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Food and Nationalism in an Independent Ghana

Brandi Miller

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ABSTRACT

In 1957 Ghana became the first nation in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve independence from a European colonial power. During this time Kwame Nkrumah’s government concerned itself with the creation of a national identity that would speak to the new African Personality and Nkrumah’s Pan-African goals. In Nkrumah’s national project, regional cultural and economic contributions were at times subsumed. The absence of an identifiable national cuisine is a lens into ethnic conflict generated in part by the crafting of the national identity. I argue that in general the absence of a national cuisine represents the strength of the desire to maintain regional cultural boundaries in Ghana. Additionally, the structural challenges that Ghana faces, and apprehension surrounding its colonial legacy, impede the development of a national cuisine.

INDEX WORDS: Cuisine, Ghana, Nationalism, Food ways, Globalization, Identity, Colonialism
NATIONAL CUISINE IN AN INDEPENDENT GHANA

by

BRANDI SIMPSON MILLER

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NATIONAL CUISINE IN AN INDEPENDENT GHANA

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my husband and friend, Timothy Earl Miller. I owe him a debt of
gratitude as he has listened to countless readings of early drafts at conferences, and has read and
edited each page of this paper. He has travelled with me, encouraged me, and given me advice
which I usually heeded (or later regretted that I didn’t). This paper is as much a result of his
efforts as mine.
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1 INTRODUCTION

The modern nation of Ghana, West Africa was conceived in a food fight. In January 1948, the Ga Chief Nii Kwabena Bonne III organized a campaign to boycott European alimentary and textile goods in order to lower the cost of living in the Gold Coast (the colonial name of Ghana). Among the disputed items boycotted by the residents of the Gold Coast colony were tinned meat and wheat flour biscuits. Chiefs of the different, mostly coastal towns, pledged their support and involvement in the economic boycott. The boycotters were guided by the slogan “We cannot buy; your prices are too high. If you don’t cut down your prices then close down your stores; and take away your goods to your own country.”¹

On the last day of the boycott, WWII Gold Coast ex-servicemen began a march from Accra to the British governor at Fort Christiansborg to present him with a petition. They were fired upon by police, leaving several leaders of the group dead. This in turn led to rioting by Ghanaians and became the precursor to the 1949-51 campaign for independence. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, soon to become the first president of an independent Ghana, and members of the Convention People’s Party (CPP) then began to campaign for Ghana’s independence from British rule. This 28 February incident, taking place at the end of the boycott that began in January, is considered "the straw that broke the camel's back". It marked the beginning of the process of independence for the Gold Coast as Ghana, the first Sub-Saharan African colony to achieve autonomy.²

This important event illustrates the Gold Coast's ongoing struggle to adjust to the legitimate trade, and highlights the relationship between food and a developing national identity in Ghana. The legitimate trade – defined as the changeover to export crop production and a monetized economy – commenced with the abolition of the slave trade in British West Africa in the early nineteenth century.² The legacy of this legitimate colonial trade was encapsulated in the structure of an enduring agricultural export economy in an independent Ghana. The purpose of this thesis is to underscore the importance of consumption in shaping national identity.

The importance of food for the forging of a national identity varies among African countries. But in Ghana, the development of a national cuisine is not invested with much significance. This set of circumstances suggests something unique about Ghanaian nationalism. Ghanaians expect to encounter diverse ethnic foods when traveling through different ecological zones within their country. They welcome this difference and consider it a source of national strength and an indication of their unique national character, which embraces diversity.

Ghana’s national identity is in process and continues to be negotiated and to change. Initially, in conceiving the national project, Nkrumah endeavored to subsume ethnic diversity with policies that discouraged any outward performance of ethnic culture on the international stage. More recently, diversity is valued by both the people and the government. Evidence of this changing attitude toward diversity is supported by the continued strength of regional cuisines, the promotion of regional cultural museums, the advancement of heritage tourism, and a cultural policy that embraces ethnic pluralism in its cuisines.

Ghana’s approach to crafting its national image is expanding nationalist discourse, allowing for an alternative means of imagining the community. The old manner of assembling the nation was based on Western models of a common language, culture, food, and dress.

Ghanaian nationalism exhibits other ways of imagining the nation. The flag, the national soccer team, monumental nationalism, adinkra symbols, or highlife music are all examples of the community marking out a distinctly Ghanaian aesthetic. This discourse shows that a national cuisine is not necessary for state building and national cohesiveness.

The Ghanaian people are expected to participate in the process of creating the national identity, demonstrating that the national conversation is as much a bottom up exchange as a top down phenomenon. Evidence of this expectation can be found in cultural policy, in the retention of local cuisine in the face of urbanization and imported foods, in restaurants which embrace pluralism, in heritage tourism which is largely administered by local communities, and by the arts markets that are also run locally.

Few historians have attempted to explain the significance of Ghana’s approach to cuisine and its relationship to nation building. What needs to be ascertained is whether this state of affairs is solely attributable to the regions pre-existing modes of production, or whether this is a deliberate choice that effectively addressed post-colonial problems of representation. What can food tell us about nation building in Ghana in this post-colonial period? One performs ones identity with cuisine in its production, procurement, processing, and consumption. The study of cuisine as an aspect of Ghana’s material history, encapsulates the very foundation of all power derived from commodity exchange. The state of material affairs in Ghana represents a national cultural complexity that is a reaction to the forces of the colonial participation in global capitalism. “When we use the term material life…, it implies at once not only long-term processes of work and domestic life but also the way those processes are conditioned at higher levels by the market economy and capitalism. Law, ritual protests, institutional structure, and
arguments about the moral reformation of tradition interact at all levels.\(^4\) The development of the Gold Coast into the nation of Ghana, entailed changes in the internal power structure that were - in part - a direct result of its response to the global market economy, and was reflected in its consumption patterns and representations of its identity. The reduction of the primacy of chiefs, the participation of “youngmen”, and the growth of the intelligentsia, were all part of the journey to nationhood and were in turn tied to its relationship with food and commodities. Thus, food matters on two levels in an emerging Ghana: both as a commodity and as a way to represent their unique identity as the first West African nation to achieve independence.

Until we better understand how problems of self-representation are negotiated within the context of Western models, we run the risk of essentializing native culture and casting it as victimized subject. If we could understand how new nations like Ghana approach problems of cuisine within the larger narrative of nationalism, we could better perceive how socio economic relationships highlight the negotiation between regional, ethnic, and national identities. If we look to see these processes, we grasp that Ghana’s national identity is a work in progress, constantly evolving with contributions from different ethnic groups, newly created social classes, and traditional leadership elements.

The freedom to choose what one wants to eat is part of the subjective construction of identity in Ghana. This freedom is the “deconstructive vigilance” that Spivak speaks of that resists the tendency of essentialization.

For many people, eating particular foods serves not only as a fulfilling experience, but also as a liberating one – an added way of making some kind of declaration. Consumption, then, is at the same time a form of self-identification and of communication. The employment of food to achieve a feeling of wellbeing or freedom is widely felt and understood…And yet this act of choosing to consume

apparently can provide a temporary, even if mostly spurious, sense of choice, of self, and thereby of freedom.⁵

This desire for freedom from an orthodox nationalism - characterized by nationalistic symbolism manifested in a common material culture - is Ghana’s subaltern declaration of ethnic identity. A common flag, common dress, literature, music, or a national cuisine are examples of shared manifestations of a Western orthodox nationalism. James McCann’s⁶ work on Ethiopian national cuisine and Igor Cusack’s⁷ work on Equatorial Guinea are most notable examples of African nations adhering to Western guidelines in the building of a national identity by utilizing a national cuisine. A national cuisine composed of the regional foods of the people who lived in the Ghanaian political system would have been an acceptable manifestation of nationalist sentiment, representing the top down conception of a united Ghana. As it was, a deconstructive vigilance prevented this sort of essentialization of Ghanaian culture. Instead, Ghanaians chose the freedom of culinary diversity. This subaltern performance of ethnic identity served as a check to both the colonial cultural legacy, and a top down elite conception of an orthodox nationalism.

The food of Ghana was reflective of a subaltern political consciousness that was accepting and encompassing of ethnic cultural differences. Cuisine, a trivial, mundane, and everyday means of expressing identity, formed the opposition to an elite orthodox nationalism. Ghanaian cuisine is a sign of a discourse of resistance and is found in transcripts such as cookbooks, newspaper commentaries, and in the retention of regional foodways and their associated ethnic identities. As such, this state of affairs reflects a third realm, or bottom up view of Ghanaian nationness that is not in line with Western hegemonic conceptions of nationalism.

1.1 Cookbooks, Cuisines, and Identity

Ever since France conceived *nouvelle cuisine* - a method of French food preparation - in the eighteenth century, and subsequently became known for associating cookery with national identity, a national cuisine has been desired by many other states seeking to model themselves on western representations of nationhood. Sidney Mintz defines cuisine as a localized phenomenon about which there is an ongoing dialogue that sustains its understanding. Possessing common social roots and techniques, cuisine is further characterized by a reliable local source of foodstuffs and frequent consumption. A national cuisine by contrast is a “holistic artifice”, composed of the regional foods of the people who live in a political system. There exist agreed upon ways to produce good food with an eye to the relationship of food patterns, specifically where it relates to courses within a meal. Additionally, the formation of a national cuisine is facilitated by improved transport and communication systems. A most noteworthy aspect of cuisine is that it goes beyond biological human needs. This tendency is attributable to the human propensity to transform nourishment into “a system of meaning for much more than itself”.

France is a nation of the modern era whose propensity to attribute nationalistic meanings to foods is well documented. As such, France’s progression toward a national cuisine is ideal for comparison with Ghana’s journey and its choices as regards cuisine.

In the modern era, national cuisines in Europe had a distinctly class based element. Created and consumed by elites in their courts and castles, local food was combined with new preparation techniques and ingredients from foreign lands. As nation states formed and lower classes were enlisted into the military, were educated, and migrated to the cities, they came in

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contact with a national standard which they came to prefer.\textsuperscript{10} Mid-eighteenth century France is a place from which to observe the transition from privileged consumption to the formation of a modern national identity. Here, the restaurant is the locus for the battle of what food meant after the French Revolution. In the eighteenth century, a “restaurant” was a restorative concentrated broth for those with delicate digestions. It was served in an environment that differed radically from wine shops and inns that also served food, albeit in a communal setting. Becoming commonly known by the word restaurant, these institutions served patrons at individual tables and supplied a menu card from which to choose a restorative broth. Restoratives, whose method of preparation became known as \textit{nouvelle cuisine} in the mid-eighteenth century, represented modernity; “\textit{nouvelle cuisine} promised to extend the scope of science and to bring the marvels of knowledge into Paris life on a daily basis.”\textsuperscript{11}

It was the travelogues of primarily English visitors that helped fix a sense of the French national character as seen through the uniquely Parisian restaurant experience. Pleasure and privilege came to be seen as democratized, “taste” became an innate and uniquely French quality only minimally attached to rank, and the restaurant came to be considered the locus of a desire that was never quite satisfied. It was the menu card itself that joined national identities to consumption. “As surely as the restaurant offered to meet all the customers desires, it civilized them by codifying them…diet enforced national differences and made them more tangible, inscribing them in unchanging alimentary structures… The Englishman had his roast, the Frenchman had his salmon: both were satisfied and – equally important – identified.”\textsuperscript{12}


Investigations of this developing connection between food consumption and national character in locations like India, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Belize seek to present the link between food and identity from pre-colonial history to the present, and specifically relate cuisine to the formation of national identity.\(^{13}\) African cuisines were a part of this trend of investigation, beginning in the 1980s with Jack Goody.\(^{14}\) This thesis extends the aspects of their work that reveal how our food choices are shaped by a vast and increasingly complex global economy. Goody’s anthropological work takes a comparative approach toward answering the central question of why a differentiated ‘haute cuisine’ has not emerged in West African nation states. He attributes this to both the mode of food production and oral communication traditions. Concluding with an examination of the ability of the region to resist cultural food domination from the world-wide rise of ‘industrial food’, Goody ascribes this successful resistance to the nature of the regions’ pre-existing small scale food production structures. My work updates Goody’s research, and demonstrates how in Ghana resistance has given way to a negotiation of the inclusion of industrial foods resulting in their assimilation and vernacularization - the translation and/or absorption of a food into a regional repertoire. This vernacularization in Ghana is most often accomplished by the altering of presentation into a more familiar form, such as foreign rice served in the form of a dumpling named *umotuo*.

Igor Cusack raised questions about the emergence of African national cuisines, how they reflect particular colonial histories and promote gendered concepts of nationhood.\(^{15}\) He charged


various actors in the West, and in particular African-Americans, with the building of African national cuisines. Cookbooks in particular have been a site of cultural representation. Utilizing cookery books published in Africa and the West, as well as official national web-sites, Cusack seeks to explicate the intersection of the colonial encounter with local foodways. He concludes that ruling elites in sub-Saharan West Africa have appropriated the nation's cuisines in part to provide a focus for the interests of African-Americans. My work does not reflect Cusack’s findings in Equatorial Guinea. In Ghana, the exchange has not been within the diaspora per se, or a wholesale appropriation by elites and foreigners, but rather a collaborative post-colonial contestation against the essentialization of the culture. Ghanaians have surely been exposed to concepts of taste and national character as expressed through cuisine in both their travels during the colonial era and after independence. But most Ghanaians are not interested in being identified and codified through food as they value their pluralism. They are much more concerned with their cuisine providing them with variety and satisfaction, eschewing a fixed national identity as represented by food.

Cuisine in Ghana is an ongoing aspect of cultural engagement that includes non-elites and features the contributions of women. Cookbooks work to reflect the capacity of speech to construct and present regional ethnic identities in Ghana. Fran Osseo-Asare’s work specifically targets Ghanaian/West African cookbooks in English during the latter half of the 20th century. Her approach utilizes a typology of authors and audiences as a framework for analysis. In an echo of Cusack’s work, she considers the relationship of these cookbooks to African-American and African diasporan cookbooks. Osseo-Asare concludes that there is wide variation in the

accuracy, authenticity, and reliability of "West African" cookbooks authored by non-Africans. Osseo-Asare concludes that cookbooks were produced to make Ghanaian cuisine more accessible to outsiders and to dispel stereotypes. My work confirms this deduction and uses other primary sources to lend more weight to her argument.

The codification of cuisine in cookbooks explicates larger postcolonial dilemmas. According to Gayatri Spivak, self-representation and national identity in post-colonial societies is no simple notion; the space that post-colonials inhabit is constituted by Western liberalism, or structures of violence and violation. As such, for elites like Nkrumah, self-representation entailed a constant negotiation within the constraints of the space he was obligated to inhabit. This situation speaks to themes of self-representation and the theoretical problems associated with representation for post-colonial nations and their citizens. This negotiation is precisely the focus of historian Harcourt Fuller’s development of the term symbolic nationalism. Fuller defines this term as Nkrumah’s accessing of Western traditions and grounding them in African localized cultural symbols and philosophies of governance. My work is an extension of Fuller’s approach in that I look to see how this symbolic nationalism plays out with respect to cuisine, and which traditions and concepts govern these processes.

