

CONTESTING SILENCE: THE BAN ON DRUMMING AND THE MUSICAL POLITICS OF PENTECOSTALISM IN GHANA¹

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Introduction

The period of Ghana's Fourth Republic has been characterized by the unprecedented growth of Pentecostal churches, particularly in the urban centers of the country. Many scholars have noted that Pentecostalism, as it has manifested itself in Ghana and a number of other former colonies, addresses the predicament of postcolonial society (see Gifford 1994, 1998; Meyer 1998a, 1999; Ter Haar 1994, 1998; Van Dijk 1997, 1999). However, the local-level implications of its relations with the postcolonial state have been little explored. While the Ghanaian state has developed initiatives for the enunciation of a national cultural heritage policy—and therefore a national identity—which coincided with some of the mainline Christian churches' quest for "enculturation," the Pentecostal churches have remained rather ambivalent if not hostile towards this entire cultural project. On a local level the political proclamation of "traditionalism" is often contested by Pentecostal leaders and members by arguing that a nation's and a citizen's progress and prosperity can only be achieved if one is prepared to "make a complete break with the past" (Meyer 1998a). This paper sets out to explore this politics of time by looking at the importance of music and musical instruments in the Pentecostals' contestation of "tradition" and "cultural heritage." More specifically, it looks at the violent conflicts that have erupted in Accra in recent times concerning the ban on drumming during the Homowo festival between groups that identify themselves as "traditionalists" on the one hand and Pentecostals on the other, and the political responses this

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produced. I will argue that there is a transnational, transcultural dimension to the use of music in the Pentecostals' politics of time which also has implications for the creation of an alternative cultural identity, as Pentecostalism espouses.

This contribution is therefore not devoted to a musicological treatment or explanation of the songs, rhythms and melodies as can be found in the recently established, fast growing urban Pentecostal groups. I hasten to acknowledge the importance of such a study that might explore the highly transcultural and hybridized nature of the texture, tempi and contents of the music and the songs that are common among these groups. Historical continuities are present, but at the same time the transcultural interaction with Western styles, with Ghanaian highlife music (see Yankah 1997; Collins 1994; Van der Geest and Asante-Darko 1982) and other modern West African musical varieties make for a very complex and rich musical fabric. I happily leave this for musicologists to explore. Rather, I will highlight the Pentecostals' emphasis on the importance of music and the role it plays in the political positioning of Pentecostalism in the context of the Ghanaian postcolonial state. The music's transnational and transcultural dimensions, furthermore, shape that political position, and this study therefore fits in with the current critical and post-modern perceptions of the role of music in African society (see Ballantine 1991; Mphande and Newsum 1997; James 1997). The paper is based on research on Ghanaian Pentecostal groupings in Ghana (Accra) and in the diaspora (The Hague), and the transnational relations between them.

The Lighthouse Chapel Controversy

Every year, around the month of May, the Ga Mantse (paramount chief) announces the commencement of the cultural festival known as Homowo from his palace in Jamestown, Accra. Ga speakers are considered the long-time inhabitants of Accra and its wider region and occupy particularly the coastal areas in this part of Ghana. The Ga maintained and developed in this area a paramount chieftaincy, entitled to the land, and involved in safeguarding its fertility through his relationship with territorial spirits and their worship. The Homowo season starts with the ritual sowing of corn and yams with the coming of the first rains in early May and ends in late September when the crops are finally harvested.

Right after the ritual sowing, the festival includes a period of time (more than a month) of quiet and servitude, when the spirits' benevolence with respect to the growth and harvest of agricultural produce and fish is solicited. In August the actual Homowo day of feasting (Ga, *koyeligbi*) is celebrated by the sprinkling of ceremonial food (*kpokpoi*) to the gods and the ancestors that safeguard fertility. A plenitude of food is consumed to "forget" the foregoing period of shortage and even hunger of the time before harvesting takes place. During these festivities the paramount chief and the other Ga chiefs (*mantsemi*) go out to distribute food, and a special, highly nutritious corn-based drink is produced and served to guests.²

The period of quietude includes a ban on drumming, dancing and other forms of noise-making, so as to achieve the silence required "to leave the gods undisturbed while they look after the yams," as one of my informants explained. As the Ga language is spoken in the major part of Accra and the other ethnic groups in the city are in a sense "immigrants", there is a strong popular feeling that the wider populace should abide by this "law." The governmental authorities very much emphasize this "law" as a way of preserving the local cultural legacy. The law is held to pertain to all, including the many different kinds of Christian churches that can be found in Accra and surrounding places. Whereas in previous years few difficulties seem to have arisen from the banning of the sound of drums from the city and its environs, in recent years, concomitant with their growth, resistance by Pentecostal groups to the "law" has stiffened. Occasional clashes between so-called "traditionalists" and members of different Pentecostal groups have emerged which should be interpreted in the context of a post-colonial state seeking to preserve elements of its varied, multicultural heritage.

One such case of conflict and contestation is the following. On Sunday May 31, 1998 a group of about 50 persons stormed the church premises of the Lighthouse Chapel International located in the Ga neighborhood of Korle Bu in Accra. Several church members were injured and the church's costly musical instruments were confiscated. This violent assault constituted the latest and most violent clash between so-called "traditionalists" and Pentecostals in that area. For the entire following

² This drink is also served at special occasions such as birthing rituals and weddings.

month the accusation that the church violated the ban on drumming, which was then in effect, the accusations of infringement on religious liberties from both parties, and the investigations of the police and other authorities, kept the general public and the newspapers spellbound. The national parliament debated the matter, and the authorities reacted to the violence by setting up a commission of enquiry, the Awortwi Commission.

One of the issues that was investigated by the commission was the church's building of modern public toilet and bathroom facilities, constructed as a service to the community and, as the church claimed, with the explicit purpose of bringing "development." The building site was however highly contested as it also served as a place for ancestral worship by some groups within the Ga community such as the Afrikana Renaissance Mission (a neo-traditionalist society that seeks the rejuvenation of traditional religious practices) and as a place for the pouring of libation relating to the practices of the Ga Mantse chieftaincy. The demolition of some of the church's building constructions (a fence in particular) had also been ordered by the Accra Metropolitan Authority as the site had been earmarked for further urban development. Secondly and more importantly, the church was accused of not respecting the imposed ban of drumming in an utter and provocative denial of traditional values. Supported by the Pentecostal Council, the church claimed that modern religious liberties needed to be upheld, and these permitted them to make music during church services whenever they wanted, and that true Christianity could not be involved in obeying "animistic" rituals. The "traditionalists" in turn voiced their opposition to the "noise-making" which accompanied so many Pentecostal meetings. They pointed to the fact that the making of loud music by Pentecostals during their night vigils usually went on throughout the entire night and that in many parts of the city numerous complaints against the practice had been filed with local assemblies. In other words, Pentecostal music and the modern equipment commonly used for that purpose were considered to infringe upon the public domain, so that the imposition of one month of silence should be seen as a gesture of goodwill.

On 9 June the Minister of the Interior, Nii Okaijah Adamafo, issued a statement in defense of the ban on drumming in certain periods of the year:

It is wrong for certain people to assume that practices such as the ban on drumming is fetish and therefore of no significance to society (*Daily Graphic*, 9 June 1998).

