶

However he concluded that the lessons from the West that the reformation brought to Japan by sending out deputations to study abroad and led to the transformation of the educational policy and the knowledge they gained from teaching workers industrial and technical skills would also work for the aboriginals in West-Africa.⁴⁷

The discussion concerning imitation and mimicry was therefore a two-sided coin. On the one hand scholars and modernizers looked to the West and to Japan for models for transforming West-Africa into an economic success-story, while on the other hand they warned and feared the consequences of European standards and influences that deceived people to lose touch with their country's history and cultural heritage. This phenomena – that was a hot-topic in the change of the 19th and 20th century and which has occupied the thoughts of scholars afterwards – has also been described as a hybrid problem. The Gold Coast colonial subjects were exposed to a double environment where the European and native influences had become mixed in every-day practices and a coastal culture. In this way the educated and westernized members on the Gold Coast lived in a hybrid society. Kobina Sekyi treated this issue in his critical short novel "The Anglo-Fanti" and described this hybrid, double society through the life of his fictional character Kwesi in the following manner:

⁴⁶ Casely Hayford 1911, 170.

⁴⁷ Casely Hayford 1911, 171.

Again, the little boy grows in a double environment: in his language, in his diet, in his garb, in his play, he includes elements of Europeanism, the degree of admixture depending, of course, on the intensity of the religious fervour that animates his people and on the extent to which they have abjured African ways and adopted European substitutes. Besides these external influences, the little boy, with infantile illogicality, argues from the greater sweetness of European confectionery the greater attractiveness of European manufactures, and above all, the greater consideration shown to those bearing the outward signs of Europeanisation and Christianisation, to the superiority, in every respect, of everything European over everything African.⁴⁸

While the hybrid identity is a difficult one to define, it highlights the problem the Gold Coast intellectuals dealt with. Hybrid members themselves, like Sekyi and Casely Hayford, did not want to be attached to this category and worked to erase the label of being hybrid or "neither the one thing nor the other" as Bhabha puts it.⁴⁹ The period in which they advocated the new African identity was also a time of harsher segregating comments and policies from the British, in which the word "hybrid" was used to humiliate the educated westernized members. The expression "deluded hybrids" was used as an insult by the colonizers and also became a phrase that Sekyi has been said to have despised.⁵⁰ The African intellectuals' mission was not to find a new identity attached to hybridity, but rather to find an identity of African origin. The accusations of hybridity did not resonate well with their mission.

Hybridity however became something closely integrated in the actions and techniques that the Gold Coast intelligentsia used to fight the colonial powers. This is insightfully described by Björn M. Edsman in his concluding of the ways Gold Coast lawyers were able to mitigate between their knowledge of both British and Fanti customs and standards.

Edsman counts four different aspects that were involved in the methods of the lawyers. The first being the *technical aspect*, which meant that the lawyers' training and insights

⁴⁸ Sekyi 1918, 179–180.

⁴⁹ Bhabha 2004, 49.

⁵⁰ Baku 1987, 340.

into the "mechanisms of English society" made it possible for them to strike the opposition in a way that made the rulers notice them. The second aspect had to do with their inherent knowledge of the British "constitutional obscurities" that worked in favor for African parties. Edsman called it the *professional aspect*. Thirdly they were strong advocates of increased representation for Africans which they based in the interpretation of the constitution that would render a definite share of governance to the native inhabitants of the country. This Edsman calls the *political aspect*. The fourth was the *social aspect*, which indicates that the lawyers were among the few people who could read and interpret the legislation making them invaluable advisers and councilors to the chiefs and local people.⁵¹

The first play of a Euro-African about Euro-Africans

The discussion of hybridity and split identities confuses the notion of opposition against imitation and mimicry. To get a more exact understanding of what it was that the Euro-Africans and Sekyi in particular opposed to we can turn to "The Blinkards". In it we find the character Mr Boforo uttering his grievances about his life that he finds foreign to himself, but to which he has to comply as his wife has become obsessed in doing everything in the English manner:

The worst of it is that some of us got into these foreign ways through no fault of our own. We were born into a world of imitators, worse luck... and blind imitators, at that. They could not and cannot, distinguish cause from effect, so they have not been able to trace effect to cause, as yet. They see a thing done in England, or by somebody white; then they say we must do the same thing in Africa.⁵²

Sekyi points out that the Anglomaniacs were in a way not themselves responsible for their misplaced identities, but that it had been a result of their upbringing. He lets Mr

⁵¹ Edsman 1979, 249-250.