Spivak calls attention to the subject position in discourse, reminding us that subjective structures can in fact provide objective truth. The subject position of foodways in Ghana is neither composed of an essentialist pre-colonial narrative, nor completely conformist to Western models, but is an amalgam. Spivak stated, “When we look at the word ‘culture’ we should see

as a site of struggle, a problem, a discursive production, an effect rather than a cause."\textsuperscript{19} I believe this discursive production in Ghana is represented by the persistence of ethnic cuisines over a national cuisine, and that this in turn is indicative of the ongoing processes of the defining of a national identity. When interviewing respondents to my survey, I learned that respondents did not believe a national cuisine to be a necessary component of nationhood. Thus within the great narrative of nationalism, Ghana’s approach is strategic, in that they have conformed to some Western concepts of nationalism such as monuments and flags to represent the nation, without compromising their ethnic boundaries.\textsuperscript{20}

A primary example of this strategic selection is Nkrumah’s decision to make native dress formal while choosing to designate local food as informal. What is the connection between food and dress? Their performativity is what connects them. The term performativity refers to our status as actors of an assumed identity – there is no true self or “original” being. As a new African nation on the world stage, Ghana struggled to construct a national culture that would adhere to orthodox nationalism without compromising their African heritage or various ethnic identities. This discursive production played out upon the body in choices over dress and food consumption. National native dress and continental cuisine - a generalized term for European food - is part of the “performance” of the nation of Ghana. The consumption of native food represents the return to self when leaving the stage. Judith Butler stated that identity is always a fluid process that is forever unfolding. Therefore, identity is never about “being” or “becoming”, because it is never fixed – it is a “doing”.\textsuperscript{21} The “nation” of Ghana is a cultural construction in

\textsuperscript{19} Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Sarah Harasym, \textit{The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues}. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 123.
the process of becoming which is shaped by discursive forces both inside and outside of the country, and reflected upon the surface of the body in its food and dress.

These choices can also be viewed as interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference. For Homi K. Bhabha, these interstices are where the locations of intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness are negotiated. Likewise, Spivak, Bhabha asserts that the production of identity is a struggle for power between various groups within ethnic groups. Produced performatively, intersticiality denotes that the present is not a distinct break with the past and the future but embodies the discontinuities of both at once. Post-colonial Ghana has a demonstrated propensity to straddle the past and the future in its national project. Food by definition is performative and is a lens with which to view this intersticiality in Ghana. Ghana’s cuisines are at once pre-colonial, colonial, and representative of the modern future. Pre-colonial in the retention of local foodways, colonial in the spacial prominence of continental cuisine in state hotels and tourist sites, and representative of the modern future in the adaptation of local foods like fufu into convenience foods in convenient powdered form. While cookbooks and archival sources perform at the level of discourse, cultural meanings are also produced through experience and the daily practice of human actors. This daily performative practice is reflected in the vernacularization of Ghana’s colonial food legacy.

This performative aspect of foodways is illuminated by John O’Neil, who connects foodstuffs with the social, political, economic, and religious life of a society. A social theorist, O’Neil relates the embodied logic to our social structures. In other words, the banal needs of our bodies are reflected upon the organization of society, and society inscribes its needs upon our

Foodways and dress are a means through which our bodies are operated upon by society. Jewish food taboos are a prime example. Drawing upon Mary Douglass\textsuperscript{24} and her assessment of Jewish foodways as a systematic ordering and classification of matter, O’Neil helps us to understand that in order to receive social and moral approval you must eat like your own kind. That is because humans never just eat food. Jewish foodways along with rituals and dress, identify the group to itself and to outsiders. They classify and systematize food to reflect their social order. Food laws reflect the maintenance of relationships both inside society and define the identity and boundaries of a society. “The keystone of this order is the principle of identity, instituted as the law of every being.”\textsuperscript{25} Clothing, like food, is bound in the construction and maintenance of boundaries and identity, and as such, is a key place of social and political action. Dress and food consumption are important signifiers in the enactment of modernity in Ghana and elsewhere in West Africa.

The relationship between food and identity brings about an examination of the social relations of the erection and maintenance of boundaries using food. Shared meals express a level of intimacy, or at the very least, friendship at its core. People break bread with family, community, friends, allies, and others with whom they desire a relationship. Consuming a meal establishes the boundaries of social group; the content of the meal establishes, in part, its identity. In Israel for example, territorial boundaries and culinary boundaries are linked to history and national/religious identity. Food laws, performance of perfect forms of sacrifice, and marital consanguinity help to maintain these boundaries. According to Mary Douglas, “The sanctity of cognitive boundaries is made known by valuing the integrity of the physical forms.

\textsuperscript{24} Mary Douglass, \textit{Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo} (London: Routledge, 2002).
The perfect physical specimens point to the perfectly bounded temple, altar, and sanctuary. And these in turn point to hard won and hard to defend territorial boundaries of the Promised Land."\textsuperscript{26}

Food laws and meal structures represent all the other ordered systems of thought associated with them and thus, are readily defended from any threat or perceived weakening. In Ghana meal times reflect the prominent social organization of polygamous marriage which was, and still is in many areas, the basic labor unit in the country side. Males and females live separately, and the duties of cooking rotate biweekly or monthly between the wives. Food is distributed according to status rather than nutritional needs. Senior male members are given the best diet in terms of quality and quantity.\textsuperscript{27} In contrast with Israel, consumption is based on the needs of an economic unit that utilizes low technological methods of production, rather than being based on religious beliefs. Food is considered to be good when it satisfies the body that labors on the farm without the aid of large beasts of burden. An example of what is considered to be good food would be the tendency to regard dishes covered by palm oil as having a nice, tasty appearance.\textsuperscript{28} The need for nutrition also tends to regulate the extremely localized diet of Ghanaians. There are no taboos with regards to perfect specimens as in Jewish religious law. What is good to eat is what is at hand, including snails or fermented corn flour. These foodways have persisted in the face of increasing migration and urbanization, suggesting that they are still being safeguarded from any decline. This is largely due to the modified replication of the basic family unit of labor in urban areas, where the meal structures still reflect the systematic structures of thought associated with them. Ethnic foodways also persist precisely due to the

\textsuperscript{26}Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal." Myth, Symbol, and Culture 101, no. 1 (1972): 77.
extreme local nature of the securing of foodstuffs in a country where scarcity is always an issue due to the climate.

1.2 Food Means Something

Drawing on material life as a lens into nation building, this thesis considers how discourse on food and clothing have structured the debates surrounding the Ghanaian national project along ethnic lines in the 1960s and today. Foods are all “culturally viable” with identifiable histories. The satisfaction that food provides is related to the pleasurable maternal world. These primordial tastes and basic foods are associated with an archetypal cultural good where it is permissible and a positive value to feel pleasure from giving pleasure. Moreover, food creates intensely powerful feelings of nostalgia, surviving changes in local foodways and migration. As Michael Pollan has stated, “For a community’s food preferences – the strikingly short list of foods and preparations it regards as good to eat and think – represent one of the strongest social glues we have…the immigrants refrigerator is the very last place to look for signs of assimilation.” These associations with an archetypal cultural good expressed through alimentation are closely tied with ideas about identity, and are not easily abandoned or amenable to change.

Food means something in every imaginable realm of human existence. Economically, politically, socially, food is value laden and its importance to the evolution of national identities is made evident in the histories of countries like France, India, and Mexico. The secondary literature and primary sources do not reveal the existence of a conscious effort to develop a

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national cuisine by Nkrumah in the period after independence. Irrespective of this, when compared with France of India, Ghana had all the ingredients for a national cuisine. Urbanization, migration, a growing transportation network, and a new bourgeoisie have all been contributing to the possibility of the development of a national cuisine. National broadcasting, markets, lorry parks, “chop bars” (local restaurants), bars, and social events like funerals and weddings all provide interactive spaces for consumption and exchange.\footnote{32 Paul Nugent, “Do Nations Have Stomachs?: Food, Drink and Imagined Community in Africa,” \textit{Africa Spectrum} 45, no. 3 (2011): 87–113.}

In order to discover what food means with respect to nationalist sentiment, I utilized a methodological approach that incorporated the examination of text such as cook books, and was combined with an anthropological approach to field work and observation similar to Goody’s. I conducted participant observation, took notes, and gathered data to draw conclusions about lifestyle, habits and beliefs. This thesis is also an extension of Cusack’s investigative methodological approach in that government websites and published materials that related to cuisine, were used as primary source material. Additionally, I sought to build upon Osseo-Assare’s findings. Her study of cookery books ended with books last published in 1999. This thesis is an extension of her work in that it extends her study of cookbooks to the present day, and includes food related primary sources other than cookbooks. A close examination of government policies, archival sources, and indicators of popular culture such as newspapers and food events contributed to this work.

My thesis is organized thematically, dealing first with problems created by the economic structure initiated by capitalism in the colonial and post-colonial eras. I then move on to a discussion of material life and identity in the colonial period through independence. Last, I address tensions between the legacy of colonial foodways and efforts to feature African culture
in the new nation. My first chapter will outline the discussion of pre-colonial and colonial
economic and power structures in West Africa generally, and in Ghana specifically. In this
chapter I will sketch out methods of food production and processes involved with the
procurement of staples, and how these processes changed over time. This chapter will also
discuss the stresses of an export economy that is centered solely on cocoa production, and how
this economic model affected the development of Ghana’s national identity.

My second chapter focuses on the beginnings of ethnic conflict in the Gold Coast. A
discussion of Nkrumah’s conceptualization of the modern nation of Ghana is followed by an
exploration of the specific kinds of resistance he encountered from different ethnic groups. Part
of this resistance centered on the control over the export of cocoa and its proceeds. Other areas
of resistance developed over the control of the national narrative itself. My third and final
chapter explores the persistence of ethnic boundaries and presents the results of the field
research. This chapter considers the specific manner in which different regimes after Nkrumah
attempted to deal with the legacy of the colonial export commodity structure they inherited, and
the resulting food insecurity it engendered. Since independence different state programs and
policies were instituted in an attempt to deal with the effect of the volatile world market on the
economy and food supply, with varying degrees of success.

2 COCOA WOES: COMMODITIES AND COLONIAL LEGACIES

The history of the cultivation and production of cocoa goes back some three thousand years
to Mexico and Central America where it was consumed ceremonially by elites, and was used as
currency. Cocoa, reddened with achiote (a food coloring also known as annatto), was prescribed
for hemorrhages, shared during marriage ceremonies, and offered in sacrifice. Considered to
have life giving properties cocoa was frequently consumed along with tobacco, which was appreciated for its powerful sensory, mood altering, and medicinal effects.\textsuperscript{33} It took some time for chocolate to cross the Spanish ethnocentric taste barrier as it was consumed by the Olmec, Mayans, and Aztecs as a bitter chili flavored drink named caca. In order to cross the aforementioned taste barrier, it underwent a process of hybridization or vernacularization where new world spices were substituted with sugar, and its name altered to make it more appealing.\textsuperscript{34}

The increasing use of cocoa was representative of an irresistible cultural syncretism, as the Spanish unsuccessfully tried to withstand its use by drawing distinctions between their cosmological traditions and those of Native American cultures. Utilizing the medieval Galenic theory of medicine, this humoral theory of disease propagated intense debates as to chocolate’s qualities and medicinal uses that raged on for two centuries. Humoral theory, exercised by ancient Greek and Roman physicians, posited that an excess or deficiency of any of four distinct bodily fluids in a person, directly influences their temperament and health. These fluids were black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. Arguments as to which fluids chocolate and its other ingredients promoted or discouraged in a body kept the Spanish guessing as to its possible benefits and or dangers in the Spanish diet.\textsuperscript{35}

Also to be taken into account is the replacement of the Galenic system of humors and temperaments by modern medicine during the course of the 19th century. By 1862, a French writer on cocoa and chocolate was able to affirm that nobody believed in the therapeutic virtues attributed to chocolate anymore. The release of chocolate from such bonds meant that anyone, anywhere, was able to take chocolate whenever they chose, in any form they preferred…No longer did they have to fret over whether chocolate or its flavorings were ‘hot’, ‘cold’, or ‘temperate’, ‘dry’, or ‘moist’.\textsuperscript{36}

Indeed, the desire for the commodities of cocoa and tobacco played a part in the desacralization of Spanish culture. This is evidenced by cocoa’s use which, along with that of tobacco, continued to grow among the masses during the seventeenth century as some of the most widely used psychoactive and stimulant substances. The release from the moral and symbolic concerns over cocoa coincides with the growth of modern industry in Europe and the onset of its commercial cultivation in Ghana in the mid nineteenth century. This New World crop produced in Africa explicates the radical permutations of its production, consumption, and symbolism. What was once sacred to the Aztec elite was transformed into a commodity devoid of cosmological meaning and grown halfway around the world in Ghana.

Cocoa grows well between latitudes 20 degrees north to 20 degrees south. It needs a damp, shaded understory, and is dependent upon humans for the dispersal of its seeds. It grows well in Ghana’s forested areas of Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo where it was, and still is, farmed on a small scale. There are 22 varieties, both wild and domesticated which yield alkaloids, caffeine, and theobromine, all stimulants. Tetteh Quarshie, an ethnically Ga blacksmith with the Basel Mission, was credited with bringing the first cocoa seeds from the Spanish island of Fernando Po off the coast of Equatorial Guinea in 1879. His image, and that of a cocoa pod, are featured as a watermark on the Ghanaian one cedi bill. As a substance that was found to grow well in Ghana and was readily exportable, cocoa did not earn a place in traditional Ghanaian foodways. In cookbooks published in Ghana itself, there are no traditional recipes that use cocoa. The only recipes that use chocolate are the ones that feature European cuisine. It is clear that chocolate is

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considered to be a European food and a commodity, and has not been integrated into Ghanaian foodways.

2.1 Pre-Colonial Social Organization

Before discussing the nature of colonialism and nationalism in Ghana, it seems fitting to first provide some context by addressing the pre-colonial economy and social organization. In the pre-colonial era, people of this region participated in an international economic trade that extended back to 1000 B.C.\(^{41}\) With respect to the Asante there evolved a structure and associated symbolism that denoted their status as a nation, if by nation we mean a territory with clearly defined limits, a central government, police, an army, a national language, national law, and a council that embodies a constitution. In the sixteenth century the Asante embodied the power of their nation and growing empire with, among other things, tournaments of value (or status contests) that featured prominently the role of foodstuffs. By 1750, the Asante successfully waged war on their neighbors, forcing them to pay tribute and to acknowledge their supremacy.\(^{42}\)

A brief examination of Asante social organization is necessary to understanding the reasons for ethnic resistance after the period of independence. Michel Foucault characterized power as a matrix of points of understanding, a support structure for our agreed upon acceptance of the rules of what constitutes truth. Power is diffuse instead of concentrated, embodied and enacted instead of held, discursive instead of coercive. Power comes from everywhere and is self-reproducing in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relationships.\(^{43}\) Institutions such


as the Asante state, and its symbols and tournaments of value are an embodiment of a regime of agreed upon truth in the matrix of power.\textsuperscript{44} The yam festival, or \textit{odwira} (\textit{driwa} means to cleanse or purify), is a manifestation of Asante primacy that occurred each year after the ripening and harvesting of the yam crop around the time of the second rains, or anytime from August to October. The yam was the basis of all Asante peasant culture and was invested with ritual significance.\textsuperscript{45} The purpose of the \textit{odwira} or purification festival, was the maintenance of the matrix of relationships between all living Asante, their deceased ancestors, and their unborn descendants.

Food played a part in this cosmological event in that it performed a vitally supportive role to the preservation of the social order and physical existence.\textsuperscript{46} That is to say that geography has blessed the Asante with a region that has great economic potential. The Asante controlled the trade routes to its northern neighbors in the kola nut trade, which hit its peak between 1825 and 1950. This trade route encouraged the production of food crops for sale to merchants in markets from northern Nigeria to central Sudan.\textsuperscript{47} Not only did this region easily produce food for direct sale in markets, but it also readily produced alimentary crops that were consumed locally and exported to other territories near and far. This geographical blessing had predisposed the Asante for an important role in the future of the region.