This position was reiterated even more forcefully at a press conference organized by representatives of the Afrikana Renaissance Mission on behalf of elders and chiefs of the Ga community. They asserted that the ban on drumming and noise making in the Ga state was a highly spiritual requirement and should be obeyed by all. Lighthouse Chapel stated in response that:

We had even packed all our musical instruments including the drums at the time we were attacked by the so-called "concerned people" [meaning the traditionalists] (*People and Places*, 11-17 June 1998).

But whereas Lighthouse Chapel publicly proclaimed its intention to accommodate the ban on drumming, the Ghana Pentecostal Council through its president Rev. Dr. Simon B. Asore was quick to describe the ban on drumming as a violation of the rights of Christians (*Ghanaian Times*, 10 June 1998). This only heated up the controversy between Pentecostalism and traditionalism. When the final report of the Awortwi Commission was published more than a month later, it left the dispute over the ban on drumming and the Pentecostal contestation of culture completely unresolved.

While this violent confrontation, its public manifestation and political controversy can be explored in diverse ways, its significance for the discussion in this paper is that it shows that the Pentecostals' preaching of "development" also entails a hidden agenda in which participation in "culture" is turned into an ambiguous affair, conflicting with the state-held notions of conservation and rejuvenation of Ghanaian cultural heritage. How does Lighthouse Chapel relate to the Pentecostal contestation of this cultural politics?

Lighthouse Chapel International emerged out of a religious group of Western-trained doctors, medical personnel from Korle-Bu Hospital and university graduates, among whom Dag Heward Mills took the lead in establishing the church.³ For a number of years Heward Mills devoted much time and energy to building up the Lighthouse Chapel church at Korle-Bu before it began branching out to other parts of Accra and the southern region of Ghana as a whole. From the mid 1990s onward, Lighthouse Chapel experienced a massive growth in terms of membership and number of church congregations and is considered by some as one of the most successful new "additions" to the charismatic Pentecostal churches that have gained national significance in the last decade. The church claims 70 congregations, established not only in Ghana but also in ten other countries in Africa, Europe and North America as well. One reason for that success is Heward Mills' prolific writing: he has produced a series of affordable books on religious and moral issues which circulate widely and respond to a popular fascination with such written tracts.⁴ The other element in its appeal is the image the church holds in the public's eye as being one of the stiffest opponents of "traditionalism." Heward Mills' public speeches often address these and similar themes of the fight against "backwardness," "ignorance" and the rejection of development in which the true Pentecostal Christian often is engaged in present-day Ghanaian society. Lighthouse Chapel gained fame for involvement in various small conflicts with "traditional" interests as it established itself in various parts of Accra, which lent prestige to the church and its leadership in Pentecostal circles.

The success of Lighthouse Chapel is to be understood against the background of the rise of charismatic Pentecostalism as a whole in Ghanaian society since the late 1960s. Pentecostalism, as a general category, has become the most popular form of Christianity in Ghana. Although many different denominational and non-denominational forms of Pentecostalism can be distinguished within this large category, which did not all share equally in increased popularity, some recent figures show a

³ Other members of these groups established Harvest Ministries International.

⁴ Booklets are produced by his own publication house "Dag's Tapes & Publications" of Accra and include titles such as "They Went to Hell" (1998), "The Strange Woman" (1998) and "All About Fornication" (1998).

marked increase in the spread of Pentecostalism throughout rural and urban Ghana, particularly in the southern and central regions. According to the 1993 National Church Survey conducted by the Ghana Evangelism Committee, the Church of Pentecost, one of the oldest Pentecostal denominations, has now become one of the largest churches in Ghana with a steady adult membership of nearly 260,000 persons in just under 3,600 congregations.⁵ The Ghana Pentecostal Council now serves more than 120 different Pentecostal churches. Among these churches there are many that belong to what generally became known as the "second Pentecostal wave" that has been sweeping through Africa since the 1970s, whereby particularly in the urban areas a newer charismatic type of Pentecostalism has emerged.⁶ Churches such as Dr. Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church (ICGC) and Bishop Duncan Williams' Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFM) started to operate from the end of the 1970s, quickly attracting a massive membership from a young, urban, upwardly mobile, emerging middle class, aspiring to success and prosperity in life (Gifford 1994, 1998: 76-97; Van Dijk 1997, 1999). There are a number of important reasons for distinguishing between this second Pentecostal wave—in which these two churches operated as pioneers—from earlier Pentecostal predecessors. First of all, these churches are basically of the one-man type. Strong personal, charismatic leadership is what characterizes them and the authority of the leader-founder usually runs unquestioned and unchallenged. Church membership is framed in a narrative in which the leader, or the messages or sentiments revolving around such a leader, sometimes appear in fantastic form and figure as a source of inspiration.

Secondly, for the greater part these leader-founders are basing their own sources of inspiration not so much on the canonical, denominational literature of the earlier, larger, usually mission-based, Pentecostal denominations, such as the Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Church of God or the later Church of Pentecost, but instead on the messages of well-

⁵ By comparison: the Presbyterian Church has a steady membership of about 180,000, divided into 1900 assemblies, while the Roman Catholic Church stands at about 340,000 members.

⁶ The National Church Survey recorded a doubling of the number of Pentecostal churches in the years 1987-1993.

known, influential Pentecostal preachers in the U. S., Europe and South Africa.⁷ In other words, direct personal inspiration and revelation is the key to their authority and narrative and charismatic power. Denominationalism or clergyism is abhorred, and counter-authority based on revelation and inspiration is valued.

Thirdly, the new charismatic churches are not "popular" in the broad sense of the word. Often delivering their messages in a foreign language, such as English, emphasizing reading and study, and underscoring the need for intellectual reflection, they reveal an orientation towards the middle classes of society; those who have been to school or have been able to attend university. While the older Pentecostal churches in that sense were popular from their inception, if not perforce populist, the new charismatic churches focused on the better off. They appealed to those with positions in society, those who could support the church financially and those susceptible to an ideology that, at least on a superficial level, equates success with God's benevolence and poverty with God's punishment and the work of Satan. As happened elsewhere (see Van Dijk 1995, 1998), the university became the natural "habitat" for the expansion of charismatic Pentecostalism.

The rise to prominence of the churches of the second wave of Pentecostalism in an urban milieu and the character of their positions cannot readily be understood without placing them in a broader historical and cultural context. The main features of the history of the rise of Pentecostalism in Ghana have been dealt with at length by other authors (see Adubofuor 1994; Larbi 1995; Assimeng 1989, 1995). Missionary Pentecostalism was introduced in Ghana during the first three decades of this century through the establishment of congregations of churches such as the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Church from England and the U. S. Though sometimes viewed as belonging to the many prophet-healing or spirit-healing churches which emerged at around the same time (the so-called *sunsum-asore*), clear differences in terms of doctrines, ritual discourse and practices arose, eventually resulting in Pentecostalism taking a different path of development from these other independent churches

⁷ Gifford (1998: 78) gives extensive details about these sources of the Faith Gospel movement as they are found in the writings of, among others, Robert Schuller, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Hagin, and Reinhard Bonnke.