⁵² Sekyi 1997, 7, 9.

Brofusem reminisce about this by stating that his parents tried to push him into becoming as European as possible.

They would have bleached my skin, if they could. [---] I remember I was often caned for not wanting to wear boots and thick stockings.⁵³

Sekyi was on a mission of trying to trace the origin of an African identity, as hybridity was essentially unnatural to him. Hybrid subjects were according to him in a constant state of physical and mental oppositions. This is clearly expressed in the *Blinkards* by a line given by Mr Onyidzin, a character based on Sekyi himself, as he is contemplating how English influences have mislead him into thinking and speaking in English when he'd rather express himself in his native tongue.

I suppose that is to be expected of us social hybrids, born into one race, and brought up to live like members of another race.⁵⁴

Even more dramatic is the ending of Sekyi's "The Anglo-Fanti" where the main character Kwesi has a nervous breakdown due to his disoriented hybrid identity. This endgame is vividly portrayed by Sekyi and warns of a fatal outcome for all those members of the Euro-African society that try to combine and manage the different lives that they have been brought up to. The decline of Kwesi's mental state is described as a progression of delusions triggered by his dual life:

He raves of spirits that have persecuted him ever since he was born, of evil, disguised in the shape of good, that has dogged his footsteps all his life. He cannot recognise any of his people: he says his mother is not his mother, because she wears European clothes, for he is a Fanti and cannot have been borne by a woman who wears European clothes; the woman representing his mother is therefore a white woman who has disguised herself.⁵⁵

⁵³ Sekyi 1997, 9.

⁵⁴ Sekyi 1997, 35.

⁵⁵ Sekyi 1997, 254.

The *Blinkards*, written as a comedy, is more humorous about the issues of mixed cultural influences than it is warning in its message. The premiere of the play was saluted with great joy in 1916, which probably was partly due to its joking and humorous effects. There is no doubt that some in the audience recognized themselves in the play, but that the comic relief and satirical irony helped get the message across.⁵⁶

One issue that Sekyi wanted to bring up by making fun of its manifestation was the ludicrous and over-ambitious elaborations of the English language that some highly educated members of the Gold Coast society were guilty of. His examples on these manifestations are very comical as he attempted to ridicule their users. In the play he gives these lines through the medium of prepared speeches that the "Cosmopolitan Club's" members voiced during a wedding reception. Sekyi did unquestionably have a large vocabulary that he demonstrated through these following examples:

The manifestations of incredible merrimentations has displayed in this capacious hall due to wedding matrimonial jollification.

[---]

Our matrimonial and connubial amiability assuring our nuptial knot is inextricably woven with the minister of God Almighty.

[---]

My eyes are effusive of their joyful lachrimosity to perceive *coram* us this reception, and its bride and bridesmaids of amazing pulchritudity.

[---]

I am sure they too will be conducted to the hymeneal altar with considerable *éclat*, and people will not be wanting to chant their epithalamium with becoming vociferosity.⁵⁷

Sekyi's point was that these speeches would only have been made to ape or even at some cases outshine the English at their own mother tongue. It wasn't however noble nor did it gain them any more respect in the eyes of the British if that was their objective.

⁵⁶ Following issues of Gold Coast papers notes the première of the play: Gold Coast Leader 21.10.1916 and 28.10.1916; Gold Coast Nation 19.10.1916, 9.11.1916 and 16.10.1916.

⁵⁷ Sekyi 1997, 115, 117.

The play was put on only once, as far as anybody knows, and had its premiere in the Government's school-room on Elmina road in Cape Coast. Due to some technical difficulties it was split into two parts that were shown on two different dates, the 14th and the 21st of October 1916.⁵⁸ The play being the first of its kind, written and acted by natives on the Gold Coast, attracted a lot of people from among the Gold Coast community and even the Commissioner of the Central Province.⁵⁹ Some troubles did however emerge as there had been rumors that the play was impious, which resulted in a last minute change of venue. Some scholars have suggested that the impious accusations were made for the concern that the play was too rancid or as Stephen Collins puts it “a euphemism for seditious and anti-imperial sentiment”.⁶⁰ The play however escaped these accusations in the local reviews and instead was greatly appreciated and cheered for its insights and self-evaluating lessons. The playwright himself appeared as Mr Borofosem and was introduced after the curtain had rung to the audience by J.P. Brown – a well-known barrister and Euro-African – followed by loud cheers and applause. Before his appearance in the play Sekyi had not been well known to the public of the Gold Coast nor had he been actively pursuing a reputation for being radical. His sentiments for the native customs and traditions were however well established following the play and paved way for his career in politics.