Attendance at the \textit{odwira} was mandatory for the renewal of allegiance of subjugated vassal states. The \textit{odwira} doubled as an unqualified assembly of office holders for the purposes of constitutional business and long term state policies, all under the aegis of the \textit{Asantehene}, the

\textsuperscript{46} T. C. McCaskie, \textit{State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante}. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 144.
Asante king. This was an occasion to display the luxury of expensive cloth, great glittering umbrellas held above those privileged to own them, and an opportunity to display military might. The annual meeting that concluded the festival was a parliament whereby the Asantehene and chiefs in council shared power. The laws of the Asante included constitutional checks and balances that tended to prevent any abuse of power. The newly enstooled (enthroned) Asantehene was admonished thus by the people: "Tell him that we do not wish for greediness. We do not wish that his ears should be hard of hearing. We do not wish that he should act on his own initiative..." 48

Enstoolment was not a guarantee of lifelong power, as destoolment was a distinct possibility. In keeping with Foucault’s assertions about power, this particular command structure is no exception to the relational quality of control that necessarily includes resistance. The “youngmen” of Asante, known as nkwankwaa had existed in an uneasy position of subordination to the chiefs and had been an active political force since the mid nineteenth century after the onset of the legitimate trade in cash crops. Youngmen were not literally young men but those of good family whose opportunities were obstructed by the traditional requirements of office, the monopoly on Asante state trade, and the rising bourgeoisie, or asikafo (literally “men of gold”) who benefited from this trade. 49 As the commodification of cocoa and the establishment of colonial schools commenced, these youngmen would play an increasingly larger role in protests surrounding food availability in the colony, as discussed later in this paper.

2.2 Monetization

Subsistence production was well established before colonization with yams, cassava, rice, and maize crops grown with simple technology by small scale farmers. This sector was neglected in the colonial period as subsistence products did not generate monetary exchange for imported manufactured goods, and could not be used to produce manufactures in the metropole. It is no accident that crown colony rule coincided with the growth of industry in England. Rubber, timber, palm oil, and peanut oil initiated an increase in trade with colonies like the Gold Coast. From 1920 to 1930 farmers in the Gold Coast colony demonstrated considerable enterprise with respect to their participation in the global commodities trade. Selecting cocoa, the farming of this commodity was extended across the territory without aid from the colonial régime. Seeds were disbursed, distribution networks formed, and migrant labor attracted from the Upper Volta region without any expenditure or oversight by the colonial government.\textsuperscript{50} It was with the consent of the governed and their constantly shifting relationships with rulers that power was applied in the Gold Coast.

A later example of the collaborative aspect of power in the Gold Coast is that of the relationship between the chiefs and the people in the cocoa growing region of Amansie, a district of just south of Kumasi, the Asante capital. In the throes of the Great Depression, which had global consequences, a series of protests by farmers over the low prices British firms were paying for cocoa, lead to “hold ups” or producer strikes. The purpose of the hold ups was to force English firms, who dictated terms to its cocoa suppliers, to offer higher prices and to end the monopsonistic agreements that had become the norm. Initially, hold ups were initiated by

Asante chiefs who would penalize farmers or brokers who sold cocoa for less than the price they decreed.\textsuperscript{51}

From 1927 to 1938 these series of economic protests demonstrate the cooperation between farmers and chiefs in initiating, spreading, and sustaining production suspensions in the Bekwai District. The Bekwai District was a colonial administrative province comprised of lands that had been part of the pre-colonial domain of the Asante. Cocoa was a cash crop that had the distinction of being among the first commercial products that facilitated the transition from the slave trade to a monetized economy. Chiefs were able to extract the first agricultural rent in Asante history from the holding of cocoa farmland.\textsuperscript{52} Credit structures were established, with local opportunities opening up for farmers and stool land owning chiefs to act as brokers and financiers, issuing mortgages and loans. During the depression, those who had ready cash acted to purchase the cocoa from smaller scale farmers at below market price, to hold and resell when the world market price grew more favorable.\textsuperscript{53}

New patterns of social organization were attributable to the colonial cash crop economy. Cash crop farmers along with merchants, traders, and educated administrators became a new \textit{petit bourgeoisie}. During the time of the conversion from the slave trade, beginning with its abolition in 1807, labor transitioned from the use of pawns and/or slaves, to conjugal labor of family and extended family, to hired migrants. Producers became increasingly capitalistic, forming farmers associations that would grow into a merchant class powerful enough to challenge the authority of the chiefs. The Farmers Union leadership (The Ashanti Farmers

\textsuperscript{51}Gareth Austin, \textit{Labour, Land, and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807-1956}. (Boydell & Brewer, 2005), 44.
Association Limited and the Ashanti Farmers Union, both formed in the early 1930’s) was comprised of brokers who often doubled as farmers. They were joined by clerks of the English firms that had attained a formal education. As the capitalist leadership of the union grew, they worked in tandem with chiefs who were vital to the spread and maintenance of hold ups. While it is true that the transition to legitimate trade in cash crops created new opportunities for farmers and the working class, the adversity created by the Depression produced a situation that ended up reinforcing the authority of the chiefs as they sanctioned hold ups, meted out punishments to rebels, and spoke to English firms on behalf of the Farmers Union. During this time, power networks were beginning to be redefined and lower classes with new opportunities negotiated with traditional leadership.

Thus it was that the commodification of cocoa played a significant role in the political, economic, and socio-cultural history of this time period and, would come to impact the regional and national politics in the post-colonial era. The legitimate trade created new pressures from wage earners to provide steady income. It is also clear that the trade in commodities sprang from a British desire for political and economic stability, and set up patterns of government intervention in the economy that would continue into the post-colonial period. Cash crop marketing was initiated by the British to ease the transition to wage labor and to appease the Asante for the occupation of their lands in the late 1890s. Subsequently, monopsistic pools were established to facilitate economic constancy for the British during the World War I and the ensuing Depression. The global market instability combined with the establishment of the Cocoa

Board after the Second World War initiated a pattern of government involvement in industry that would also continue to the time of an independent Ghana.\textsuperscript{55}

The resistance offered by farmers during the cocoa hold ups of the 1920s and 1930s illustrates an important assertion of Foucault, which is that resistance is part and parcel of a power matrix and thus, power is about the relational character of this resistance: "Their (power relationships) existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, to handle in power relationships. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network."\textsuperscript{56} Not only are these points of resistance present everywhere, but they are "mobile and transitory", creating constant divisions that carve out regroupings of society. The creation of a new educated class and new opportunities for the lower classes during colonial times created regroupings of society, new points of resistance, and eventually led to the agitation for independence.

2.3 Urbanization

New social structures were generated in locations other than the cocoa growing hinterland of Kumasi, most notably in the growing urban areas. From 1880 to 1935 Accra and its surrounds reached a population of 60,000 inhabitants. Many people migrated to this urban center in order to staff colonial administration and secondary industries. Seasonal migrants poured into the surrounding countryside from the savannah to the Gold Coast and Nigeria at a rate of 200,000 per year.\textsuperscript{57} From 1901 to 1948 the population in Accra proper rose from 17,892


\textsuperscript{56} Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge. (London: Penguin, 1998), 95.

to 135,926. These new urban dwellers caused an upsurge of tradesman’s and workers unions, laying the groundwork for new potential points of resistance to colonial rule.\textsuperscript{58}

During the period from 1880 to 1935, urban dwellers and farmers found their lives increasingly tied to the international economic market. Africans experienced a total integration of their economy with the world economy. Along with the growth of a merchant class, shopkeepers and fishermen proliferated. The need for educated workers grew to include doctors, barristers, photographers, and engineers. These educated workers used the discontent over food and cocoa trading to organize politically, including shopkeepers and merchants in their campaigns. They demanded and won representation in the Executive Council and African representation in the Gold Coast Legislative Council in the legislative elections of 1946.\textsuperscript{59}

Ethnic unions and youth movements in the interwar period from 1925 to 1930 grew to as many as fifty. These groups were formed by missionary educated elite, young lawyers, doctors, and businessmen. The political style of the nationalist movement after 1945 owed much to these youth movements. J.B. Danquah, a member of the 1946 Legislative Council, and Wallace Johnson are examples of this type of nationalist leadership. Johnson came to the Gold Coast and founded the West African Youth League in June 1935. With his organization, he manipulated local grievances over rising food prices and unemployment. His activities were deemed criminal by the colonial administration, and he was deported back to Sierra Leone in 1929.\textsuperscript{60} These events illustrate how dynamic Ghanaian national identity was. It was a process of constantly being negotiated from subordinate units such as farmers and youth groups, with issues surrounding food availability and the growth of the commodities trade at its core.


2.4 Gold Coast Nationalism

The period from 1919 to 1935 in Africa revealed a concept of nationalism that differed in its goals from the earlier European nationalism that lead to World War I. European nationalists sought a union of the cultural nation and of the state. Culture in the form of a shared language arose, and the formation of the state followed. In Africa, the colonial state apparatus was created well in advance of the culture of nationhood. Furthermore, the goals of African nationalism included the revival of precolonial sovereignty and a recovery of culture.\(^{61}\) As such, independence was celebrated with the cultural symbols of the durbar (a ceremonial gathering of the royal court), including the chiefly umbrella, kente cloth, horns, and drums. Nationalism is still a valid means of historical analysis today in an age where investigation is increasingly focused on globalization and its ramifications. In his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson offers a definition of nationalism, how it speaks to a great diversity of communities, and how it formed the core of anti-imperialist resistance in Africa. No shared political ideology, including democracy or communism, can trump nationalistic fervor. It is a transplantable model, uniquely capable of merging with any existing political beliefs, causing people to form deep attachments to the concept. "Since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself on national terms," writes Anderson.\(^{62}\) He delineates a nation as an imagined sovereign community of people who have never met, yet who share a political community limited by territory, and conceived of a comradeship so deep as to be willing to wage war to protect it. The method of creating the awareness of a national community


is through the use of newspapers and their ability to construct the boundaries of "national"
consciousness.

Ghana itself belongs to what Anderson terms the "last wave" of nationalism, the norm of
political organization after World War II. He delineates the construction of a "colonial
nationalism" whose characteristics include: the retention of European languages of state, and the
colonial tradition of travel and training pilgrimages to the metropolis. Armies of clerks
employed to administer the multiplying specialized functions of the state, required cultural
acclimatization through language and training. Additionally, the spread of both secular and
religious modern style education is an essential feature of colonial nationalism. The Ghanaian
intelligentsia’s access to European and American national histories in reading rooms and class
rooms via documents such as the Magna Carta, brought about an awareness of nationalism that
was transmitted in ways that bypassed the print media. Cloth, flags, and monumental
architecture were all utilized to create an awareness of a national community. In this manner the
intelligentsia became the spokesmen for colonial nationalism, eventually coming to undermine
the traditional power of the chiefs and exacerbating interethnic conflict in the post-colonial era.

What is interesting to note is that irrespective of the influences of colonial education, the
negotiation of a national identity in Ghana represented an enlargement on the dialogue of
nationalism to include symbols of the nation other than print media to include consumption like
dress in the form of kente cloth.

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63 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised
64 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised
2.5 Colonial Education and Social Change

An example of the connection between modern education and the development of a nationalist agenda needs to include the Achimota School. Founded by the colonial state in 1927, and considered the peak of the Gold Coast educational pyramid, this is the school where children of cabinet ministers were groomed to replace their fathers.\textsuperscript{65} Nkrumah was most certainly one of this class of nascent nationalists. A graduate of Achimota, he was recruited by Assistant Administrator Kwegyir Aggrey. Aggrey spent 22 years in the United States earning four degrees from Livingstone and Columbia University in the United States, before returning to Ghana to be appointed to Achimota as its first vice Principal.\textsuperscript{66} Enlisted by Aggrey from the Half Assini Primary school, training at Achimota opened doors for Nkrumah and others like him.\textsuperscript{67} The relationship between Aggrey and Nkrumah represents the intergenerational development of the intelligentsia in the Gold Coast Colony, a product of the colonial institutionalization of education.

Educated men like Nkrumah were quick to take advantage of any perceived weaknesses or missteps of the colonial administration of the colony in order to advance their nationalistic cause. In 1946 the extermination of diseased cocoa plants became mandatory and caused criticism of the colonial administration by chiefs and farmers associations, who sprang back into action from the hold ups of the previous decades. Adding to the administrations woes, the decreased production caused the value of cocoa to increase eightfold, multiplying the amount of money in circulation by fourfold.\textsuperscript{68} Shipping had yet to recover to prewar levels and limited the importation of consumer goods. All of these factors pushed the prices of consumer goods.

the stratosphere. A boycott of consumer goods ensued that included such items as cotton textiles, canned meat, flour, and spirits. The boycott was deemed a success as foreign firms promised to reduce their profits for a trial period of three months by 75 to 50 percent. Due to this agreement, on February 20th Chief Nii Bonne and his committee announced the boycott would come to an end when the new prices were introduced on February 28th. However, a group of ex-servicemen who were discontented with their treatment decided now would be the opportune time to march on Christiansborg Castle to present a petition outlining their grievances to the governor. Thus it was that on Saturday the 28th, 1946 members of the Ex-Serviceman's Union marched to the castle, deviating from the approved police route. The European superintendent in charge of security at the castle acted by "...snatching a rifle from one of his men - opened fire on the crowd, killing two and wounding four or five others."69

In short order looting and rioting in nearby Accra ensued fueled by rumors that the prices had not been adjusted, as agreed upon. European, Lebanese, and Syrian shops were burned, and the United Africa Company's offices and shops destroyed. The disturbances spread to outlying towns and by Monday evening rioting broke out in Kumasi in the heart of the Asante nation. By the time Nigerian troops were called in, around two million pounds sterling of damage was done and the calls for independence were set in motion by the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), an organization founded in 1947 by Danquah to insure the interests of Ghanaian merchants. The effects of the riots were vast, catapulting its leaders to fame and sparking what was to become a profound change in the hopes of the struggle for nationalism in Ghana.70

Taking advantage of the breakdown in public order, educated individuals such as Danquah and Nkrumah, stated that the "control of the government should pass into the hands of

the people and their chiefs in the shortest possible time."\textsuperscript{71} Although the chiefs were named in this call for independence, the UGCC called for a replacement of chiefs on the Legislative Council with "educated commoners".\textsuperscript{72} This move foreshadowed the conflict between the traditional leadership of the chiefs in the country and the educated commoners in the metropolis that would continue into Ghana's postcolonial era. The Accra Riots of February 1948, precipitated by the shoppers’ boycott in January of that year, firmly establish how complications over availability and prices of provisions contributed directly to the growth of nationalistic sentiments and eventual decolonization.

\section*{2.6 Cocoa Woes}

The development of the Cocoa Marketing Board, installed in 1947, was preceded by the West African Produce Control Board, which operated from 1940 to 1946. The West African Produce Control Board purchased cocoa at guaranteed prices from all cocoa growers in British West Africa. The function of the Cocoa Marketing Board in Ghana was similar. In high cocoa price years, farmers were paid less than the world market price, and the profit was put in a reserve fund to be paid out to farmers in low price years. The goal was to protect farmers from the fluctuation of world market values and to provide them with leveled income.\textsuperscript{73} The theory was not borne out by the practice, as the large profit made from underpaying farmers was transferred to London where it became part of Britain’s worldwide banking assets. Protests over this state of affairs contributed to the English decision to grant Ghana its independence.

Educated elites pressed for control over the marketing of cocoa, but it came at a cost to traditional power structures. Subsequent to the Accra Riots of 1948, in a measure to ease the

\textsuperscript{71} Roger S. Gocking, \textit{The History of Ghana} (Westport: Greenwood, 2005), 84.
\textsuperscript{72} Roger S. Gocking, \textit{The History of Ghana} (Westport: Greenwood, 2005), 84.
transition to independence, the 1951 constitution called for shared government between the British and Africans on the Executive Council and in the new unicameral Legislative Assembly. For the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) who controlled a majority of the 38 seats in the Legislative Assembly, the Local Government Ordinance was the first vital step for reducing the traditional power structure in the countryside. New local councils were touted as more democratic, essential to the future progress of the colony, and most importantly, the new policies were to be understood as representing “the popular will.” Chiefs in the Colony lost control of stool land tax revenue, which went directly to the treasuries of the new local councils. These reforms were enacted to enhance administrative efficiency and accountability, or to “modernize” local government. The further erosion of chiefly supremacy came in 1952 with the loss of the power to set the price of cocoa, a privilege chiefs had exercised since the transition to the legitimate trade.