(Wyllie 1980). The Pentecostal churches engaged in a dialectic, as they were not prepared to accept such practices that would signal the continuation of a cultural past in the same way as the prophetic-healing churches did, because in their view this would make the church vulnerable to attacks from the Devil and associated demons. In other words the post-colonial predicament has caused Pentecostalism to engage in a politics of time. Ancestral spirits, witches and ritual practices related to veneration and protection are classified as demonic and are diabolized (Meyer 1995). More forcefully than the prophetic churches, the Pentecostal churches denounced the continuation of practices that in their view might invoke the presence of demons, the accomplices of Satan. Being delivered from such powers is supposed to take place only through the "blood of Christ," the laying on of hands and ecstatic prayer sessions in which the presence of the Holy Spirit is felt to be manifest in speaking in tongues (Akan,⁸ *kasa foforoo*, lit. "the new language"). Objects and substances that would relate to a cultural past are in principle not given a place within its ritual practice and discourse. So while the Pentecostal churches started to Africanize from around 1950 in terms of their leadership and forms of worship, the importance of their own distinctive ways of dealing with the evil forces in society grew. It began opposing the ideology of mainline Christianity, which denied the efficacy of these forces, and that of the prophet-healing churches, which maintained a practice of healing in which herbs, concoctions, water, oil, candles and statues still played a decisive role.

This very same dialectic was also played out by many of the new Pentecostal churches in the area of music. Whereas the prophetic and spirit-healing churches very much embraced the use of drums, the singing of certain songs and the dancing of certain rhythms that maintained a continuation with a perceived cultural past of ancestral and healing traditions, the Pentecostal churches refused to follow suit. Nor did the new Pentecostal churches engage in a form of "African enculturation" which some of the mainline Christian churches embraced. Particularly the Roman Catholic church introduced drums and dancing into its liturgy from the early 1970s as a way of accommodating the call for Africanized

⁸ Pentecostal churches in Accra prefer to use Akan and/or English to the Ga language to communicate with their multi-ethnic membership.

forms of ritual and worship following earlier phases of Africanizing its clergy.

As will be highlighted in the following sections, Pentecostalism rather began developing a different trajectory aimed at the hybridization of Western, Black American and West African musical styles. Concomitant with the rise of charismatic Pentecostalism a booming "Pentecostal" music industry rapidly developed, particularly in the urban centers of Accra and Kumasi, which also benefited from the liberalization of radio broadcasting in Ghana in recent years. Since the early 1990s, various privately owned FM radio stations (such as JoyFM) began to promote the many artists who had found in Pentecostal music an avenue to commercial success. The relatively easy production of compact disks made possible the release of many albums by Ghanaian musicians and singers who offered gospel-type of music in modern styles, modern rhythms and using modern equipment and instruments. Some Pentecostal churches in Accra, such as CAFM and ICGC even established their own music studios, equipped with highly professional recording facilities and manned by professionally trained musicians. At many public places in the cities, such as markets, bus-stations, shops and the churches themselves, compact disks and music-cassettes of this new generation of artists are being sold at affordable prices, adding to the fame many of them gain in a relatively short period of time. Musical styles range from "gospelized" highlife (such as that of C. K. Mann and "Prof" Kofi Abraham) to "internationalized" *mmrane* (such as that of "Suzy and Mat," two cousins highly promoted by their uncle and well-known preacher and radio personality Owusu Ansah of Kotobabi's Living Bread Bible Church). *Mmrane* are the appellations traditionally sung in honor of a king (*ohene*) but are now entirely "christianized" and reshaped by replacing references to kings and chiefs with those to *Onyame* (God); a process quite the opposite of "enculturation." Accompanied by modern instruments they are turned into an internationally appealing form of Ghanaian Pentecostal music. An example of *mmrane* lyrics is as follows:

Song title: "Yehowa"

*Tete kwafram Nyankompon tease ampara
Ahene mu hene, Domberina Nyankompon*

God of all ages and still living
King of kings, Lord of a warring
group

Kantamanto, Okokroko, Juda mu gyata

Almighty, omnipresent God, Lion of
Juda

Ayebiafo, Okatakyie

All powerful accomplisher

Woma obonini wu nta

The One who gives the barren
twins.

(translated by J. Nuamah)

"Suzy and Mat," like so many other gospel singers, are regularly invited by Ghanaian Pentecostal churches located in the West to come and perform, and thus give expression to a kind of "global" Ghanaian Pentecostal message. Music became at the same time a subject of cultural deliverance (such as *mmrane* delivered from its tradition) and an object of transnationalism.

Further Characteristics of Ghanaian Pentecostalism

The overall success of Pentecostalism in Ghanaian society can to a large extent be explained by looking closely at two major points of popular attraction and fascination: its deliverance ideology and praxis, and its emphasis on transnationalism. The practice of deliverance (*ogyee*) has become a common denominator in Pentecostalism over the last four decades as it shares and negotiates a fear of how demons, ancestral spirits and the like from the past may still haunt a person in the present. The more positions of leadership were taken by Africans and the more Pentecostal churches and breakaways were started by Africans, the more the practice of deliverance, which is a way of dealing with a person's past, came to take a central position in worship and church organization (see for further substantiation of this claim Gifford 1998: 97-109; Meyer 1998a; Larbi 1995; Van Dijk 1997).

Another salient feature from the mid-1980s onwards was the international self-presentation of these churches. The "global claim" came to feature prominently in them. It showed that they are not confined to the limits of Ghanaian, or even West African culture, like most prophetic churches, nor to the limits of the postcolonial Ghanaian state. Instead they actively started to seek interaction with other cultural contexts beyond present borders and cultural boundaries, and included this in their

ideology, organization and religious experience. Often operating from bases in Accra or Kumasi, these churches began setting up branches outside Ghana, particularly in Western Europe and the U. S. Pentecostalism thus linked up with the "new" African diaspora and contained a message for a mobile urban population eager to participate in transnational travel. In order to understand the popular appeal of charismatic churches in the urban areas we need to take a closer look first of all at the Pentecostalism's politics of time and practice of deliverance.

Deliverance has become one of the most important features of the emergence of Pentecostalism in Ghana's urban areas. Its significance has become the subject of extensive study, both by scholars from Ghana (see among others, Atiemo 1993; Adubofuor 1994; Larbi 1995) as well as from elsewhere (Meyer 1995, 1998a; Van Dijk 1997, 1999; Gifford 1998: 97-109; Ter Haar 1998: 175-176). The aim of deliverance is that people should be freed from the powers of Satan which hold people in bondage through demonic forces. These demonic forces are proclaimed to reside within society at large, but more particularly within the individual's immediate circle of family relationships and descent. Satan is particularly believed to work through ancestral or generational curses (*nnomee*) which may become manifest in specific problems haunting individual family members such as barrenness, alcoholism, misfortune or tragic death. Pentecostal believers are therefore urged to be aware of such manifestations that may signal the presence of a curse from a past of which the individual was not aware. Deliverance is aimed at creating a rift, a clear-cut rupture with the knowable or, in most cases, unknowable past. Deliverance should be preceded by "breaking" (*obubu*) which is the spiritual breaking of the bonds that keep people entangled with their past, their former upbringing within the family circle where the ancestors are venerated at the family shrines through the practices of the shrine-priests (*okomfoo*). Name-giving, outdoorings (an elaborate ritual of bringing a newborn child out into the community), initiation, healing and particularly the pouring of libation to the ancestors performed at important events in a person's life may signal links with the family spirits which in Pentecostal discourses provoke danger and impurity.