In the Gold Coast Nation's review an emphasis was put on the fact that Sekyi was the first native playwright of the Gold Coast and while they might have embellished the performances of the actors they notably wrote that:

We should encourage and not hamper home art, especially where it is original, and Mr. Sekyi's talent and effort show the latent ability of our people in the dramatic art.⁶¹

The choice of theater as the medium for expressing the grievances that Sekyi and many others had concerning the blind adaptation of foreign influences was interesting as it

⁵⁸ Gold Coast Nation 19.10.1916.

⁵⁹ Baku 1987, 101.

⁶⁰ Collins 2011, 22.

⁶¹ Gold Coast Nation 19.10.1916.

didn't require literacy from the audience. The reviewer from the Nation also pointed out that

[The] lessons it taught were wholesome and they brought some valuable home-thrusts to those who overstep the boundary of propriety in engrafting foreign customs on their own.

However, after the single performance of the play it disappeared and was forgotten until it resurfaced again in 1974. There are some evidence that Sekyi had had some intentions in publishing the play as a book in the 40's as James Gibbs has uncovered page proofs of the play for publishers Alan and Unwin.⁶² Maybe partly because Sekyi failed to get the play published he was not remembered as a playwright. Collins elaborates on this and suggests that "plays which explored life within the colonial structure, rather than contributing to revolutionary change, were effectively disregarded post independence."⁶³

Hybrid manifestations in the colonial space

The point that Sekyi and his contemporaries wanted to make following the path laid out by the Gone Fantee movement was that they adhered to native standards and shunned away from accusations of being hybrids. This was however easier to do on paper than it was in practice. Courtney Micots has showed examples of hybrid manifestations in the urban spaces in Gold Coast towns and points to a hybrid counter position that the Euro-Africans enabled through implementing different styles in the building of their houses.

Ghanaian homes manifest a deliberately constructed hybrid style of architecture combining local elements— asymmetry, courtyard plans, and two-story compact massing—with British and Afro-Portuguese architectural styles.⁶⁴

Micots rectifies the misconception that Euro-African houses were primarily built to mimic European houses because Euro-Africans yearned for the approval of British

⁶² Collins 2011, 24.

⁶³ Collins 2011, 25.

⁶⁴ Micots 2015, 41.

colonials. Instead he suggests that the houses should be understood as complex symbols signaling different aspects and power relations through their placement and inherent native and European styles. Bhabha states that: “the *menace* of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial disclosure also disrupts its authority”⁶⁵ which implies that by adopting British symbols of power the locals could turn them around and exploit them as reversed enunciations.

This meant that anti-colonial enunciations were manifested behind a hybrid false front where for instance two-story houses with mixed architectural styles were erected opposite colonial buildings or forts and overtook a visible part of the urban scenery in that particular landscape. Even if these anti-colonial enunciations went totally unnoticed by the British they resonated with the locals who understood them as visual symbols with multiple meanings. Micots proposes this theory by the example of George Blankson and his Castle Brew.

Blankson’s choice of European architectural symbols from Castle Brew and Franklin House made a visual connection between his power and that of Europeans, proving local right to rule through a show of power, wealth, and modernity.

Cape Coast experienced its greatest prosperity in the 1830’s which also led to the outlaying of new streets and buildings. Hyland notes that Europeans and mulattos competed in building and outdoing each other’s houses. The town then started to resemble a prosperous European trading center and could even compete with the splendors of the houses in Elmina.⁶⁶

The Euro-African urban spaces on the Gold Coast were laid out with paved roads that ran straight through areas with colonial houses that mimicked European styles and created a sensation of modern civilized towns. Although this was described by travelers in their journey accounts, it is only half-true as the urban spaces also encompassed African characters, only visible to the natives or those familiar with the hybrid influences. Brodie

⁶⁵ Bhabha 2004, 126.

⁶⁶ Hyland 1995, 169.

Cruickshank described in the mid-17th century the physical spaces in Cape Coast and noted the sharp division between the Europeanized hybrid and African spaces. The African spaces were described as “huddled together in the most crowded manner, and without the slightest regard to light, air, and convenience of approach”. Cruickshank was mostly disgusted by the native quarters but enjoyed the European streets and found the Colonial and stone buildings enchanting as they reminded him of houses he knew from back home in London. There’s a chapter in his book describing the layout of Cape Coast that reveals some insights in the formation of the European quarters of the town.