The difficulties the colonial government experienced with managing fluctuating cocoa prices and the related prices of foodstuffs, did not improve with the changeover to the control of educated elites. On the eve of independence in the spring of 1954, Nkrumah and the CPP were facing considerable tensions surrounding farm productivity and food security. On May 12, 1954 The Daily Echo published a commentary entitled “Grow More Flags”: “The C.P.P. government’s campaign for the growing of more food failed and Government reports show no concrete increase in food production during the three years of Nkrumah’s reign. The Housewife found things gone worse. Hence, the average reflective person can rightly term the present hoisting of C.P.P. flags as the Government’s understanding of grow more food.” The phrase “The Housewife found things gone worse” is an allusion to the lack of the availability of food.

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The commentary revealed the CPP’s difficulties in managing the availability and prices of foods, and mocked their campaign to encourage farmers to grow more food as a bid to salvage their political popularity. Food security continued to plague the soon to be independent Gold Coast colony.

Later in that year Nkrumah ran into opposition from the Asante who were the largest suppliers of cocoa at the time. The historical success of cocoa farming in the Asante region is in great part due to the ecology of the province. The Northern Region is far too dry for cocoa farming, while the eastern flank of the country is dominated by mountains and Lake Volta. The Asante have benefited from this ecological fortune for some time, earning themselves standing dominance in the business sector. The precolonial and colonial involvement of the Asante in cash crop production placed them at the forefront of the transition to the monetary economy. As previously discussed, the proactive market behavior of the Asante in the spread of profitable cocoa farming, their participation in the establishment of economic supports such as financing and mortgaging, their coordination of cocoa hold ups in the 1920s and 1930s, and the establishment and maintenance of farmers unions, have placed the Asante at the vanguard of the new economy and social structure.76

Figure 1 1951-52 - nearly 50% of cocoa grown came from the Ashanti Region.77

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Nkrumah’s administration alienated many cocoa producers in the Asante region by instructing the Cocoa Marketing Board to fix the price of cocoa for a period of four years, at a level less than one third of the current world market prices. Amid growing agitation for Asante independence, the June 1954 elections found Asante candidates had been expelled from the CPP, making them ineligible to run for office. A protest leaflet circulating in September of 1954 clearly relates the resistance to Nkrumah’s efforts at consolidating power, and the Asante’s sense of importance relative to the other regions in the colony.

Ashantis produce more cocoa than the colony. IS THERE ANY COCOA IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES [sic]? NO! Why should Government tax cocoa farmers to develop the country in which Ashantis suffer most? ...Ashantis! Save Your Nation and let others know that we are no FOOLS BUT WISE, kind and also we have the Worrior [sic] Spirit of Our Great Ancestors Within Us.78

Agitation produced by the growing loss of power of the chiefs and the control of the marketing of cocoa led to the formation of what was to become the Asante National Liberation Movement (NLM), some of Nkrumah’s staunchest opposition. In addition to fixing prices in such a one-sided manner, the Cocoa Marketing Board had a reputation for corruption, using the profits skimmed from farmer’s production for construction projects, and the distribution of credit, contracts, licenses, and jobs to CPP supporters. Additionally, funds were used as bribes to farmers for the purpose of enticing them to join the party.79

In September of that year, farmers, traders, teachers, and clerks voiced their discontent with what they saw as an inequitable relationship with the south that set the prices through the Cocoa Marketing Board. Protests began to take on an increasingly political character. “It is not

for other people’s corn that we grow teeth” was the slogan of the Asante Youth Association.  

This slogan is an allusion to regional loyalties and the awareness that Asante federalism would be funded by their cocoa production just as easily as it could fund the greed of the CPP. The Asante Youth Association was one of the leading organizations in the 1948 shoppers’ boycott. They, along with farmers and chiefs, made a bid for Asante independence. On 19 of September of 1954, the Asante leadership swore the Great Oath of Asante, and the new flag of the NLM was unfurled.

The flag’s green symbolized Asante’s rich forests, its gold the rich mineral deposits which lay beneath the earth and its black, the stools [thrones] of Asante’s cherished ancestors. In the center of the flag stood a large cocoa tree; beneath the tree were a cocoa pod and a porcupine. The graphic was powerful and its symbolism misinterpreted by none. The cocoa pod represented the major source of wealth in Asante and the porcupine (kotoko) stood as the age-old symbol of the Asante war machine. Like the quills of a porcupine, ‘wokum apem a, apem be ba’ – ‘if you kill a thousand, a thousand more will come’.

This flag unmistakably asserted the primacy of Asante land and agricultural production in the new nation’s economy. As a major supplier of cocoa the Asante wanted more representation in the marketing of this critical commodity. One of the objectives of the NLM included the regional restoration of traditional power and values. Alienation from Cocoa Marketing Board and the increasing centralization of power by the CPP had caused Asante resentment to calcify into a resistance movement. The CPP responded to Asante demands for independence by abolishing regional assemblies in favor of concentrating power in the National Assembly. Additionally, the Asante population was divided by the creation of the Brong Ahafo region. The increasing solidification of power on the part of the CPP elicited the assembly of a reactionary

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alliance of the youngmen, petty traders, clerks, primary school teachers, and chiefs in order to counter what they termed as the “communism and dictatorship” of the CPP and Nkrumah. This discourse between the CPP government and the Asante represented the early processes of dialogue over the use and symbolism of cocoa in the crafting of the regional identity of the Asante versus that of the nation. At this early stage, the national project did not embrace diversity and the performativity of the opposing nationalist conversation of the Asante, as this represented a threat to the convergence within the defined national boundaries of Ghana. However, we do see the Asante using commodities and consumption as a means of imagining an Asante nation.

**Youngmen**

The Asante were not the only resistance movement reacting to the perceived corruption and centralization of CPP control. The Ga Adangme Shifimo Kpee – The Ga Standfast Association was one such organization. In a memorandum submitted to the Accra Regional Executive by a group of youngmen who were composed of unemployed elementary school leavers (elementary school finishers) and local taxi and lorry drivers, the organization accused the CPP and Nkrumah of tribalism. The conflict revolved around housing constructed on Ga traditional lands in Accra that was largely destroyed by an earthquake in 1939. Promises of rebuilding after the war were not fulfilled, causing a severe housing shortage in the area. Estate housing used for rental property on Ga traditional land was allocated to the wives and relatives of CPP members instead of those truly in need. On July 23 1956, Ga protests and rallies culminated in a driver’s strike that caused food to become scarce and prices for staples such as

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yam, plantain, and garden egg (eggplant) to more than double. The CPP rejoined by tightening its web of control to include mass deportations and the augmentation of CPP power in the various regions of Ghana. The conscious manipulation of the availability and price of food to impact regional and national politics by the Ga, demonstrated anew the centrality of the role of food in Ghana’s political history. Nkrumah and other leaders of the new Legislative Assembly of 1951, products of the colonial educational system, used riots over the high costs of imported food to lobby for independence. These same leaders disrupted chiefly control of lands and control over the pricing of cocoa, and provoked an interethnic resistance that centered on food and commodities. The Asante and Ga resistance in turn, exploited their control of the supply and transport of commodities and foodstuffs to weaken the popular support of the CPP, reinforcing the idea that the Ghanaian people were to participate in the shaping of the national agenda.

3 EMBOYING THE NATION: ETHNIC CONFLICT AND NATIONALIST MATERIAL TRADITIONS

With upwards of over 50 ethnic groups within its borders, there is no question that Ghana is culturally diverse. Thus it would hardly be surprising if there existed competition and tension surrounding the construction of a national cultural heritage. Much ethnic tension in the Gold Coast Colony is related to Asante cultural dominance, which emerged in part due to their early role in the export commodity trade. Nkrumah’s attempts at appeasing the Asante by adopting kente cloth as a national symbol exacerbated interethnic conflict. Ethnic fractures in

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the national narrative surfaced in the clashes over the handling of profits from the export of cocoa, in dissent over the allocation of resources, and conflict over anti nudity campaigns.

Asante heritage loomed large in the national project of Nkrumah’s time. The main focus of the pro-independence agenda was to recover indigenous culture and to reestablish political power. The Asante tradition of royal patronage stretched back several centuries, and was ideal for Nkrumah’s purpose of establishing legitimacy. As such, aspects of Asante culture were appropriated for the national scheme. This resulted in reinforcing the perception of the Asante as the dominant ethnic group in Ghana, a perception that persists even today. Evidence of this post-independence cultural dominance is demonstrated by the identification of Asante fufu (a dumpling made of cassava and plaintain, served with soup) as the national dish by the largest number of respondents, when rice is the most widely consumed staple.86

3.1 National Kente

Kente cloth has played a prominent role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the nation of Ghana. Kente cloth, an Asante fabric made of interwoven cloth strips, is at once highly personal and intended for display and, like food, laden with cultural and ritual significance. Taking its name from coastal Fanti traders, Kente cloth has come to represent the nation of Ghana and has aided in the building of a shared cultural heritage, or an imagined community. A potent symbol of Nkrumah’s pan African ideology in the period after independence, the adoption of Asante Kente by Nkrumah could be interpreted in a number of ways. It is at once an acknowledgement of the prominence of the Asante in the export economy, and an example of the effacing of specific ethnic identities in the cultural development of the

86 See Figure 6 for data on what is most widely consumed, and Figure 5 for data on what survey respondents believe to be the national dish of Ghana.
country. The combination of Asante cultural and economic dominance and Nkrumah’s attempt at addressing tribalism by appropriating Asante ethnic symbols, served to strengthen regional identities.

The Asante had an established institution of chiefly succession since the founding of the Asante capital of Kumasi in 1680. As a symbol of the Asante’s highly developed and intricate political organization, many cloth patterns became the sole privilege of the Asantehene, the nominal ruler of Kumasi and of the Asante. In Kumasi, cloth was commissioned in a system of royal patronage. Unlike the Asante, the Ewe ethnic group located in the Volta region of Ghana and Togo, lack a tradition of noble sponsorship of kente cloth. The means of enforcing the Asante system of royal patronage is stipulated in traditional law, which states that kente commissioned by the Asantehene becomes stool or state property. In this manner, cloth came to represent wealth and status. Although not himself an Asante but a member of the Nzima ethnic group in the southwestern part of the Gold Coast, Nkrumah chose to claim kente as a national symbol. This move may have been partially stimulated by kente’s association with regal symbolism, as well as a move to appease the culturally dominant Asante who made major economic contributions to the nation via the production of cocoa.

In a measured effort to highlight the new African personality - a distinctive identity which represented the presence of both Eastern and Western influences - an amalgamation of western and traditional dress was promoted as representative of new modern African culture.

89 Nkrumah bestowed kente as a political gift upon such illustrious individuals as President William Tubman of Liberia and President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who subsequently wore the kente in an official portrait as a way of expressing solidarity with Nkrumah’s pan African vision. See Doran Ross, *Wrapped in Pride*.
Nkrumah designated European dress as appropriate for everyday work and school, while traditional dress was reserved for the most formal of occasions. Scholar G. P. Hagen cites Nkrumah’s skillful manipulation of the Ghanaian love for outward representations of communal and individual identification. Hagen stated, “…The nationalist movement played out its cultural dilemmas in a medium the people could understand… - seeing Ghanaian culture as part of world culture – made it easier for Ghanaians to see their culture as a composite culture of diverse ethnic cultures. Ghanaian culture could be projected through the display of aspects of any of the ethnic cultures within the boundaries of Ghana. And Nkrumah showed them how.”

Most ethnic groups in Ghana value cloth and use it to express collective and personal identity. Although the cloth Nkrumah used was specific to Asante culture, it was still a medium all Ghanaians could relate to and appreciate. Nkrumah demonstrated this nation building strategy by wearing the kente pattern named Mmeeda in 1951 after he was freed from colonial James Fort prison. This particular kente pattern represents the Asante maxim “It has not happened before”, signifying an extraordinary occurrence.

Nkrumah’s wearing of symbolic kente that carried Asante maxims at key points in his leadership journey, showed his desire to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems into national representations. Recognizing that print capitalism was unsuitable for a culture that had in place an ideographic writing system in Adinkra ideograms, Nkrumah set about finding other ways of communicating the nation to Ghanaians. Currency, postage stamps, dress, nonverbal maxims (Adinkra symbols), and monumental architecture were tools he used to achieve this goal. He

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famously nationalized tribal culture and went to great lengths to emphasize national unity at the expense of individual tribal identity. As Fuller writes:

> During Nkrumah’s reign, the CPP placed restrictions on the development of museums that his administration deemed “tribal” in nature, that is, those that highlighted specific ethno-regional groups as opposed to the nation as a whole. This policy lead to the conversion or nationalization of entities such as the Asante Cultural Centre, which was renamed the Centre of National Ghanaian Culture. Nkrumah’s nationalization of the Asante Cultural Centre was a part of his policy to subsume the rich Asante history, culture, and traditions as part of the glorious national history and culture.  

Now named the Kumasi Centre for National Culture, The Kumasi Centre is considered to be the show piece and model for the other Centers. This development is yet another indicator that Ghanaian national identity is in process and continually being renegotiated, while expanding nationalist speech to include specific ethnic symbols like adinkra. It also demonstrates the growing complex national character that is increasingly accepting of “unity in diversity” within its national boundaries.

### 3.2 Embodying the Nation – Nationalist Material Culture

If we envisage the changing public disputes surrounding food, commodities, and politics as a window through which to view the construction of a Ghanaian nation, these clashes reveal that the national project has more to do with food security than with recognizing and promoting a national cuisine. Like food, clothing can be utilized as a principal site of social and political action. The body’s surface is a site of the enactment of modernity and has been both structured

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and tested in Africa. Nineteenth century British Christian missionaries saw clothing as the very fabric of civilization in places such as South African. One of their goals was to manufacture demand for European styles of dress so as to conjure up “dependencies of taste” to ensure the hegemony of market capitalism. To these missionaries, the spread of capitalism would unfurl a social order based upon a new culture of “selfhood” and individuality. This sense of selfhood, that could be purchased and possessed via western clothing, would enable the South Africans they were ministering to, access to the loftiness of the spirit. The impartation of the loftiness of the spirit would simultaneously propagating a desire for consumption that would be controlled by Europeans. In these efforts to subjugate, the body was the site of social, political and religious organization. As in South Africa this new sense of modernity and social and economic organization via the adoption of clothing did not pass the Gold Coast by, but showed itself during the colonial era as a measure of the success of the monetization project of the colonial government. In Ghana, as in South Africa, the image of the colony and its progress toward civilization was measured by the extent to which its inhabitants were clothed:

In the early years of colonial rule, cloth thus served initially as a means for comparing levels of civilization among the colonized, and then as a colonial index by which to measure the march toward civilization of the “wild” and “naked tribes” of the northern frontier. As that frontier was increasingly incorporated into the emerging colonial economy of the south, largely as a reservoir of cheap male migrant labor after 1910, cloth became a ready index of the extent of capitalist penetration. Again, diaries are replete with references to the growing number of young men from the far north “proceeding to Coomassie [sic] to work without money or clothes and returning with money or money saved in the form of trade goods.”

Shortly after independence there arose a public and national discourse surrounding dress and “Ghanaianness”. This discourse closely followed other patterns of intraregional conflict and underscored the struggle for control of the narrative of Ghanaian nationalism. The problem of the stateless, pagan, “unclothed” people in the north, became a countrywide concern beginning in 1958. There began to be a concern for how the unclothed status of the people in the north, most specifically women, would reflect upon the national image. The concern for the national image and the role that women played in its construction was most certainly stimulated by the All African Women’s League’s (AAWL) relationship with its sister organization in the United States, the Afro-American Ghanaian Women’s Friendship League, which provided them with assistance. The later anti-nudity campaigns of the 1960’s were characterized by the reproduction of colonial and precolonial messages about civilization in the Gold Coast. The anti-nudity campaign featured Akan control of the narrative of who is deemed to be Ghanaian, relegating the northern region to a permanent status of backwardness in the young nation’s history.\(^{100}\)

In 1958, Mrs. E. Amarteifio of the Ghana Federation of Women remarked “Nudity in the far north was not only an eye sore to the country but also did not reflect favorably on the high respect and reputation this country has achieved.”\(^{101}\) The other large women’s leadership group, the AAWL, was chaired by Mrs. Hannah Kudjoe. Mrs. Kudjoe, the woman credited with spearheading the anti-nudity movement from the years 1958 to 1960, was also an influential CPP activist. She made repeated trips to the north, distributing clothing parcels received from the AAWL, and speaking to women about personal hygiene and the need to clothe themselves.