Deliverance ministries are established in most churches, which provide for a "break" with the past. "Make a complete break with the past"

is a cry often heard in the context of these ministries (see also Meyer 1998a). This complete break with the past operates on two levels: one is the person's immediate life-style, the engagement with present-day society in which the confirmed believer is trapped in moral wrongdoing: drinking, stealing, other forms of crime, greed and poverty, rudeness, envy, and hatred. These are all re-defined in Pentecostal ideology as resulting from evil spirits or even as spirits manifesting themselves in these forms.⁹ Becoming Born Again therefore is often portrayed as a fierce battle between the individual and the powers from the person's immediate past. Even after having rejected all these vices, Born Agains are advised to be alert as "the Devil is shrewd" and may deceive a person in his weak moments.

At a deeper level, however, deliverance from the ancestral past confronts the bondage of the *longue duree*. The past life of the family, one's parents, grandparents and great-grandparents is to be inspected for the sins that have been committed in the past. Any person alive today may be haunted by ancestral curses that become manifest through recurrent problems in terms of the blood-line with the past: families and individuals may experience problems with childbirth, with being unable to conceive, with chronic diseases, with afflictions from ancestral or evil spirits which become apparent in possession, madness and nightmares. In Pentecostal ideology these ancestral curses all result from blood covenants which in the past have been established through and by the ancestors with devilish powers. The answer to such problems, it is stressed during deliverance rituals, is a complete break with the blood tie that keeps a person trapped within the realm of an ancestral curse. It may imply, subsequently, a rejection of all those rituals such as initiation and funerals, which emphasize the connection to a family's bounded past.

Breaking with the past and deliverance are therefore seen as key-elements in the Pentecostal ritual structure. Accompanied by songs and music, they take place during church services where people are invited to give testimonies and are touched by the Pentecostal leader with the aim of making the power of the Holy Spirit manifestly present in the person's

⁹ As Pastor Ampiah Kwofi proclaimed at a gathering of his Global Revival Outreach Ministries which I attended on 29 October 1995: "Poverty is a spirit you need to get rid of."

mind and body. Usually people who have stepped forward to receive such "anointing" can be found groveling on the ground, sweating profusely and seemingly engaged in a fierce battle with forces that are being driven out of the body. Most churches, in addition to the Sunday services, maintain special deliverance hours, usually indicated on signboards they place along the main roads.¹⁰ Delivering public statements, by which one's firm position in the true faith can be shown, is part of deliverance. It is coupled with a narrative form that demonstrates a new identity; a "rhetoric of self-making," to use the felicitous term of Battaglia (1995). Deliverance produces a new subjective identity by stating at the same time that the person is a product of a past, but a past that can be inspected, interrogated and finally rejected.

Politicization of Culture

In addition to the personal, individual level of controlling one's past, one's location in a family history or in a specific tradition of ancestral veneration, there is a second wider and cultural domain: the moral supervision of time. Most Pentecostal churches are deeply concerned about "culture" and about how the government and other authorities negotiate the call for a preservation of heritage, ritual and symbolic styles. As Meyer shows (1998a) many Pentecostals perceive African rituals such as Homowo as yet another avenue by which Satan ensures that ancestral and generational curses become manifest in present-day society. Pentecostal leaders provoke in the public realm a profound contestation in terms of a politics of culture and its implied nostalgia. In the Pentecostal

¹⁰ Both Meyer (1998a) and Gifford (1998:98) rightly assert the importance of questionnaires which people have to fill out when they enter the deliverance ministries of some churches. The general tone in which the questionnaires are cast is one in which the person is asked to scrutinize his or her personal past for any experience, any piece of information which may lead to a recollection and assessment of what has happened in their lives. Questions would for instance relate to initiation ceremonies the person has gone through in the past, to the "stools" in the family where the ancestors reside and the shrine priests perform their rituals of ancestral veneration, to ritual baths a person may have taken in the past, or to herbs, concoctions, incense that has been administered to the person for purposes of healing and appeasement. The variety of questions is enormous and shows the skill of Pentecostal leaders in penetrating the many layers of Ghanaian culture.

view traditional ritual blocks progress not only on an individual level, but on the community level as well. In other words, social-cultural traditions form an impediment to the community's and even to the nation's betterment, and Pentecostal initiative is therefore directed at disqualifying such displays of cultural life. Consequently, Pentecostals critically examine efforts, such as those of the state, that are aimed at reviving and rejuvenating certain traditions, that have the objective of overcoming the ruptures with a cultural heritage which have been brought about by the modern projects of colonialism, missionization, western education, and capitalist market relations. Instead, within much Pentecostal ritual surrounding birth, death, marriage and so forth we notice an explicit strategy aimed at replacing the cultural forms that are so cherished by those wishing to preserve their heritage.¹¹

The state's overall cultural policy stresses the need for an active involvement of the general public, as well as what is considered "traditional" leadership, in the preservation of cultural heritage in much—but not all—of the variety that one encounters in present-day Ghana. Official government policy seeks consciously to strengthen those cultural institutions and organizations that promote a sense of pride in and respect for Ghana's cultural heritage, both within and outside of the country. At the same time the state also critically negotiates elements of cultural traditions, such as the *trokosi* system, which may run counter to that imagery.¹² As in so many other postcolonial states, Ghana's current

¹¹ Replacement may take place for instance when after childbirth, usually within a period of about three months, a name-giving ceremony for the baby is held. I once witnessed how an ICGC pastor took full "possession" of the ritual, proclaimed the name of the baby and, instead of the usual alcohol, put water, salt and honey on the lips of the infant "to make him taste the three essences of life." At similar rituals the power of the family and elders is publicly and substantially reduced and detachment proclaimed. While in a non-Pentecostal context the parents themselves, the family elders or the *okomfoo* (the shrine priests) proclaim the name of the baby in public, in what has become known in English as the "outdooing" ceremony (Akan, *dintoo*), here the church directly asserts its detaching power over new life.

¹² The *trokosi*-system involves the placing of a child, usually a girl, at the shrine of a traditional priest or healer by the child's family as a form of compensation for a serious offence committed by a family member. Largely confined the Volta Region of Ghana, the system was critically debated in the years after the 1996 general elections as a form of child-bondage or slavery no longer acceptable in a "modern" nation. See Ameh 1999.

National Democratic Party (NDC) government has stepped up efforts to overcome the legacy of colonialism and missionization by using the past as a rich resource for societal renewal, for achieving progress and development in a "Ghanaian" way. While some of the cultural traditions are critically examined, in general the state's policy of augmenting the general public's awareness of their cultural heritage aims at fostering national cohesion.