There is a gentle and continuous rise from the castle gate to the top of this street, which is crowned by a very sober-looking chapel belonging to the Wesleyans, perfectly devoid of any architectural decoration, but strongly and substantially built. The bulk of the European houses is on the west with their green jalousies, lying along the brow and side of a gently swelling acclivity, and interspersed with the mud and picturesque effect when viewed from the sea.⁶⁷

Although Cruickshank and partly the Euro-African elite wrote critically about the African quarters of the indigenous town of Cape Coast, called Oguaa, there has been studies that have shown the town to have been well adapted to its urban surroundings. It had a layout that was situated conveniently near the town center and the fishing harbour. As A.D.C. Hyland points out the interior of the houses were planned to benefit the lifestyles of the inhabitants while the exterior and the placement of the houses followed the topography of the area. Furthermore the thick mud walls and flat roofs of the huts functioned better as insulation against the heat than did the modern houses’ blockwork and corrugated sheet roofing. Hyland continues to describe the African town as “picturesque, gay, humming with life; and above all, it speaks to us of its history”.⁶⁸

Euro-Africans influenced the town’s appearance with their houses built in different styles like the sobrado, Italianate and Queen Anne in the late 19th century which characterized

⁶⁷ Cruickshank 1853, 24.

⁶⁸ Hyland 1995, 173.

the hybrid style and became more common as the locally trained masons put their unique mark on the buildings architecture.⁶⁹

For most Euro-Africans, even the members of the Gone Fantee movement, modernization with regards to technological advances were very welcome and were regarded as positive aspects of the relations with Western countries. The construction of better communications and infrastructures on the Gold Coast was encouraged and it created hopefulness for the future of the country. It wasn't, however, until the 1920's that more significant changes started to take place. The first electrical installations were erected in the Sekondi harbor in 1919 and the following decade saw the introduction of a piped water supply, electric lighting and the building of hospitals, dispensaries and health centers.⁷⁰ There still existed a large gap between the modern European quarters and the poorest quarters, a contrast that had become worse in the late 19th century when towns experienced a large inflow of people from the countryside in search of education, work and a better life.⁷¹

The end of the allied anti-colonial vanguard created by the Gone Fantee movement

Kofi Baku wrote in his dissertation that “By 1925 the break between the Government and the Westernised Africans had [become] complete.”⁷² This statement poses some questions regarding the character of the break and what became of the westernized Africans after it. Has the placement of the break in the year 1925 been correct and if so, should it be remembered in any specific way as the end of an era?

I have not made any serious attempts to explain the organization and the Euro-African involvement in the British Gold Coast political sphere, but as the ARPS grew older and stronger it also started to experience internal struggles with members of different political

⁶⁹ Micots 2015, 48–49.

⁷⁰ Boahen 1975, 106.

⁷¹ Boahen 1975, 105.

⁷² Baku 1987, 340.

opinions and outside powers undermining its work and role. An especially difficult tug-of-war was fought between the Euro-African educated class and the native chiefs. The year 1925 coincided with a new constitution that proposed an end to the old Legislative Council and the emergence of a new one that separated power-relations between the educated elite and the chiefs. Governor Guggisberg ruled that three elected representatives from the educated elite and six elected chiefs from three (newly created) Provincial councils of chiefs would be eligible for the new Legislative Council. This angered many in the ARPS that saw this new separation of institutions as a challenge for future prospects and hindered the educated Euro-African elite from ever gaining control over the Gold Coast as its justified leaders.⁷³ Casely Hayford was very disappointed with the governor's Constitution but eventually felt forced to comply, because otherwise there would have been less qualified men partaking in the election. Kobina Sekyi on the other hand refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Provincial council.⁷⁴ The elite and the chiefs would however as a consequence of the new reforms go head to head with each other for the true legitimacy of the natural leadership of the country. This conflict was personified by the quarrel between Casely Hayford and Nana Ofori Atta, the Omanhene of Akyem Abuakwa. Arguably this conflict raging throughout the 20's and 30's only played in favor for the colonial rulers.⁷⁵

Baku was right in associating the break (between the government and the educated class) with the introduction of the new constitution. The constitution had been long in the making and was passed rather easily, but surprised the educated class on how radical it was in favor for the native chiefs. Kimble has shown that some of the educated members were stunned by the effects of the constitution and J.E.K. Aggrey of Achimota wrote in a private letter: "Wish I had known about the whole thing before it was promulgated"⁷⁶ which indicates that they did not understand the repercussions of the changes that were being carried out. One of the main reasons to this was that the educated class and members like Casely Hayford had themselves promoted Provincial Councils as early as

⁷³ Gocking p. 617.