Kudjoe’s approach linked food and clothing in the national conversation. Helping women to make the connection between being clothed and economic empowerment through food production, she attempted to highlight the structure of domestic economies that were hampering the economic growth of the region. Eventually, the tensions created between the southern Akan women’s groups and northern male regional officials, resulted in the incorporation of this mission into the national project. In 1964 Kudjoe’s campaign was re-launched as a state controlled program with her at the helm, and a “no publicity” stipulation. During her frequent trips to the north, Kudjoe used food as a way to win people over, especially during the hungry season when she could use seasonal food insecurity in the Northern Region to gain an audience for her anti nudity message. She lobbied for the donation of foods such as rice, millet, and corn, and used these to teach women how to farm, a task that is normally consigned to men in the northern region. The absorption of Kudjoe’s efforts into a state sanctioned social advancement program by the administration, was designed to bar questions of ethnic conflicts over the national image, and screened the uneven regional development the nation was experiencing.\(^\text{102}\)

The treatment of cloth and clothing in Ghana was laden with meanings tied to regional identity, economic empowerment, and the projection of a modern national culture. Leaders like Hanna Kudjoe demonstrated the connection between clothing and food in its employment as a means to achieve social and political action. The Nkrumah administrations takeover of the anti-nudity campaigns and the use of kente to proclaim the nation, juxtapose sharply with Nkrumah’s lack of attention to the development of a Ghanaian national cuisine. The national narrative was and continues to be defined by the commodities trade, regional food security, and ethnic tensions. Notwithstanding the

opportunities for forging a sense of national identity through consumption through dress and food, the ongoing structural issues do not create a welcoming environment for the development of a national cuisine.

4 FOOD AND THE UNFINISHED NATIONAL PROJECT

All material goods convey meaning. Both clothing and food are visible markers of cultural identity and indicators of cultural difference. Clothing and food also articulate local group identity and serve to resist globalizing cultural forces. In addition to serving as a form of resistance to outside forces, local production can assist in ensuring food security for the population during times of import price fluctuation. In an environment where the economic structure mandates dependence on imported foods, but the rhetoric of the national project centers on the reclamation of African culture, tensions over the approach to cuisine have resulted. Apprehension surrounding competing food supply priorities were manifested in various state provisioning schemes, in the national cultural policy, and in the image presented to outsiders via the spatial organization of cuisine in official state venues. My research of government policy and attitudes concerning government policy, foodways, and identity, supports the assertion that there are concerns about the maintenance of regional identities.

The independence of Ghana on March 6, 1957 represented an extension of debates around modernity. For the British, the granting of independence to the Gold Coast was both a hedge against the spread of communism, and at the same time, represented their mentorship toward democratic processes during the colonial period. For the people of the Gold Coast, independence represented a cultural and political redemption of African traditions and accomplishments. Some of the early necessary ingredients of a national cuisine can be seen in
Ghana in the existence of robust regional cuisines with dependable local sources of ingredients, especially in the Southern half of the country. The transportation system, although not as excellent as many Western nations of the time, was fast becoming the best in West Africa thanks to Nkrumah’s expansion projects. Urbanization and migration had been trending steadily upward since colonial times. If the consumption of food can be viewed as a message, the message it holds is understood by means of the patterns of social relationships it expresses. If Nkrumah designated formal cloth as kente and everyday clothing as European, while everyday food is native and European dishes served at the independence ball as formal, what is to be the takeaway? Anthropologist Jack Goody surmised that one reason there is no national cuisine of Ghana is due to the lack of intensive farming, which is necessary for the creation of wealth, surplus, and a high court cuisine. The need for literacy in connection with cooking is also conspicuously absent in Ghana.\footnote{Jack Goody, \textit{Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology}. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 99.} The traditional oral transmission of recipes in Ghana could have been a hindrance to the production of cookbooks shortly after independence, which Goody deems a necessary element in the construction of a national cuisine. However, the opportunity elites had for travel in the service of the colonial empire, and the installation of the colonial education system, belies this possibility.

Sidney Mintz defines high or haute cuisine as a heterogeneous base upon which travel and leisure make unfamiliar foods desirable, and subsequently are incorporated into a national cuisine as expensive substitutions for traditional fare. As stated above, international travel was part of Ghanaian reality for the purposes of training in the administration of the British Empire. Nkrumah himself traveled to the United States and England in the pursuit of an education. This was a pilgrimage that many of his contemporaries like Kojo Botsio, Ghana’s first Education
Minster, undertook. This extensive travel undoubtedly exposed the new African leadership to foreign foods. Yet, there is no evidence of the introduction of any foreign foods into the elite construction of a national cuisine for Ghana. Research of Nkrumah’s correspondence with government ministers at the Public Records and Archives did not yield any discussion of a national cuisine. The archives did however yield a copy of Nkrumah’s Seven Year Plan, which attempted to deal with issues of food scarcity by developing state farms and cooperative farming schemes.

Ethiopia and Equatorial Guinea are worthy of consideration in a comparison of the effects of different European modes of colonization on the development of postcolonial national cuisines. Ethiopia was briefly colonized by Italy from 1936 to 1940. Ethiopian agriculture has had the advantage of higher productivity relative to Ghana. This is due to the environments ability to sustain beasts of burden like the ox, and the technological advantage of the plow with which to cultivate a grain based diet. Oxen will not thrive in the southern region of Ghana where most of the food and commodities are grown, as they are adversely affected by disease spread by the tsetse fly. James McCann’s work reflects his expertise with the relationship between food, culture, and national identity in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular. He echoes Goody’s conclusion that high production cereal based diets generate socially and politically stratified societies. This political stratification is reflected in the cuisine of Ethiopia, which began to be codified in the 1887 feast to consecrate Addis Ababa’s new Entoto Maryam church. By the serving of special foods such as raw beef for example, on special occasions like this feast, Queen Taytu initiated the process of negotiating which foods would become part of the national cuisine. The results of this process are exported around the world in restaurants that feature an official Ethiopian cuisine. Ghana does not have a courtly cuisine like that of Ethiopia as

traditionally, different classes consume the same dumpling with soup based diet.\textsuperscript{105}

Additionally, Ghana was colonized for a much longer period of time, from the late 1800s to 1957. Asante fufu may come closest to a national cuisine, but due to the delicate balance of power between ethnic groups Ghana strives to maintain, choosing Asante cuisine would cause considerable friction. Consequently, Ghana utilizes continental cuisine in its state dinners, and gives pride of place to foreign foods in its state hotels and their restaurants. Like the use of English to facilitate communication and to avoid conflict that may be stirred up by choosing one ethnic language, continental cuisine serves to smooth over any potential conflicts that choosing a specific ethnic cuisine might engender.

Equatorial Guinea was colonized by the Spanish in 1926, and became a province from 1959 to the year 1968 when it gained its independence. But the interaction between Equatorial Guinea and the Spanish stretches back to 1778 when Portugal ceded the area to Spain. The Spanish used food to defend and enforce cultural boundaries by structuring difference between themselves and colonized populations. This difference was delineated by means of which imported foods colonized people were allowed to consume.\textsuperscript{106} Once a “native” was baptized and emancipated, they were excluded from doing any compulsory work on the cocoa plantations. “He had become an honorary Spaniard, pure enough to partake of the bread and wine of the Catholic faith. The \textit{emancipado} was also allowed to buy and consume olive oil and bread and take alcoholic drinks in the same bars as whites. Food and drink were an important part of the colonizer’s identity and when the colonized were admitted as honorary Europeans they were

pure enough to partake of the same imported food.” ¹⁰⁷ Since independence the national elite in this country has assembled the favorite foods of different ethnic groups in cookbooks and marketed them as Equatorial Guinean national cuisine. These cookbooks were published by the Spanish Aid Agency, various Spanish religious orders, and the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs.

Ghana’s relationship with Britain was not nearly as long that of the Spanish relationship with Equatorial Guinea. Additionally, Britain’s style of colonial rule was much more indirect, utilizing locals to administer the Imperial government. During colonization, there was no official slave society, and thus the access to foreign food in the enforcement of liberties and privilege was not a factor. The British government and British aid agencies were not involved with the promotion of Ghanaian cuisine. As will be discussed later in this chapter, cookbooks in Ghana tend to be produced for the preservation of a regional cuisine and traditional cooking techniques, not for the dissemination of an elite conception of national cuisine.

Comparison of colonial cocoa cultivation in Ghana with that of coffee, another important trade commodity, highlights the structural economic legacy that has in part dictated Ghana’s treatment of cocoa and its disconnect from inclusion in the crafting of a national cuisine. Brazil has played a major role in the structuring of global demand for coffee for various reasons. The demand for coffee was a largely post-colonial phenomenon in an independent Brazil beginning in 1822. From that time to 1899, coffee exports jumped 75%, surpassed noble and bourgeois demand, and stimulated consumption by the proletariat. ¹⁰⁸ This boom in production was a result of the super exploitation of labor and land in Brazil. The excellent condition of the railroad

revived slavery after 1850 and then facilitated the transition to the labor of European immigrants that began in 1877.\textsuperscript{109} The transportation revolution via rail and shipping facilitated the efficient use of the land in the interior, as well as stimulated demand in the United States. By contrast, the development of cocoa cultivation in Ghana was initiated during colonization, with limited labor and rail facilities. Ghana was not able to effectively manipulate the market, being completely subject to global demand. Additionally, cocoa has a tendency to disease, and is produced on a small scale by family groups whose narrow profit margins do not encourage reinvestment or large scale production. Another point of comparative discussion is the tendency of Latin American countries such as Colombia to plant food crops and to diversify their export crops.

“…coffee production was rarely a monoculture. Regardless of the size of the farm, planters also had to plant food corps and pasture for their mules. In Colombia for example, one can speak of ‘the activities that have always accompanied coffee cultivation: sugar cane, plantains, manioc, maize, and livestock.’ With this mixture, it was not uncommon for the majority of coffee farm’s holdings to be devoted to food, pasture, and uncultivated forest.”\textsuperscript{110}

This indicates that most coffee producers were not in the position of having coffee supplant subsistence crops. Ghana however, has had a history of struggling to produce enough food for its population. This is a legacy of the structure of the colonial economy, which tended to import staples, rather than encourage their production. In this manner, Britain was in a position to better supply the growing industrial economy in Europe. Cocoa displaced traditional foods as a crop, and its export inclines its economy and agriculture toward food insecurity which Nkrumah and subsequent leaders have had to address in their national policies.

4.1 Nkrumah’s Food Policies

During the CPP era, the government instituted reforms in an attempt to equalize the volatile consumer goods situation brought about by dependence on cocoa revenues. In 1962, the Program for Work and Happiness was introduced. Just two short years later in 1964, the Seven Year Development Plan was inaugurated. The objective of both programs was to eradicate the colonial structure of the economy via rapid development of state and cooperative farming sectors. Both were socialist programs aimed at increasing the internal production of what was consumed by Ghanaians. “Ghana was to develop a self-sustaining economy, balanced between industry and agriculture, ‘providing a sufficiency of food for the people and supporting secondary industries based on the products of our agriculture’.”  

In other words, Ghana’s economy was to be diversified in order to change the structure of its monoculture economy. The development of infrastructure necessary for industrialization and for the achievement of integration of industry and agriculture, was the new mandate. Ghana was beginning to supply local demand for many basic consumer goods using locally produced raw materials. Agriculture was diversified and mechanized wherever possible. State farms produced rubber, palm oil, banana, citrus, cereals and vegetables.  

These policy changes reflected a profound understanding of the relationship between food security and national security for Ghana. Nkrumah greatly believed in the benefits of the attainment of a strong nation state, recognizing its impact on Ghana’s global positioning and prosperity. He was famously quoted as saying “Seek ye first the political kingdom, and all else shall be added unto you.”

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when the international market value of cash crops such as cocoa, minerals, and ground nuts was high. Rainfall was good during these years. West African economies grew between 4% and 6% per year.\textsuperscript{114} Nevertheless, Nkrumah’s agricultural policies proved to be disastrous. Starting as one of the most prosperous economies at the time of independence, by 1965 Ghana was virtually bankrupt.

The world price for cocoa, the backbone of the country’s economy at the time, either due to international manipulation to subvert the economic programs of the Nkrumah government or due to an inter-play of market forces, plummeted so sharply that the country needed a large dose of external support to maintain financial solvency. By 1960, a ton of cocoa beans on the London Exchange was estimated at 240 pounds on average; by August 1965, it dropped to an unprecedented low of 91 pounds. It became difficult for the government of Ghana to guarantee an acceptable price for the sizeable percentage of Ghanaians who depended on the cocoa industry for their livelihood.\textsuperscript{115}

The price of cocoa was affected in part by the declining value of the Ghanaian cedi (GH\textsuperscript{c}) and the smuggling of this vital commodity to Togo and the Ivory Coast in exchange for higher prices. Furthermore, a shortage of food supplies to the cities made it more profitable for farmers to switch to food crops such as maize, millet and yams.\textsuperscript{116} Farmers went back to producing local food, something they knew they could depend upon to earn them money.

In addition to the unanticipated plummeting of the price of cocoa, between the years of 1959 and 1964 Ghana spent 430 million pounds on various development projects, financed mostly by the Cocoa Marketing Board. The end result was that, despite massive government spending, gross national product remained stagnant and the agricultural sector was shrinking rapidly. Mechanized state farms with huge amounts of monetary support, technical assistance,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{115} Boni Yao Gebe, “\textit{Ghana’s Foreign Policy at Independence and Implications for the 1966 Coup D’état}” \textit{Journal of Pan African Studies} 2, no.3 (2008):176.
\end{itemize}
and import allocations were staffed with CPP friends and family. This resulted in huge losses and imported farming equipment abandoned, broken down, and rusting in the fields. Not only did state farms yield only 1/5 of those of peasant farms, the neglect of peasant farmers encouraged the continued smuggling of cocoa across borders. Smallholders refused to plant more cocoa trees as they were offered subpar prices for their crops. In place of the prosperity experienced just after independence in 1957, food shortages, higher taxes, and foreign debt became the norm in the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{117} The effect of this new norm on food ways — chronic food insecurity and a retrenchment of local food stuffs — was a persistent trend in the policies and events of successive regimes.

4.2 Post-Nkrumah Leadership

The post-Nkrumah independence era continued the economic patterns established during the initial post-colonial era. In 1972, General Ignatius Acheampong came to power under the banner of the National Redemption Council. Acheampong overthrew Busia, whose party had in turn overthrown Nkrumah. Seeking to stabilize the prices of imported staples, Acheampong launched Operation Feed Yourself, a program that banned the direct importation of essential goods like corned beef, sardines, milk, and sugar by foreign companies. A subsidy of 23 million Ghana cedis was then provided for the government to purchase these same essentials in order to address the volatility of their prices.\textsuperscript{118}

Operation Feed Yourself strove to fill the gaps of restricted imports by promoting backyard farming in the cities. Along with generous loans, seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides, expert advice on irrigation projects was provided to farmers. Students were enlisted as


\textsuperscript{118} Roger S. Gocking, \textit{The History of Ghana.} (Westport: Greenwood, 2005), 167.
volunteers to harvest sugar cane in order to boost national production. Gains from this project were arguably attributable to the policies of the previous Busia administration, rising world market prices, and two years of good rains.\textsuperscript{119} The Acheampong administration failed to leverage the rising world market price of cocoa, keeping workers focused on local food production. As in the previous administrations, farmers smuggled cocoa to neighboring Togo and the Ivory Coast in exchange for hard currency in the form of French francs. This currency was then used to purchase restricted essential commodities.\textsuperscript{120} These policies served to shore up the consumption of local foodways, reinforced concern over the availability of foreign staples, and strengthened the association of cocoa as a purely cash crop not intended for use as alimentation by the Ghanaian people.