Thus, in contrast to the Pentecostal view, the past is not seen as a curse but a source of cherished cultural identity. The NDC government therefore created a National Commission on Culture that uses governmental funds for the organization of local, regional and national festivals such as that of Homowo. Furthermore it gave high priority to culture in school, college and university curricula (for instance in the form of music and dance classes), paid tribute to the National and Regional Houses of Chiefs, and actively supported organizations such as the Du Bois center and PANAFEST—the widely acclaimed pan-African cultural festival with its extensive programs of Ghanaian cultural displays, dancing-classes, literature, and festivals. It actively promoted photo, film, video, theatre, and musical productions that seek to produce images of Ghanaian cultural life and how diverse and vibrant it is. The PANAFEST festivals aim particularly at reaching out to communities of Ghanaian migrants and descendants in the former slave colonies as a way of remaining in close contact with their cultural roots.

Researching the Homowo festival in Accra, Clarke-Ekong (1995, 1997) notices the increased politicization of such and similar cultural festivals since the inception of the Fourth Republic. This politicization occurs in two ways; first, a cultural policy, underscored by the 1992 Constitution, of strengthening the social and political meaning of chieftaincy; and secondly, festivals emerging more and more as cultural locations for the staging and proclamation of certain political interests (Owusu 1996). First of all, the government has built up extensive relations with a very influential House of Chiefs, embodying an underlying powerful tradition of chieftaincy, which (as many authors have shown for various parts of Ghana) creates and maintains a popular, well-respected *de facto* authority. I do not intend to examine in any detail the highly complicated state-chieftaincy relations in Ghana as they are beyond the

scope of this article (see among others: Nugent 1996; Kludze 1998). Rather the fixed times for the public acknowledgement of the authority of chieftaincy should be stressed. Throughout the year, depending on the area, the nature of chieftaincy and of certain ritual cycles requires that the rights of the citizenry be suspended (or as Pentecostals would say, invaded) in favor of the obligations towards their ritualized forms of power. These festivals are turned into full displays of chiefly grandeur and involve what are called "durbars" where chiefs appear in public in full paraphernalia and give public speeches to inform the people about future developments in their area.

Complying with the ban on drumming during the Homowo festival is acknowledged by the state on the basis of the 1992 Constitution and on the basis of the general public's respect for chiefly and religious traditions. As far as the nation-state is concerned, Homowo is a ritual of traditional religion which has an equal status to other religious rituals, be they Christian, Muslim or whatever. Not to comply with the ban on drumming would suggest an act of intolerance towards another citizen's religious convictions. Moreover it would also be interpreted as being disrespectful towards a paramount chieftaincy, such as that of the Ga Mantse, and of being disobedient towards his authority and the ancestral traditions the paramountcy safeguards. Also the Homowo festival is the occasion for the Mantse to assert authority over his sub-chiefs and their subjects and for announcing the ways in which the community will benefit from the various development efforts the paramountcy will undertake on their behalf. The mainline missionary churches once more acknowledge this authority as the entire festival is rounded off with a church service. Without any doubt Ranger's (1993) insights on the inventiveness and constructedness of such public power should be invoked here as the dominant discourse on chiefs' power usually stresses its primordial nature.

While the NDC government invested a great deal in the celebration of Ghanaian cultural heritage, many influential Pentecostal churches are hesitant if not critical towards such policies. Invoking a past of ancestral traditions and powers as happens in such festivals—by practices of pouring of libation, of calling on the gods as the chiefs usually do, of showing respect to the ancestors by offering sacrifices, and so forth—is "playing with the Devil," as a friend of mine called it. Politicization through the

governmental support of chieftaincy and festivals has complicated matters a great deal. Critiquing such festivals, the pouring of libation, the ban on drumming and dancing preceding it, now in fact implies a dismissal of policies developed by the NDC government. In Pentecostal thought, moreover, the state has become complicit in encouraging and preserving such traditions. It defiles itself by participating in "traditional" rituals, and worse, in using them for the promotion of its ideas of the national interest.

Still, it would be an oversimplification of matters if the position of the government would be interpreted as simply being biased, favoring the "traditionalist" project as against that of Pentecostalism. In the past years there have been a number of occasions in which Rawlings has actively sought moral support for his policies from the Pentecostal churches (Gifford 1998: 70-86). As Meyer (1998b) has shown in detail, increasingly Ghanaian politics has been presented as a battlefield between divine and satanic powers in which there was and is a purifying role for Pentecostalism to play. In approaching the nation-state's emphasis on cultural policy and heritage critically, many Pentecostal churches adopt an ambiguous and sometimes uneasy relationship with what they feel is the need to protect the nation spiritually from the occult powers that may lurk behind such politics. So-called "prayers for the nation" are held and performed on radio and television, in which well-known Pentecostal preachers pray for God's benevolence towards the well-being of state, society and even the president himself (Meyer 1998b: 30). In most of these prayers analytical distinctions are made between the state and state policy, and between the nation and its government. Mensa Otabil, for instance, while holding prayers for the nation would still implicitly accuse the government of "immorality" in a great number of its (cultural) policies (see also the many books he has written: Otabil 1992a, 1992b, 1992c).

This once again underlines the complex relationship between Pentecostalism and the State which has emerged particularly since the suspicious death of Francis Amoako, the leader of the hugely successful "Resurrection Power Ministries," in Kumasi in 1990, and particularly since the dispute over PNDC Law 221 of 1992, which was an attempt at registering, and therefore also curtailing, the massive rise of new religious

bodies in the country.¹³ The mainline Christian churches had pressured the NDC government to accept democratic changes, and these were effectuated with the national elections in December 1992. At the same time, however, PNDC Law 221, although already promulgated in 1989, was now put to effect in such a way that it appeared as a direct infringement on the religious liberties of the churches. Waging a battle for greater democratic freedom, the mainline churches in particular objected to this law in the strongest terms, resulting eventually in its suspension. As Dickson (1995: 274) shows, the Pentecostal churches were now invited to hold and lead the national thanksgiving service in January 1993, celebrating the peaceful democratic transition, even though they had not taken part in the preceding painstaking negotiations between the mainline churches and Rawlings. The Pentecostal churches clearly showed by their disinterest in these negotiations their distance from "worldly" matters as well as their ideological distance from the mainline churches.

Despite the fact that the state's cultural policy and Pentecostalism seem to be at loggerheads concerning fundamental issues of identity and citizenship, Rawlings courted some of the influential Pentecostal churches. He managed, on the one hand, to gain the moral support of Bishop Duncan Williams, leader of the extremely rich and influential CAFM mega-church (see Toulabor [1994] on Rawlings as a self-proclaimed "Junior Jesus" for the redemption of the nation-state). On the other hand, Mensa Otabil, leader of the other mega-church, the ICGC, has remained highly critical throughout and is often portrayed as moral watchdog in the independent public media.