⁷⁴ Gocking 1984, 617.

⁷⁵ Boahen 1996, 243.

⁷⁶ Kimble 1963, 443.

1903. Back then their focus had been on education, which was mostly a quality limited to the educated elite and not to the chiefs. By the time the Guggisberg Constitution of 1925 emerged more chiefs than ever had become literate and educated to some degree.⁷⁷ Kimble has reasserted that national unity emerged ironically from the opposition aroused by the creation of the Provincial Councils, not by the councils themselves even though they were created for the purpose of national unity.⁷⁸

The European community redefined

One question that has yet to be sufficiently discussed is the European community on the Gold Coast, and how it should be defined and understood. If it was a community for the Europeans who travelled to the Gold Coast for governmental or other positions, it would be easy to differentiate it from other communities. Some aspects, however, suggest that the European community should be understood in a broader view of and that the possibilities of who could have been considered a member of it should be redefined.

The British had started building a distance between themselves, the natives and the westernized Africans communities from the mid-19th century onwards. Ato Quayson remarks that when Sir Benjamin Pine entered the Gold Coast as governor in 1857 an openly racist tone was to become dominant. It progressed into to the 20th century and formed a polarization especially between the educated community and the colonial administrators.⁷⁹ The residential patterns in Gold Coast towns had however not been heavily impacted by the emergence of racist attitudes before the 1910's. Traditionally Europeans and wealthy Africans had lived side by side in European-styled houses scattered throughout town quarters. Sharp divides between the European residential areas and other townfolk started to take shape as a result of the mosquito theory of malaria and encourage a racial segregation to combat the plague. This led to the formation of "The

⁷⁷ Kimble 1963, 444.

⁷⁸ Kimble 1963, 451.

⁷⁹ Quayson 2014, 121.

Ridge” as a segregated zone for all Europeans in Accra.⁸⁰ The Ridge wasn’t a complete success for the colonial administration as they could not compel all the European residents to move from their former establishments into the new area.

There are some interesting mentions of the European community that nuance the picture of an exclusive and excluding community towards the mixed communities on the Gold Coast. One of these is mentioned in a letter from Woolhouse Bannerman who acted as Police Magistrate in Cape Coast. In 1928 he applied for the position of Puisne Judge in Cape Coast comprised with a raise in his salary. Governor Slater declined the application with a letter explaining that the position had to be filled by an outsider who would not be inclined to be biased in his dealings with the local people. Bannerman perceived this as an excuse to exclude Euro-Africans from attaining similar positions on the Gold Coast. In his answer to the Governor he however raised the concern he had for losing his face in the European community. The only possibility for Bannerman to become Puisne Judge was for him to move to another colony, to which he gave an elaborate account of his predicament.

In the case of a European, the position would be quite different: he would carry with him the whiteman’s prestige and all that it means and stands for, and he could always count on the moral support of the European community which, after all, makes life worth living in this planet.

The social status that Woolhouse Bannerman enjoyed was tied to Cape Coast and extended at the most to established networks on the Gold Coast. This was probably the case of most westernized Gold Coast Africans at this time. The emphasis on the utterance “makes life worth living in this planet“, appears dramatic and raises the question whether Bannerman believed this to influence the Governor to sway his opinion in favor of him. Commenting on the prospect of moving to another colony Bannerman replied that:

The native community would, undoubtedly, regard me as an interloper and would always look upon me with suspicion and aversion, and my position among the European community would be embarrassing.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Parker 1995, 294.

For Euro-Africans this meant that their positions in the communities relied on good relations to both natives and Europeans. Bannerman could not have the one without the other.

More than a physically defined space the European community was probably a mental space reproduced in the interactions between Europeans and westernized Africans who upheld hierarchies on the Gold Coast. The breach between the educated class and the government resulted also in the breach between the cooperators and the non-cooperators of the ARPS members. This educated society was being torn apart by internal struggles. The Constitution of 1925 and the resulting struggles thus also led to the creation of at least fifty national clubs and associations complemented with a new generation of educated Africans who surfaced from the native section of the populace.⁸² This development would eventually lead to the emergence of parties that oversaw the transition from colonialism to independence.

⁸¹ PRAAD ADM 12/5/100 Miscellaneous Correspondence.

⁸² Boahen 1996, 243.