Securing the supply of essential commodities continued to be a focus for the government into the 1980’s. This decade was characterized by the onset of the “Big Man Syndrome” in West Africa – a patronage system of bloated bureaucracy and systems of regulation whereby elites provided jobs, contracts, and opportunities to their kinsmen and political supporters. During this time public enterprises became symbols of national sovereignty and discrimination against private sector entrepreneurs was common.\textsuperscript{121} Government food subsidies kept urbanites complacent and staved off political instability. IMF and World Bank stabilization programs would threaten this patronage scheme by requiring structural adjustments to the bureaucratic system. However, in 1980 thirty six Sub-Saharan governments signed on, many fulfilling the bare minimums that such structural adjustment programs required. Foreign aid became a crucial

\textsuperscript{120} Mr Ales Bulir, \textit{The Price Incentive to Smuggle and the Cocoa Supply in Ghana, 1950-1996}. (International Monetary Fund, 1998), 14.
component of African economies, taking over key functions of the government and becoming a major employer, second only to the state.\footnote{France Moore Lappe, Joseph Collins, and David Kinley. \textit{Aid as Obstacle: Twenty Questions About Our Foreign Aid and the Hungry}, Institute for Food and Development Policy (San Francisco: IFDP, 1981), 98.}

In 1982 Ghana became one of the Sub-Saharan governments to ask for aid. At this time, Ghana came close to economic collapse. Food supplies and production levels were at an unprecedented low. Roads were impassable. A severe drought plagued the region and caused one million Ghanaians to be expelled from Nigeria. Jerry Rawlins, at the time the Chairman of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), went to work embracing the offered World Bank and IMF restructuring program. Rawlins underscored the debt the nation owed to farmers, stating, “We are acknowledging the historic debt of the whole nation to the farmer and have thus repudiated the monstrous injustice of a past in which we virtually ran the machinery of the state on the tired backs of rural producers and provided little for their basic needs.”\footnote{Meredith, Martin, \textit{The State of Africa: A History of the Continent Since Independence}. Martin Meredith. (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 372.} This comment is particularly ironic, given Rawlins early history with food distribution networks. In 1979 the then Flight-Lieutenant seized power and became the chairman of the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), a military dictatorship that included civilians. Along with his fellow junior officers, he attempted to clean out corruption in the food distribution system by publicly flogging traders accused of profiteering and razing Accra’s main Makola market to the ground.\footnote{Claire C. Robertson, \textit{Sharing the Same Bowl?: A Socioeconomic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana}. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 239-245.}

As part of their restructuring policy, the PNDC devalued the Ghanaian cedi (GH\textc{edis}) currency in 1983. That year the exchange rate started at three to one with the US dollar, and plummeted to the rate of 450 to one dollar by 1992. The goal of devaluation was to make
exports more competitive on the global market by making them less expensive. This had the simultaneous effect of raising the cost of the imported staples that Ghanaians had come to rely upon. Over 60 thousand public service sector jobs were eliminated, and public sector organizations such as Ashanti Goldfields were privatized. Rawlins experienced mixed results from the implementation of these reforms. Food and cocoa production rose from 155,000 tons to 220,000 tons by 1986. Foreign debt, which rose in part due to subsidized purchases of imported staple foods, more than doubled, reaching 3.3 billion dollars from the period of 1983 to 1988.

Eventually, the national cultural policy would become a way for Ghana to mitigate the foreign debt of the 1980’s by instituting a heritage tourism marketing scheme in line with IMF requirements. The heritage tourism scheme had the effect of focusing attention on Ghana’s various ethnic groups, like the Asante. It contributed to the conception of a national character that incorporated multiplicity, and allowed citizens a role in the crafting of the national identity as their role as entrepreneurs expanded. On my research trip to Ghana, I encountered local businesspersons who ran the arts markets, gave guided tours of the Jamestown lighthouse adjacent to the fort where Kwame Nkrumah was imprisoned, and gave tours of the historic Larabanga Mosque in the Northern Region. National and ethnic approaches of identification worked in concert to create a distinct nationalism that converged around common traits and local idiosyncrasies.

4.3 Evolution of the National Cultural Policy

Nkrumah appeared to choose his battles with regard to the original official cultural policy, which focused on areas of cultural expression where he calculated he would gain the most impact with the least resistance. Cultural freedom was not the emphasis of official national

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policy launched by Nkrumah after independence in 1957. Utilizing state support to develop the arts in the service of nation building, Nkrumah directed the creation of councils, organizations, and centers to forge a common national identity and culture. Since independence, cultural policy changed over time from being heavily state sponsored and directed, to being self-sustaining through the promotion of tourism. Additionally, the policy changed from an exclusive focus on the performing arts to include the support of cuisine as culture. From the promotion of a common national identity, to an agenda of cultural integration, to the promotion of cultural tourism and food, each stage represents a gradual transition of cultural policy. Beginning with a policy that excludes food, to one that features cuisine and its connection with cultural preservation, Ghanaians maintain ethnic boundaries and highlight their pride in a culturally diverse nation.

As part of the development of the African Personality, the arts policy of the Nkrumah government emphasized rural cultural preservation in rejoinder to past colonial experiences. Before colonization, missionaries tended to discourage local cultural activities that were believed to sustain indigenous spiritual beliefs. This negative view of local culture persisted during colonialism with the administrative application of progressive modernizing influences. Ghanaian elites absorbed these attitudes as evidenced by their lack of support for native cultural practices. Nkrumah's goal was to reverse this negative view and to incorporate various disparate artistic traditions into a common Ghanaian identity based upon a uniquely Ghanaian sensibility. The Arts Council organized various regional festivals whose venue changed annually among the regional capitals.126

Irrespective of Nkrumah's attempts at being culturally inclusive by fostering a greater awareness of regional cultural distinctions, there was still considerable opposition to the implementation of the cultural policy. Uneven in its implementation and with an agenda that was too strictly focused on a combination of tradition and Pan Africanist identity projection, artists found it difficult to grow and to incorporate the experiences of being part of the modern global economy. The following poem by Joe De Graft uses food to illustrate the frustration artists like him felt over national cultural patronage. Ghanaians were experiencing changing cultural influences that they were not allowed to represent in their work.

I like to eat tasty Chinese and Mexican food when I can get it to eat, even though I have never been to China or Mexico; and I prefer the smell and tang of garlic to that of stinking fish, which most Ghanaians simply adore but which I detest. I love to read any author, no matter his nationality, so long as I think he has something interesting to say to me...I enjoy Mozart and Louis Armstrong and the Seekers no less than I do the singing of adenkum troupes from my home town...

I do not imagine that any of my readers will like more than a few of my poems in this collection... But I hope they will desist from asking me why I have not written them "African poetry." Simply because I am this individual, neither a tribe living in some long inaccessible African jungle, nor a committee of pan-Africanist ethnographers.  

A poet and playwright educated in the classics at Mfantsipim in the Gold Coast colony in the 1940’s, De Graft was appointed by Nkrumah as the director of the Ghana Drama Studio in 1962. His body of work reflects important relevant themes of a recently independent Ghana. Those themes include the difficulty of artists struggling to realize themselves in a society which does not value them and what they stand for. Consumption of different foods highlighted the urbanization and increasing global influences on the food repertoire. Artists needed to reflect what they experienced, and this need often came into


artists struggling to realize themselves in a society which does not value them and what they stand for. Consumption of different foods highlighted the urbanization and increasing global influences on the food repertoire. Artists needed to reflect what they experienced, and this need often came into conflict with the objectives of the national project. Those themes include the difficulty of artists struggling to realize themselves in a society which does not value them and what they stand for. Consumption of different foods highlighted the urbanization and increasing global influences on the food repertoire. Artists needed to reflect what they experienced, and this need often came into conflict with the objectives of the national project.

In later years under the administration of Colonel Ignatius K. Acheampong and the National Redemption Council (NRC), the adoption of a cultural policy oriented to the philosophy of an African Personality was retained as the guiding strategy. During Acheampong's administration (1972 to 1975), spending on the arts was drastically curtailed owing to factors such as the international oil crisis. However, the official cultural policy was still sanctioned and published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1975.\(^{129}\) Perhaps as a reaction to the combined downturn in the market value of cocoa in the previous decade and of the oil crisis, the document contains mention of the principle of self-reliance in order to achieve a "complete and systematic transformation... to build a modern nation with a spirit of its own."\(^{130}\) Mandating cultural integration and national understanding by way of providing opportunities for studying additional Ghanaian languages and the distribution of multilingual materials, this particular version of cultural policy still did not include any mention of cuisine as culture. Other retentions include the emphasis on craftsmen and performance groups. Citing the concern over the encouragement and development of creativity, the policy does articulate the goal of

incorporating more input from the community and for artistic growth; "Biographical studies of traditional and contemporary artists as well as research into problems facing artists and their artistic creations, including the problem of consensus and critical standards, or the problem of relevance (considered in terms of audience reaction and response) will be encouraged in order to provide guidelines for new directions in creative activities or in sponsorship." At this stage, the Acheampong administration, in an effort to differentiate itself from previous administrations, reversed elements of Nkrumah's policy that stifled the growth of artists with an emphasis on local traditions. It allowed the incorporation of new values via the inclusion of indigenous and other materials in new ways.

As previously discussed in this paper, the 1983 economic crisis deepened, causing Jerry Rawlins to request assistance from the IMF. The new economic policy as directed by the IMF required an emphasis on private enterprise and trade liberalization. The National Commission on Culture was an agency, one of many charged with becoming self-sustaining, designed to seek out foreign funding to support the arts in Ghana. An entrepreneurial spirit was encouraged in accordance with new economic policy requirements in the launching of Arts Fairs in major cities to facilitate the establishment of contacts for artists. Rawlings maintained the Pan Africanist cultural ideology of Nkrumah’s time by seeking out support from the African American business community and with the launching of the Pan African Historical Theater Festival, more commonly known as PANAFEST. In recognition of the African diaspora and a commemoration of the Atlantic slave trade that contributed to this dispersal, the Cape Coast Castle and Elmina became center pieces of the Festival and the new “heritage tourism” industry. Contributions

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from USAID in 1991 to restore and develop a display focus for the castles, tended to obscure the long history of the sites to focus almost exclusively on the period of the Atlantic slave trade.

The 2004 Cultural Policy of Ghana, produced by the National Commission on Culture under the John Kufuor administration, was developed with an eye toward traditional cultural preservation and the promotion of food’s role in national economic development. Strength and unity is a theme reserved from the very first cultural policy, along with an emphasis on the performing arts, language, and various cultural institutions such as museums and monuments. Incorporation of maxims preserved the Pan African outlook, while allowing the incorporation of outside influences in the evolution of Ghanaian culture: “This is established by our concept of Sankofa, which establishes linkages with the positive aspects of our past and the present. The concept affirms the co-existence of the past and the future in the present. It therefore, embodies the attitude of our people to the interaction between traditional values and the demands of modern technology within the contemporary international cultural milieu.”

What follows is a section of the 2004 Cultural Policy:

10.4 Foods

10.4.1 Ghana has a rich diversity of foods and culinary cultures from its diverse ethnic Cultures. The state shall:

a. actively support research into production and preservation of local foods; and the compilation of traditional recipes and methods of preservation.

b. Encourage the consumption of Ghanaian cuisine from all parts of the country and discourage the over dependence on imported foods.

c. Explore the nutritional values of our local foodstuff and promote them.

d. Encourage the introduction of cuisine from other African Cultures.

10.4.2 Ghanaian dishes shall be a predominant feature of menus at State functions and in public catering institutions.

10.4.3 Ghanaians shall be encouraged to develop a culture of producing what they eat and eating what they produce.\(^{134}\)

There is an emphasis on the richness of the regional variation in foods in this policy and a recognition of regional migratory influences on cuisine. While locally produced food remains the focus, there is still no sign of the conscious development of a national cuisine. Rather, there is a heavy emphasis on national self-reliance with respect to agricultural production. The encouragement of the introduction of cuisines from other African Cultures echoes the Pan African sentiments of the first and all subsequent cultural policies. Thus, while original and subsequent elements such as an emphasis on the preservation of tradition, and the inclusion of outside influences are present, the focus is on increased agricultural production in order to meet the needs of Ghana’s citizens for sustenance and economic empowerment. Various small adjustments over time have still not brought about any major change in the cultural policy to include a national cuisine.

The latest incarnation of the cultural policy demonstrates the evolving national character as one that embraces performative ethnic difference: “Encourage the consumption of Ghanaian cuisine from all parts of the country…”, and “Encourage the introduction of cuisine from other African Cultures.” It also validates that national cuisine is not necessary for national

cohesiveness, and that nations can be brought to being notwithstanding differences in lineage. Last, this cultural policy encourages participation at the level of consumption in the pledge of support for local preparation methods, and the charge to the people to develop a culture that values local production and consumption.

4.4 State Entertainment

Despite the stipulation of the 2004 cultural policy, Ghanaian dishes were not a prominent feature of menus at state functions and in public catering institutions. Cuisine served at state functions in state owned hotels, and at offsite locations such as the State House, usually featured continental fare. The reverse of the formality of native dress in Ghana, there is an association between formality and continental cuisine, while regional cuisine is considered to be informal. According to Chef Fordjour, Executive Chef of the state owned La-Palm Royal Beach Hotel, state banquets can present a logistical problem as “African foods are finger foods and soups.” Fordjour admits that for most catered state functions, continental dishes are offered as serving Ghanaian dishes becomes a logistical issue in more formal settings, where it is nearly impossible to individually plate five hundred servings of fufu. Buffet style is possible, but is less formal and not always an option depending on what is requested.135 The designation of continental food as formal reveals a certain tension between the African oriented cultural policy and a sort of residual colonialism, as exhibited in the serving of continental cuisine at its state institutions.

The La-Palm Royal features the beachside Ghanaian Village Restaurant, a replica of a northern village. The Continental Restaurant at La-Palm highlights some local Ghanaian dishes, alongside a large selection of international main courses.