The Pentecostals' fear that the past and cultural traditions may serve as an avenue for Satan is elaborated as a moral ground for Christianizing the state with a kind of theocratic discourse. The state is to be "spiritually" liberated, set free from all forms of spiritual bondage, so that progress and prosperity amidst a world of nations can be achieved. This is what they also hold against the involvement of the mainline churches in such festivals as Homowo. In their view state rituals, national, regional and local festivals and the like should be purged of those elements, such as the

¹³ This law required the registration of all religious bodies in the country with the National Commission on Culture.

pouring of libation, that invoke the presence of the ancestors whom Pentecostals regard as the accomplices of the Devil.¹⁴ Very little further elaboration or exploration of the structural factors that are affecting the position of Ghana in political and economic terms is deemed necessary for the "liberalization" that Pentecostal leaders have in mind for the nation. As long as the state is involved in such things, Pentecostal leaders often tell their followers, hope of "development" will prove futile.

Cutting national identity loose from its ancestral past in fact entails a breakaway from a localized identity and a localized power base. Pouring of libation is considered a localizing tradition, a tradition that relates identity to the gods of a specific place and a specific people. Here another element of opposition to the existing cultural policy can be found: the transnational, even global aspirations and characteristics of Pentecostalism. A rootedness in place and people is not sought by many of the new Pentecostal churches. Ethnicity is often downplayed, and a Christianized state as such is not envisioned as a conglomerate of distinct ethnic groups, each attached to a specific place or region within the state's boundaries. Rather, in establishing churches outside Ghana and in linking up with transnational Pentecostal circles, these churches do not present a "roots" ideology. This transnational and transcultural element of Pentecostalism, as a counter project to that of the state and its emphasis on cultural rooting, is particularly present in the musical expression of its ideology.

Music and the Creation of a Transnational Domain

The state's national policy of promoting festivals, music, dance, and the power of chieftaincy has profound implications as it embodies and denotes a struggle for the control over the public domain and the effect it has on private lives. The Pentecostals' dominance in the privately-owned radio stations, the many "crusades" and evangelical rallies they organize, the many videos, booklets and musical cassettes and CDs they produce, and the many church meetings they hold throughout the week, point to a contestation in their engagement with the public sphere. Music is

¹⁴ Most Pentecostal churches were outraged, for instance, when, during the official state visit of President Bill Clinton to Ghana, he was invited upon arrival to pour libation in honor of the ancestors.

fundamental to the manner in which Pentecostal churches express their claims in the public domain, a strategy which opponents dismiss as "noise-making." Speaking from broad experience with these matters, one of the pastors of the ICGC in Accra explained in an interview in which he talked about Pentecostal growth:

you see, the first thing we do, particularly here in Accra and the greater region, is to give new congregations drums, musical instruments. You can't start a church without them, nor could you confront the traditionalists! (Interview with K. Ochere, 16 October 1998)

This works on different levels. Music is important for the functioning of the church; performed by musicians using Western-manufactured instruments it lends prestige particularly to newly established congregations in densely populated suburbs. They bring entertainment, an opportunity to dance and enjoy, and confer prestige on the leaders as it shows their contacts "outside" Ghana for obtaining such expensive equipment.¹⁵

"Internally," during church-services, the music played has clear functions in indicating the various stages of the Pentecostal liturgy. For instance, the kind of "slow" music played during the time of worship and praise is different from that played at the time of deliverance and testimony, which again differs from the music played towards the end of the meetings where people can enjoy, dance and relax. Particularly in getting the right tone for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (*Honhom Sunsum*), expertise in playing the right kind of music is highly esteemed and considered crucial for this important experience of the charismata, the benevolent spiritual gifts sent by God.

In addition to such crucial "internal" functions of music, the "external" aims are also considered to be important for the success and

¹⁵ The same applies to video equipment. Very often, particularly in the larger churches, entire church-services are videotaped, usually with more than one camera, carefully filming the face of each and every person while video monitors enable the worshippers to watch what is being filmed. This has an element of entertainment and prestige both for the church and individual members, as most of them will make sure to be videotaped in their nicest outfit.

attractiveness of the church. Music in this sense often becomes a public statement of the church's "vision," as it is called. In recent years, Mensa Otabil's ICGC in Accra has frequently staged a highly successful and well-known "close harmony" group of four young men, known as "Black Heritage." Usually performing before thousands of church members and others, the group sings songs such as the Presbyterian hymnal "Holy, Holy, Holy" in a rap version while waving black fly-whisks. Their performance not only triggered laughter and hilarity but was surely understood as a political statement against the mainline churches' alleged interest in maintaining "white traditions" while patronizing the inclusion of African cultural elements. In various areas of the capital, moreover, the Pentecostals' loud music, which in vigils may continue throughout the night, is considered a political statement of "presence." Countering the increasing dominance of chieftaincy in the public life in many suburbs, the Pentecostal presence penetrates into homes and houses of all that live around. Complaints of "noise-making" by those who oppose it are usually filed with the local assemblies, but there is little they can or are prepared to do about it. Most churches have separate "music ministries" that look into such matters, help and circulate musicians, provide for instruments and recording facilities, and sometimes organize large and even national events.¹⁶ The paramount social and political importance of music for the Pentecostals' position in the nation-state is clear to every leader.

The transnational links of this politics of music are crucial to understanding it. Much of the music played or recorded is influenced by musical styles from outside Ghana. It involves musical styles found in other parts of Western Africa, but it focuses particularly on the black American gospel music scene. Rap and reggae rhythms are part of it, while at the same time the Ghanaian highlife musical styles (see Collins 1994) are transformed and "purged" of their "immoral" connotations for use in

¹⁶ For example, in October 1998, the ICGC featured in its brand-new "Christ Temple" in Accra (built at the cost of 8 billion cedis) the world-famous black American gospel singer Ron Kenoli. For several nights thousands flocked from far outside Accra to attend his performance, which was supported by acts of a score of Ghanaian artists. This became one of the largest Pentecostal musical events ever in the country, an investment by the church of ten thousands of U. S. dollars; Kenoli was paid \$15,000 and the total expense was at least three times that much.

the Pentecostal context. Pentecostal tunes and sounds have become part of a wider national musical culture, and such songs as Francis Adjei's "God You Are so Good" can be widely heard, played by non-Pentecostal bands at non-Pentecostal occasions as well. It is in this mixture of local styles with international ones that the Pentecostal music finds a source of appeal and attraction. The above-mentioned pastor in the same interview therefore continued by explaining in great detail how he uses his trips to Europe, including the Netherlands, for buying second-hand instruments and shipping them straight to Tema. At the same time in the diaspora we find Ghanaian Pentecostal churches actively engaged in purchasing musical instruments, recording equipment and the like for their branches or mother-churches in Ghana.

While electrical musical instruments bought in the West are attractive because they are much cheaper than in Ghana, on a deeper level there are other reasons behind this premium on the possession of such instruments. First of all, the Pentecostal churches appear to re-enact the kind of "cultural violence" most of the missionary churches displayed during the colonial years as they acted against the use of some traditional instruments by Christians. Talking and chiefs' drums, the horns blown in honor of the king's presence and so forth were regarded as manifestations of the power of ancestral deities and thus as contrary to the missionaries' ideology. While the missionaries avoided certain instruments because of their purported "devilish" associations, the Pentecostal churches generally appear to disqualify categorically the use of any musical instrument drawn from Ghana's various cultural repertoires. They therefore opt for non-Ghanaian instruments only, but at the same time they encounter ambivalence here. In general terms, consumption of western goods is a clear identity marker in urban Ghana, signifying progress and prosperity, modern personhood and modern forms of social organization. At the same time, as Meyer shows in several publications (1998a, 1999), Pentecostalism speaks to the moral dangers that are perceived to lie in the possession of luxury items, the danger that a person must "sell his soul to the Devil" in order to possess such wealth. It offers prayers to help protect against the evil powers that may have been encountered in the acquisition of such goods.

In order to safeguard a disconnection from the cultural past, in Pentecostal ideology neither musical styles nor musical instruments should be of local origin, and they should not refer to local traditions of veneration of ancestors, chiefs or their stools. Acquiring instruments from the West therefore precludes such "contamination" by past traditions and influences. But at the same time the Devil is able to deceive and may work through enticement. Pentecostals are constantly warned by their leaders that the possession of Western luxury items may involve a blood covenant with Satan, whereby luxury items may be obtained by sacrificing a close relative. Therefore sending musical instruments and equipment from branches in Europe to the Pentecostal churches in Ghana requires that they undergo consecration (*nteho*). The instruments are to be "sealed off" through prayer from evil and harmful influences that may travel with them from Europe to Accra and as such jeopardize the "mission" of the local church. Both before shipment and upon arrival the leaders usually pray over the instruments, consecrating them for the service in the "house of God."

Hence a double war is waged against Satan. One is directed at purging or at least contesting the domain of cultural heritage and public functions of ancestral veneration, as in the case of the Homowo festival. Lighthouse Chapel became renowned in Pentecostal circles for daringly contesting the authority of the Mantse paramountcy by deliberately ignoring the ban on drumming, dancing and of the playing of loud music during the time of public silence. The other struggle is directed "internally" at the safe and uncontaminated acquisition and possession of luxury items (such as the possession of expensive, western-manufactured instruments), but also the safe use of rhythms and songs that evoke certain "emotional" states. In Lighthouse Chapel and many other churches the emotional and excited, if not trance-like, states of mind that occur during sessions of prayer-healing and deliverance, should be interpreted only as a "spirit-possession" by the Holy Spirit. Music and dance are "work for God" and capable of driving Satan and his helpers (the ancestors) away.

While in these perspectives the reasons for the avoidance of various Ghanaian cultural traditions are made clear, the hybrid cultural style that has developed within and through Pentecostalism also entails a critical awareness of the transnational domain. Not all international musical styles

are adopted by the Pentecostal churches in Ghana. A clear example of this selective and critical stance towards the international circle of gospel music production occurred during the performance of Ron Kenoli (see note 16), the world famous gospel artist who brought to the stage two of his sons. Dressed in the style of rap-groups like "Public Enemy," the two boys, bald-headed and decorated with tattoos and earrings, received boos and laughter during their brief performance. This clearly failed to resonate in the Ghanaian Pentecostal milieu where tattoos and earrings are considered "marks of the beast" and commonly relate to the secular "worldly and ungodly" music of the West which is also penetrating Ghanaian highlife. Similarly, Ghanaian gospel or Pentecostal artists never perform with "dreadlocks," nor do women-singers appear on stage in mini-skirts, as standards of "decency" must be respected if success is to be achieved.

Many of the Ghanaian gospel artists tour in the West and visit Pentecostal churches in migrant communities such as those in the Netherlands. Here again, as I have noticed many times, a critical distancing from Ghanaian cultural traditions, on the one hand, and from Western "secular" styles, on the other, is strongly maintained. Visiting performers are usually immensely popular, but are carefully scrutinized by the leaders before they perform in church meetings. Then their CDs are well promoted, and the local church bands often copy the latest "hits" during church meetings so that people can enjoy and dance. In addition, many gospel CDs by Ghanaian artists are recorded and produced at locations outside Ghana, and an international branch of one of the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches is often involved in such a production.¹⁷

In much more concrete terms than Gilroy (1993) describes for the importance of music in the development of a transatlantic Afro-American culture, this transnational music scene is part of the Ghanaian positioning vis-à-vis Western national identity politics and society, on the one hand, and vis-à-vis their own imagined cultural background, on the other. In the diaspora as well, Pentecostalism remains critical towards both and engages in music as an "instrument" for the delineation of its own non-local and

¹⁷ Francis Adjei's famous song, "God is So Good," was recorded in Canada at the Church of Pentecost Toronto Assembly.

spiritual domain.¹⁸ For Lighthouse Chapel not to comply with the ban on drumming and dancing therefore also means that it remains in touch with that transnational domain and that it has been able to resist successfully the attempt to bring it under the control of local and localizing forces effectuated by chieftaincy. It therefore shows resilience in maintaining spiritual boundaries against such intrusions.

No political resolution for ending the conflict between the Pentecostals and the traditionalists appears to be in sight. In Accra the Pentecostals' "church-planting" activities continue, flouting what they usually consider "traditionalist" power. This commonly erupts in local disputes, as the Pentecostals insist that playing drums and making loud music is their right within the religious liberties provided by law and that followers of "traditional religion" have no right to prohibit this essential part of the Pentecostals' expression of faith. The public statements of Pentecostal leaders betray a high level of disrespect and ridicule towards such rituals as Homowo, which they brand as backward and serving to keeping people trapped in the bonds of tradition. Likewise, the so-called traditional groups, such as the Afrikana Renaissance Mission, maintain their complaints of Pentecostal "noise-making" and what they see as abuses and insults.¹⁹ Interestingly, these groups now also apply a similar mode of

¹⁸ An additional remark that should be made—although it cannot be discussed at length here—is that this "boundary work" of music is highly gendered. Both at home and in the diaspora, the music in the Pentecostal churches is exclusively produced by men, although the singers may be women. In that sense the symbolic status of being a musician is not very different from that of that of the role and function of the Pentecostal church leaders, who are almost exclusively men as well. Both operate on the level of establishing, protecting and maintaining the symbolic and ritual boundaries of this spiritual domain, a work not to be left in the hands of spiritually "weaker" women. This is often used as an explanation for the women's predominance in the healing and deliverance sessions of the churches; women are considered likely conduits for evil powers to enter the community of the "saved."

¹⁹ In July Osofo Kofi Ameve of the Afrikana Renaissance Mission issued a public statement, in which he said he was:

operation did as the early European missionaries against the use of traditional instruments: the traditionalists are confiscating the instruments used by the Pentecostal churches. This occurred both at the incident at the Lighthouse Chapel and again recently in May 1999 with the well-known Pentecostal leader Takyi Aboi, who was also physically assaulted when he pleaded with the traditional leaders for the return of his instruments. The NDC government called for a compromise: the Pentecostal churches would promise to restrict drumming to their church confines and avoid unnecessary noise-making; the traditionalists for their part were asked to refrain from disrupting Pentecostal church services (JoyFM Radio News Broadcast, 10 May 1999). In April 2000 religious leaders from a number of important umbrella organizations, including the Ghana Pentecostal Council and the National Association of Charismatic Churches, met with representatives of the Ga Traditional Council and the Afrikania Mission in an attempt to resolve the issue and avoid further escalation of the conflict. A joint declaration was issued in which the churches agreed to confine crusades and loud forms of worship to church buildings so as to avoid open and excessive noise making during the period of the ban.²⁰ Although the declaration recommended the establishment of a Standing Committee to monitor the conflict and to intervene whenever necessary, it did not offer concrete guarantees for "peace and harmony,"²¹ nor did it envisage a specific role for the government in that regard. Considering the continuing interest of the government in chieftaincy and in cultural festivals on the

abhorred [sic] by the use of radio and other mass media by Christian groups to insult believers of African religion. Some Pentecostal churches are the main perpetrators of the act. It is disheartening to hear open insults, abuses and brazen misinterpretations of facts and downright untruths being told about our African religious heritage (Ghana Review International Internet posting, 17 July 1999 <<http://www.ghanareview.com>>).