Spatially, continental fare is organized to preference Western and Chinese foods. The La-Palm Royal Beach Hotel features six eateries, two of which showcase Ghanaian food and one, The Royal Dragon, which features Chinese. The Continental Restaurant serves both Continental and Ghanaian dishes at its lunch buffet, with a heavier emphasis on European food. The Ghanaian Village Restaurant is billed as Pan African eatery that features almost exclusively Ghanaian regional foods. Housed on a thatched patio adjacent to the beach and located furthest from the main building, the diner is treated to first class service with an Atlantic Ocean view. However, the beach is gated off, due to the propensity for a segment of the Ghanaian population to reside on the beach. The gate protects the diner from hawkers and some of the more unsavory aspects of beach living near Accra. The spatial organization of foods at state hotels reflects the tensions between local food promotion and foreign foods. It also addresses the problems of representation that post-colonial Ghana is currently working out with respect to the performative aspects of Ghanaian nationalism.
4.5 National Best Farmer

One of the more successful government strategies that follows the mandates of the 2004 cultural policy, is that of the National Best Farmer. This policy celebrates local foodways by honoring its farmers. Other current food policies are made obvious in several ways. Websites, the Official Cultural Policy, state owned hotels such as the Golden Tulip, the Tourism Authority, libraries, and the Food Research Institute all reveal its priorities. An echo of the odwira festival from pre-colonial times, the annual Yam Festival in Ghana is also called the "Homowo" or "To Hoot at Hunger" Festival. It is a celebration of victory over hunger and can be traced back to pre-colonial times when a particularly severe drought affected the population. Because a good yam harvest is important for survival, the people give thanks to the spirits of the earth and sky and perform rituals to ensure a good harvest. Instituted by coastal Ga people of Ghana, but celebrated by various other ethnic groups as well, it coincides with the planting of crops before the rainy season in the south from May to August. This festival is celebrated in many rural communities, in parts of neighboring Nigeria, and is observed in Accra with bans on noise to allow the gods to concentrate on producing an abundant harvest.\textsuperscript{136}

In a modern rendition of the traditional harvest commemoration, the Ghanaian government initiated the Farmer of the Year celebration beginning in 1985 to recognize and celebrate its farmers. The 1970s and 1980s were times of volatility in terms of food security due to lack of rainfall. Increasing urbanization further threatened food security in Ghana. The celebration was conceived to show appreciation for farmers’ efforts during times of drought, to encourage youth to choose farming as a profession, and to introduce modern methods and government policies. Since 1988, the first Friday in December has been set aside as a countrywide holiday to honor successful farmers at the national level. There are many categories; 

\textsuperscript{136} Ann Morrill, \textit{Thanksgiving and Other Harvest Festivals} (New York: Chelsea House Publishers), 40-43.
cocoa, foodstuffs, animal husbandry, and poultry. A national ‘best farmer’ is then chosen from
this category, and the winner is awarded with a car, cash, farming equipment, and a house. Past
themes include “Grow More Food” or the 2013 theme, "Reducing Post-Harvest losses for
Sustainable Food Security and Nutrition". Today, more than seventy percent of Ghanaians are
subsistence farmers and Ghana continues to face post-harvest losses of food staples, especially of
grains and cassava. These post-harvest losses are mainly due to difficulties in transportation
and lack of appropriate storage facilities. These events underscore the primacy of food
availability in policy and planning for the nation, in that the focus is still on increasing
production. Post-harvest losses too have been a concern since the Nkrumah era, and are still a
challenge today.

4.6 Foodways and identity

The attitudes concerning foodways in Ghana are varied. Cuisine is at once regional and
hybrid, and views show a concern for cultural preservation and representation. Surveys reflect
the regionalism of Ghana’s cuisine, and cookbooks aim to preserve regional foods and
techniques, while at times incorporating foreign elements. “If you don’t eat fufu, it means you
have not eaten.” So stated J. Y. Appiah, Managing Director of “Y” Semereka Limited. Mr.
Appiah, a manufacturer’s representative of civil and building contractors and farmers claimed he
ate fufu each evening, and he would eat it three times each day if he could get it. This trained
accountant from the Brong Ahafo region responded to the question of what the national dish of
Ghana is with “Depends on your tribe,” adding that the Akan are in the majority and they take

(accessed September 8, 2014).
(accessed September 8, 2014).
fufu. (The Asante are the principal sub-grouping of the Akan people.) He believed the
government should support Ghanaian food with their policies but that the leadership is
“…disorganized, disinterested, and see no immediate benefit to the government. They’d rather
spend money.” He went on to relate that there are no guarantees from buyers for those who
chose to farm, adding that high risk and high cost prevent farming from being a lucrative
occupation in Ghana. The only product guaranteed by the government is cocoa, an export.
When it comes to fufu it takes time to digest. “When you eat fufu once during the day and you
are good to go. It stays with you all day.”

Fran Osseo-Asare was not of the opinion that the national dish of Ghana was fufu.
Osseo-Asare, a TED Fellow and African Gastronome, lecturer, author of a number of books on
African cuisine, and founder of “BETUMI: The African Culinary Network,” is a rural sociologist
by training. When asked what the national dish of Ghana is, Dr. Osseo-Asare stated that it
“Depends on who you talk to!” She stressed that Ghana is composed of ten different
administrative regions, inhabited by millions, with significant cultural contributions from both
British and French heritage due to the portion of Togo absorbed just before independence. She
emphasized the key word is cuisines, not cuisine. Today workers migrate all around the country.
Northerners go south for gold mining. Ghanaians travel abroad and intermarriage is common.
There exists a general blurring of regional ethnic identity. This phenomenon is similar to the
one described by Arjun Appadurai in post-colonial India in his work “How to Make a National
Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India.” The Nigerians who have been migrating to
Ghana since independence have affected the ‘national cuisine’; gari, a fermented, roasted,

granulated cassava is an example of a Nigerian food popular in Ghana. Other commonly eaten foods include fried fish, fufu, and ampesi (boiled starchy vegetables) eaten with stew. Common starches in the north are corn, millet, and sorghum, whereas in coastal areas, yam, cassava, and plantain are more widespread. Customary dishes are prepared dozens of different ways and carry different names depending on the regional and outside influences.

Irrespective of the diversity of offerings, those interviewed were still asked about what they believed the national cuisine to be. Fully 37% of respondents claimed that the national dish was fufu. When asked why they believed fufu was the national food, 27% responded by stating fufu was widely available and that each ethnic group serves a variation of fufu, so it should be the national food. However, a great many more declined to give a specific reason for this choice, stating that it was the national food and could give no reason, or declined to elaborate upon this opinion.

Those who responded with “food is regional in Ghana” made up 24% of responses. Banku was the answer given by another 20%. “Food is regional” combined with “banku”
together at 54% outnumbered those 37% who believed the national dish to be fufu. Banku, a fermented corn dumpling commonly served with fried tilapia, is also widely available but often associated with the coastal Fanti ethnic group.

Many of those who stated that food is regional felt it was a source of national strength, making such comments as it brings “a blend of something extra”, or it provides “… variety, it is healthy, and interesting.” Dr. John Kwadwo Osei-Tutu, professor of history at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and visiting professor at the University of Ghana stated that “Ghana has no need for a national food.” As one of the respondents who felt food was regional in Ghana, he asserted that it would be divisive if one food was chosen, and that for a politician to attempt this would be disadvantageous to his or her career. Osei-Tutu emphatically stated, “There will be no national food of Ghana. Not in my lifetime, my children’s lifetime, or in my children’s, children’s lifetime.”

He went on to say that he felt that the soccer team and the national anthem were more important to the inspiration of national pride than an identifiable Ghanaian national cuisine.

Dr. Osei-Tutu a member of the Ga ethnic group and a historian of the Fanti and Ga ethnic groups, is in agreement with 24% of all respondents who stated that food is regional, all of whom with the exception of one individual are from outside the Asanti region. This indicates resistance to the idea that the national cuisine be an Asanti dish from those belonging to other ethnic groups. This result is arguably a manifestation of the points of resistance created after the transition to the legitimate trade whereby the Asante established economic hegemony. As hitherto discoursed in this paper, resistance is part and parcel of a power matrix and thus, power is about the relational character of this resistance. The Asante have struggled with and

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encountered resistance from other ethnic groups since before independence and this friction is reflected in the lack of a national cuisine.

When questioned about how the Ghanaian diet has changed over the last two decades in the hospitality industry, Labadi Beach Hotel Executive Sous Chef Cecilia Kegey responded with the observation that there is a greater variety of fruits available (for example passion fruit, mango varieties). Also, the single greatest change is the addition of polished rice from the United States and perfumed rice from India and Vietnam. Chef David Fordjour at La-Palm Royal Beach Hotel, responded to the same question with his observation that he has not been able to find yucca in Ghana for over thirty years now. Additionally, there are certain fruits missing that he used to eat as a child, such as a variety of blackberry. Mango varieties have increased. Yams and potatoes tend to be imported from South Africa. Vinegars, mustards, and condiments have become a regular part of the diet in Ghana. Additionally, in the 1970’s with the onset of drought, Uncle Ben’s rice, salads and salad cream (salad dressing), baked beans, and noodles were introduced through food aid.

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The powerful Asante influenced perceptions about what the national dish should be, but it was food insecurity related to its cocoa export economy that was a prevailing agent for change in Ghanaian foodways. Aid products like imported rice were incorporated into traditional foodways. Umotuo, a rice dumpling served with soup, is just one example of this hybridization. In this manner, food aid lead to a change in vernacular foodways, marking Ghanaian cuisine as a product of its post-colonial struggle. Fully 39% of respondents, when asked what they ate daily, responded by stating rice was the staple they ate the most. During my research, respondents would regale me with discussions about the virtues of polished or perfumed rice, both of which are imported from the United State, India, Thailand, or Vietnam. Local rice does exist, but many Ghanaians developed a taste for foreign rice during the drought Ghana experienced in the early 1980’s, when aid agencies brought in foreign rice. Mr. Appiah acknowledged the trend to increased rice consumption, observing that the ongoing rural to urban migration that originated in the transition from the slave trade to the legitimate trade contributed to this change. According to Mr. Appiah, fufu is time consuming and laborious to prepare. Rice on the other
hand is fast and easy to cook, and many can afford to purchase inexpensive rice dishes from restaurants in Accra.

4.7 Government policies and improved economy

Since rice is an imported staple, respondents had mixed opinions about it, linking it to a perceived dependence upon foreign provisions. When asked if they believed the government did indeed promote local Ghanaian food, 46% responded negatively and 32% responded positively. This suggests an awareness of legislation that promotes local food production, and of the barriers to their implementation, such as poor training for food inspectors who inconsistently apply the food safety laws. Also, there is currently no pre-market inspection of produce and, due to frequent power outages, inadequate pre-market storage and refrigeration is nonexistent. A majority at 32% of those who did respond stated that they believed the government promoted Ghanaian food in the interests of an improved economy. When asked if the government should promote Ghanaian food, 57% responded positively.

Figure 5 Government Promotion Question

![Bar chart showing government promotion of Ghanaian food](chart.png)
Most believe the government should promote Ghanaian food to improve the economy and to stop the importation of outside food, which many believed to be harmful to the economy as it ultimately costs taxpayers more money. As concerns the source of foodstuffs, an overwhelming 67% stated that it was important to them that the food they eat be produced in Ghana. Equal numbers of respondents, 25% for both categories respectively, were concerned with nutrition and freshness, or with employment and an improved economy.

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### 4.8 Cookbooks maintain boundaries

If in the eighteenth century the French national character began to be associated with taste, it wasn’t until the post-colonial period that the construction of a national cuisine began to emerge in places like India. Cookbooks offer up important clues about the creation of a prospective culture. In the mid to late twentieth century, cookbooks in India were written that raised up a historically localized culinary tradition by making it serve for the entire nation. As previously mentioned in this paper, this same process occurred with the promotion of kente cloth as a national cultural symbol in Ghana. The post-colonial Indian parallel is in the tendency to conflate Mughali food with Indian food in cookbooks and restaurants. At times, an explicitly nationalist ideology will emerge in Indian cookbooks where, paradoxically, the increased
articulation of regional and ethnic cuisines occurs. Punjabi snacks served as dessert courses, or Hindi entrees as appetizers. “As in other modalities of identity and ideology in emergent nations, cosmopolitan and parochial expressions enrich and sharpen each other by dialectical interaction. Especially in culinary matters, the melting pot is a myth.”\(^{144}\) In other words, urbanization is the catalyst for the ongoing process of developing a hybrid national cuisine in India. Regional influences remained relatively separate, rather than a melting pot metaphor where ingredients and techniques are subsumed in the modern national project.\(^{145}\) In contrast, the capital of Accra is not leading the way to a national cuisine in Ghana, tossed salad or otherwise. Most people in Accra are immigrants from a different region and prefer to maintain their regional cuisine. Notable exceptions include the hybridity apparent in restaurants like Asanka Locals and Maque Tante Marie, which make an attempt to serve regional dishes with mixed results.

Along with an improved economy related to local food production and consumption, many Ghanaians seem concerned about foreign perceptions of their culture. Most cookbooks written in or about Ghana were produced with the intention of dispelling myths and fighting the prevalent Western bias of Sub-Saharan cuisine as “second class”.\(^{146}\) Osseo-Asare demonstrates this in “Beyond Gumbo: A History of Ghanaian Cookbooks”. In this study Osseo-Asare constructs a classification of authors of Ghanaian and West African cookbooks during the latter half of the 20th century. An exploration of the perception of Ghanaian food both within Ghana and outside of it, the paper assumes the relative size and location of the cookbook publishers are

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important pieces of information that serve to identify the audience for the cookbooks and the strength of marketing distribution channels.

The survey of Ghanaian cookbooks by Fran Osseo-Asare along with my own analysis of what has been published since her paper in 2000, reveals the continuation of the trend of Ghanaians (and other English-speaking West Africans) continuing to write cookbooks to make their cuisine more accessible to outsiders and to dispel stereotypes, often but not always self-published or publishing with smaller presses. Indeed, they seem to be written for tourists and literate elites in the urban areas that are in danger of losing their indigenous food traditions. *Melting Pot: Ghanaian Cooking with a Twist* by Asantewaa Tweedie, and *Ghanaian Cookbook: Favorite Recipes from Ghana* by Sophia Manu are two from this genre. Manu’s book features both Western kitchen and traditional cooking instructions. Tweedie’s book includes a meal selection matrix to facilitate the appropriate selection of meal components.

Other books I purchased in Ghana were written by educated elite females and do not appear to be written with the intent of repackaging these recipes with some sort of nationalist agenda. Rather, they seem to either commemorate a woman’s life’s work in the culinary field, are intended for culinary students, or were written with an eye to the preservation of traditional recipes and cooking methods. *Aunty Mama’s Cookbook: A Taste of Ghana* by Florence Aleeno Sai is one such book. A product of Achimota School and a graduate of Cornell University with a Masters Degree in Consumer Education, Public Policy and Home Economics, she retired from the University of Ghana’s Family Welfare and Consumption Department. As a reflection of her training and exposure to Western foodways, her cookbook includes western courses such as desserts, salads, and global influences such as Greek, Indian, and Chinese dishes. Mrs. Aleeno Sai’s book had also included a kid’s recipe section. As her book was self-published and
marketed in dez Amis, a Western café, her audience includes the affluent of Ghana and foreigners who frequent such establishments.

Cookbook authors exhibit an awareness of the influences of foreign foods on their culture. Corporations like Maggi, a subsidiary of Nestle, have an increasing market share due to inexpensive, convenient products such as seasoning cubes. Seasonings, or bouillon cubes, are made especially convenient and adaptable because they can be purchased in individually-wrapped cubes, which are affordable for most people. Asantewaa Tweedie, author of *Melting Pot: Ghanaian Cooking with a Twist*, comments on the use of these seasoning cubes:

> A good stock is the basis to any good soup or stew. However, nowadays people view the process as too time consuming, and frequently use artificial or convenient seasonings, commonly sold in cubes or powder form… Most, if not all of these artificial seasoning, put MSG (mono-sodium glutamate) and other artificial flavorings in them. Many people have adverse reactions to these artificial ingredients such as swollen tongues, sore gums, nausea, stomach ache, indigestion and so on.\(^{147}\)

This quote reveals the disapproving attitudes of some Ghanaians toward foreign foods and their desire to maintain certain cultural boundaries with regional cuisine. In Tweedie’s cookbook, foreign food is conceived of as the unhealthy other, while local food is seen as life sustaining and healthful.

### 4.9 Conflicting Attitudes

It is apparent that Ghanaians are proud of their foods’ wholesomeness, regularly claiming that it is organic and not genetically modified. In a May 12th - May 26th 2014 biweekly edition of the *Your Neighborhood* newspaper, the organization Food Sovereignty Ghana (FSG) and the Coalition of Farmers Against Genetically Modified Organisms (COFAM) were on a mission to lead a “movement (that) is also aimed at protecting our food supply, local farms, and

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environments, promoting organic solutions, and exposing cronyism between big business and the government." COFAM was protesting against pending legislation that would allow Monsanto Company, a publicly traded American multinational biotechnology corporation and a leading producer of genetically engineered (GE) seed, to bring genetically modified products into Ghana.