²⁰ Joint Declaration on the annual ban on drumming and noise-making by the Ga Traditional Council, The National Catholic Secretariat, The Christian Council of Ghana, Afrikania Mission, Ghana Pentecostal Council, The Council of Independent Churches, The National Association of Charismatic Churches, Office of the National Chief Imam, The Federation of Muslim Councils of Ghana, and the Ahmadiya Muslim Mission, Accra, dd. 13 April 2000.

²¹ The release of the declaration was immediately followed, for instance, by a militant reaction by a Ga youth organization announcing that they would enforce the ban on the churches wherever they saw fit (recorded by the *Dispatch* of 19-25 April 2000).

one hand, and the moral support it seeks from the side of the fast-growing and immensely popular Pentecostal churches on the other, there is little reason to believe that it will venture to intervene in the conflict in favor of the one as against the other party at any point in the near future.

Conclusion and Interpretation

Pentecostalism has blossomed in Ghana's Fourth Republic. With it has come a major emphasis on music as a transnational and transcultural "gateway," a point of entry to a largely imagined world outside Ghana, much desired, but for many out of reach. One will look therefore in vain for explicit or coded political statements confronting the government and its policies in much of the Pentecostal music. Other forms of Ghanaian musical styles have been interpreted largely along those lines. Van der Geest and Asante-Darko (1982) explored the political content of highlife music while Yankah (1997) examined the subtextual political implications of the song-tale *akutia* tradition of well-known performers. These hidden transcripts (cf. Scott 1990) are absent from "gospelized" highlife music even in the work of those who converted from "secular" highlife to Pentecostal forms, such as the famous highlife artist C. K. Mann. This is so not because Pentecostalism in all its diversity is politically quiescent—it is not—but because the Pentecostal musical style as a whole intends to transcend Ghana's political and cultural boundaries, defies being limited by it and rather bespeaks a transnational world of which it has become part. *Akutia*, the witty, often shrewd song-tale style of political analysis and commentary, is absent from gospel highlife altogether, "because," a friend of mine explained, "it is negative and has no message for the world." Most praise-songs therefore speak of the Christian God as a power that travels alongside and protects wherever the true believer goes in life, while those who adhere to the traditional forms of worship never prosper and remain "caught" within limits set by Ghana's present situation. C. K. Mann sings *Nkrofo a wosom abosom nyinaa ahwease*: "those who gave themselves to the service of the deities have all perished."

In anthropology there is a rising interest in the relationship between song and music on the one hand, and (e)motion and modernity on the

other.²² Often an analysis of the socio-political content, meaning and signification of the migrant groups' music and lyrics is stressed. Such analyses vary from studying the expression of sorrow, misery and plight in these musical styles to studying the explicit political meanings of opposition and protest vis-à-vis ruling regimes and prevailing (political) circumstances. One of the most marked domains for the development of styles of music that would relate to the migrants' plight were and still are the many African independent churches.²³ The recent attention to music as a deeply rooted representation of the African diaspora has particularly been fostered by Cultural Studies approaches to the meaning of song and musical styles in such transnational communities (see e.g. Gilroy 1993 and Browning 1998).

A most inspiring analysis, based on empirical research, of the relationship between modernity and music in Africa is that of Bianco (1996). The Zionist musical style she studied among the Pokot adherents of the Dini ya Msambwa movement in colonial Kenya is interpreted as "songs of mobility." These songs bespeak a crisis of mobility as experienced by the Pokot, both in their spiritual and material world, resulting from a range of colonial measures, regulations and above all the introduction of new modes of production that curtailed "free-roaming" pastoralism. Dini ya Msambwa music spoke of movement, unfettered travel, the desire for effortless motion, in much the same way that Europeans moved about freely, unhampered by restrictions of any kind.

Bianco's interpretation of music as a "medicine of mobility" does not exclusively present rhythm and rhyme as a "subaltern" art of political resistance, to invoke the felicitous phrase of James Scott (1990). The political message of such music is enveloped in an expression of desire: the

²² Studies such as those by Ballantine (1991), Gondola (1997), James (1997), Mphande and Newsum (1997) and Bianco (1996) all relate music and song to African experiences of migration and travel in the context of modernity's projects of colonization and state formation.

²³ See for instance Comaroff's study (1985) of the emergence of Zionist groups among migrants in urban border areas of South-Africa and Botswana, which devotes attention to the paramount importance of music and song as a socio-political expression of "modernity's discontent" among such groups.

desire to be in motion, to be mobile, gain access somewhere, and to travel effortlessly.

It is also in the modernity of a transnational world that a crisis of mobility has emerged. Europe, including the Netherlands, has turned into a "fortress" whereby the taxonomic state, as Rouse (1995) has called it, has gained full and dominant control over the highly serialized identities of its citizens. While there is unfettered travel of Europeans into Africa, travel the other way round has become highly restricted by all sorts of "paper" obstructions (see for further details on the identity politics of the Netherlands in particular Van Dijk 2000). While a conservatively estimated 15% of the total Ghanaian population is living abroad, opportunities for migration to the West and participation in transnational travel have diminished rapidly in the last decade (Peil 1995). Deliverance prayers over passports and visa, accompanied by western musical styles and western instruments are important indications of how present-day Pentecostalism positions itself in the widely shared desire to escape from Ghana, to seek "greener pastures" elsewhere and to find a livelihood in the West (Van Dijk 1997). The entire Pentecostal liturgy is an expression and celebration of movement and emotion: not only the dancing to the "gospelized" high-life tunes, or the emotional sobbing that usually occurs when the bands start playing "slow" hymns and other solemn Western songs, but also at times of ecstasy in speaking in tongues and prayer-healing, when we witness people constantly moving about, rolling over the ground, jumping or falling backwards. This, in my interpretation, is not only a (temporary) denial of normal speech, of composure and of culturally respectable forms of behavior, but its music and body language can also be read as expressions of the craving for moving or breaking out (*obubu*) of the limits imposed by present-day Ghanaian society on many aspiring, upwardly mobile urbanites. The musical politics of Pentecostalism and its significance reach beyond Ghana's political life and the localizing cultural policies it stands for. Its globalizing zeal to change Ghanaian society gives rise to many local struggles of which the contestation of the yearly recurring period of silence is just one example—albeit a striking one.

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