At the other end of the spectrum, Ama Akoto, Senior Quality Assurance Officer at the Ghana Tourism confided that “…really, food in Ghana is not a big deal.” When asked if she believed a country needs a recognizable food or cuisine to be considered a great country, she responded with “Food is not everything.” She related the current trend toward heritage tourism and the new tourism act of parliament that includes consideration of food. She believed that cleaning up the beaches was more important to attracting tourists than catering to the culinary tastes of tourists. She admitted that cuisine is important in as much as getting sick tarnishes the reputation of a country, even if its processed food from the supermarket. The monitoring of processed food was a joint responsibility of the Food and Drug Ministry and the Tourism Ministry. She also felt that the qualifications of inspectors needed to be raised.

The overriding concern in most responses about cuisine seemed to reflect a concern for the economy and the generation of jobs more than a concern over the marketing of a national identity. Many respondents agreed with Ms. Akoto, in their assessment of the low importance of a recognizable national cuisine for Ghana. Fully 30% of respondents believed it was not necessary to have a national cuisine, while 47% percent did. Of those who did respond positively, 21% believed it would benefit the tourism industry and 25% believed a recognizable national cuisine would boost the economy and/or employ more Ghanaians.

The increasing standardization of foods due to the presence of multinationals like Nestle has resulted in a demonstrable lack of pride in the local cuisine, according to Fran Osseo-Asare. Osseo-Asare has observed that most Ghanaians do not commonly eat local foods in front of white friends who “would not understand”.\(^{150}\) Asare, an American who is married to a Ghanaian and has written several Ghanaian cookbooks, fits into the category of individuals who want to preserve Ghanaian foodways. An outsider with a Western publisher, her cookbooks tend to combine regional cuisines and to be organized in Western fashion, segmented in courses. Asare states that in general, western foods are perceived as more exciting. TV cooking shows endorse western products. Coke and yogurt have a higher status than native foods. This claim is inconsistent with the data collected about respondent’s opinions about their own cuisine. Not all Ghanaians share Osseo-Asare’s opinion with respect to pride in their own cuisine. Foreign foods seem to be perceived as problematic for the economy, insecure with regards to fluctuating pricing, and representative of neocolonial domination by others. Owutse Noah, a student in the Family and Consumer Sciences Department at the University of Ghana at Legon prefers to eat food he has brought from home prepared by his mother or rice he prepares himself in his room.\(^{151}\) He and his classmate, Agbeve Worlali both agreed that pizza and other such foreign foods were generally considered snack food and that Ghanaian food is “good for the body” in comparison. Additionally, both students stated that these foods may be available, but “purchasing power” is an obstacle to frequent consumption.\(^{152}\)

My own observations did not lead me to conclude that Western food is more highly prized. Most people like Charity Dzigbede, graduate of Achimota School and receptionist at the Baptist Guest House, exhibited a suspicious attitude toward foreign food. She expressed the

belief that local food is healthiest and will not contribute to disease. Adeline Doe, cook at the Baptist Guest House, also was of the opinion that the food the Ewe consumed in the Volta region is best for your digestion. However, the British influence is ever present in foods like tinned baked beans, tea, and sausages. It is becoming increasingly common to be served rice and beans garnished with spaghetti (macaroni). I have observed this claim in restaurants in Accra and as far afield as Bolgatanga in the Northern Region. Osseo-Asare contends that this behavior is a reflection of hybridity whereby the development of a national cuisine is a post-colonial process of vernacularization instead of a process of cultural domination.  

5 CONCLUSION

In a nation that was a model for all African nations, the persistently evolving cultural policy, along with other indicators such as food security, make it evident that Ghana’s national project is adaptable. By studying Ghana’s material history, my hope is that Ghanaian perceptions of nation and the negotiation of interstitial spaces in this post-colonial period can be more completely historicized and more fully understood.

The colonial period introduced massive changes to the power structure in the Gold Coast with the onset of the cocoa trade. Some of the changes included the commercialization of land and the introduction of a money economy, an increase of purchasing power, and a new demand for consumer goods. New social classes arose. Banking activity and the total integration of the African economy with the world economy, accompanied the expansion of the volume of trade with Europe. Some of the perceived downsides of the changes in the power web included the destruction of local industries such as textiles in favor of imports. Expatriate trade oligopolies eliminated the large African merchant class that existed before the colonial period and transformed them into employees of foreign firms. The intra-African trade that had been transpiring for millennia was discouraged or outright banned. A new web of power was constructed that turned around the production and distribution of commodities. The colony produced what it did not consume in order to consume what it did not produce. This economic framework would contribute a legacy of food insecurity that Ghana still struggles with. In no way has commoditized chocolate been integrated into the foodways of Ghana. Neither is it part of the performativity of national identity.

Areas for further study should include an examination of Spivak’s theories about representation in the post-colonial nation, specifically as they relate to the gendered subaltern (also known as the disenfranchised woman). In pre-colonial times, matrilineal groups called abusua were headed by women, and supplied provisions to European traders on the coast. Market women were, and still are, responsible for the distribution of foodstuffs, consumer, and household goods. In an unprecedented move, Kwame Nkrumah cultivated his relationship with

market women, leaning on their support for his campaigns and his policies. Additionally, cookbooks are still produced by Ghanaian women, whose intent in publishing them is the preservation of local foodways. These relationships need to be examined with respect to gendered representations in post-colonial Ghana.

My hope is that in the future, studies of Ghana will extend to the issue of food aid and its effects on the changing tastes of the population. Due to restraints of time and sources, my own study focused solely on efforts surrounding a national cuisine. However, future studies focusing on Ghana would better be able to historicize contemporary issues of identity in Ghana with an exploration of food aid. In addition, food security issues in Ghana need to be compared with other West African countries that have fashioned a national cuisine, to allow one to see more clearly how different approaches to colonial rule affected social perceptions. In further considering African perspectives, readers would be reminded that Africa was not a void place available for colonial powers to imprint their own cultures upon, but a space filled with historical agents who also constructed (and contested) representations of themselves.

Nkrumah’s approach to the nation building project was in itself an attempt to work within the economic structure he inherited, and a reaction against the general tendency of ethnic groups to reinforce boundaries. As a political innovator, he was concerned with the codification of idioms. The ascription of value for such distinctive cultural items such as kente, adinkra symbols, highlife music, and the suppression or denial of relevance of others was selective and deliberate. He was strategic in his approach. A great amount of attention was paid to selecting particular symbols for emphasis in order to mobilize support, and as supports in a strategy to

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confront other groups. The “revival” of select cultural traits and the establishment of historical traditions was undertaken to justify and glorify the new idioms and new national identity. The crafting of a national cuisine would have crossed too many boundaries due to its figurative role of a representative good, and would have engendered a more rigorous defense. Food represents cultural freedom and, combined with the continued maintenance of ethnic boundaries in Ghana, would have exacted a higher political price than Nkrumah was willing to bear.

Cocoa represented the obvious post-colonial truth that was going unaddressed. It was the central commodity that Nkrumah wrestled with in crafting a national identity. In the Gold Coast, and later in an independent Ghana, cocoa represented a potentially divisive and antinationalistic inheritance, as it was too closely associated with Asante economic power and ethnic heritage. Although cocoa is a regional food produced for export, it would have had to be considered as part of a national cuisine if one was to be manufactured. There are ironies here worth noting. The first is that cocoa is a food that itself causes chronic food insecurity for those who depend upon it for revenue as a commodity. The other irony is that currently it is difficult to find a locally produced chocolate bar in Ghana.

My research did not support the idea that cocoa had been absorbed and vernacularized, as cookbooks ignore this vital national food in their regional recipes. As committed to Pan Africanism as he was, Nkrumah did not attempt to appropriate any regional cuisine as a national symbol since it would beg the question of why cocoa as a commodity was not being utilized for this purpose. If the political situation is any indication, having to feature cocoa would have upset the perceived balance of power in Ghana. For example, the current president, John Mahama, is a northerner with a
Southern Vice President and a cabinet selected from different ethnic groups. Ghanaians are very sensitive to even the perception of tribal favoritism. Employing cocoa for the national project would have been divisive as it was heavily associated with Asante power. This contrasts with Kente cloth which, given its use in royal ritual and role in the communication of traditional idioms, is gamely converted for use as a national symbol irrespective of its ethnic associations. Giving cocoa pride of place in the national project would have given the Asante more fuel for their nationalistic aspirations, would have defeated the idea of a unified Ghana, and would have killed Nkrumah’s larger vision of a unified Africa.

REFERENCES

Primary Sources


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APPENDIX

The purpose of the field work I completed in Ghana in the summer of 2014 was to ascertain whether or not there was a national cuisine and the circumstances of its evolution, or the reasons for its absence after independence. My initial hypothesis was that there was a national cuisine currently under construction which had been heavily influenced by Ghana’s historical relationship with the African American intelligentsia. I discovered that the opinions over the meaning of a national cuisine were as rich and wide-ranging as the varieties of regional foods themselves. Mixed with discussions of the regional differences in preparation techniques and ingredients, were heartfelt expressions of the roles food played in private life, in the Ghanaian economy, and in the messages it conveys to visitors and citizens of the nation. Does a country need a national cuisine to be a great nation? What is the national cuisine of Ghana? When taken together the answers to these and other questions create a fascinating picture of how, when viewed through the lens of cuisine, Ghanaian cultural tradition has remained regional since independence.

General trends found in the responses to the survey questions I administered included participants expressing pride in the wholesomeness of their food supply and its ability to satisfy hunger. Other observed trends include the encouragement of the government to increase smallholder production of food, trepidation over the lack of consistent premarket oversight, and little monetary support for the local food industry. An appreciation of the diversity of the regional cuisines was also clearly evident.

Overview
Research was conducted using both interviews of individuals and observations of public places such as government agencies, restaurants, and street food vendors. The individuals interviewed exemplified a fairly broad cross section, 55% being male and 45% female, with uniform representation across various age groups. I conducted 62 interviews in Accra, Bolgatanga, Tema, Cape Coast, and points in between. Many interviewees, especially in Accra, were of mixed ethnic backgrounds with 9% self-identifying as of Asante ancestry, 23% of the Volta region, 13% from both the Greater Accra and Easter Region, and 17% foreigners. People interviewed represented a variety of Ghanaian ethnic groups, with nearly equal numbers of individuals from the Volta Region, the Greater Accra Region, the Eastern Region, and foreigners from Lebanon, the Philippines, and other West African countries. In terms of occupation, individuals were involved in business concerns, and employed in educational institutions. Clergy members, community leaders, and political leaders were interviewed. These persons, in addition to those employed in the arts or in the museum field, in positions in such diverse fields as public health, philanthropy, and urban studies, were all classified as professionals. All other interviewees were either classified as students or blue collar workers.

Field work was limited to observing major markets, cold storage businesses, grocery stores, roadside food sales, ports, restaurants, hotels, resorts, and included various interviews with workers at government ministries and Non-Governmental Organizations. On only one occasion was I privileged with an opportunity to share a meal in a private home. No food events associated with any religious occasions were observed. Additionally, there was not sufficient time to make a firsthand observation of any food taboos or prohibitions.
Ghanaian food is served and preferred by most of the population, with continental cuisine reserved for formal state functions in the state owned hotels. Western food such as frozen yogurt from Danish exporters or maggi seasoning cubes were widely available for purchase on the street and in stores and markets. Most western foods, such as pizza or sandwiches, were widely considered to be snack food and not substantial enough to be served as a meal. Popular dishes from other ethnic groups include fufu, banku, or tuo zafi (different varieties of starchy dumplings), with fufu being the most popular. Fufu is primarily known as an Asante food. A dense, starchy staple made of pounded yam, variations are created by the addition of more or less plantain.

Regional foodways in Ghana are remarkably similar in that customarily a substantial meal is served each day that consists of a large starchy dumpling, accompanied by a soup that is flavored with various meats. There was traditionally little distinction made between course and mealtimes in the country side. In urban centers people may have tea and toast or biscuits (cookies) for the morning repast reserving the main, and at times only meal, for later in the day.
Fish is widely consumed, particularly in the south near the coast. No pork was observed being served and chicken is considered a delicacy one encounters most often in urban centers. There is little beef available in the south, as most all beef is raised in the north. Goats are found foraging all over the country side and in the cities like Accra and Kumasi. In the areas surrounding Nima market in Accra, which is heavily populated with Muslim northerners, a number of cattle are kept adjacent to people’s homes in small shelters. Neighborhoods in Accra also feature large community ovens and street food cooking operations.

There are currently no efforts to construct a national cuisine in Ghana. There was an awareness of the concept of a national cuisine, but it did not seem to be a pressing concern as most people are apprehensive over fluctuating costs of food due to the unstable economy. Cookbooks tended to veer toward the preservation of regional cuisines and techniques. Those that featured European cuisine were intended as instructional manuals in a course of culinary study at technical colleges or training programs, and are very different from regional cookbooks. The state tendency to spatially situate Ghanaian regional cuisines in deference to continental cuisine does not in fact indicate any perceived lack of pride in local cuisines. On the contrary, this special differentiation is a reflection of a desire to make foreign guests feel comfortable.
**Fufu Powder**

Not only is availability a priority, but the encouragement of entrepreneurialism and the development of new products for local foods is a priority as well. Halfway through my stay in Accra, I got the opportunity to interview Richard Twumbaah at the compound which formerly housed the UN food testing institute. Since then, the area had been taken possession of by the Ghanaian government and turned into the Food Research Institute (FRI). The current FRI office
has since been moved to another location. The compound was still inhabited by many of the employees of FRI, however. Mr. Twumbaah, the security man who has been employed at this very same location since he finished school in 1968, shared with us the history of this location.

Twumbaah, an Akan from the Eastern Region, was one respondent who claimed the national dish of Ghana was rice since “At any party that is what is served.” Not only was he of the opinion that the government did not promote the food of Ghana but that the government “…can’t do it as each tribe has its own food.” He relayed to us that most anything he desired to purchase was available: “Yes, if you have money. At times it is too costly. You cannot afford your favorite food each day.” Fufu was his favorite food which he gets an opportunity to eat once a week. He was the first person to tell us that there was such a product as fufu powder, which has been developed by FRI. He added that the government could do more to ensure the security of the food as it is brought directly from the village without inspection or oversight. After the interview, Mr. Twumbaah was kind enough to show us to the home of the Director of the Food Research Institute.

At the Food Research Institute I had the opportunity to interview three top officials who relayed their organizations mission to me, distributed a copy of the annual report and a sample of one of their products (palm nut pulp). They answered my questions and gave me a tour of their facilities, showing me the bio toxin testing labs, new products they have developed, and their test kitchens. I was treated to a sample of bread made with yam flour. This was followed by a visit to the marketing department where there were many products they developed on display, such as powdered fufu. One of the mandates of FRI is to work with entrepreneurs to find different ways to develop, package, and market local foods. Interviews at FRI confirmed evidence of the

reinforcement of local production, a mandate to develop new products, and disinterest in the vernacularization of cuisine in Ghana.

FRI products. Source: Author

Dr. Atikpo, Deputy Director of FRI, was asked about the African American influence on Ghanaian foods. She dismissed this query with the following: “Our national foods are already established and known all over West Africa. They are delicious, popular, and varied, more than others in the region.” When asked how much foreign food has displaced local food, Dr. Atikpo revealed that there was currently no foreign food policy as foreign foods are not feared by the Ghanaian government. What her organization’s responsibility is involved with is food wholesomeness and quality. She estimates that roughly eighty-five percent of Ghanaians eat local food.158 Her organization is one of thirteen nationwide that research foods in order to advise the Food Ministry on policy for such items as palm oil, timber, rice, and maize. Although she admits to Ghanaians having developed a taste for imported American rice, luncheon meat, and cooking oil from food aid during the 1983 famine, she insists that her organization promotes

158 Dr. Margaret Ottah Atikpo, Deputy Director of the National Food Research Institute Ghana. Interview by author. Personal interview. Accra, June, 2, 2014.
local brown rice through the Africa Rice Project. Yet she admits to the weakness of the
government in that they collude with Brazilian and Chinese companies in the north who produce
and export rice, providing the government with inducements. The choices of foodstuffs for
Ghanaians owes as much to the Ghanaian government’s policies as to tastes developed from
famine induced foreign food aid.