

# **GHANA BOOK WORLD**

A Publication of the Ghana Book Development Council,  
Editor: **ANTHONY P. K. ADZAHO**

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT

After about seven years of unhurried consideration, the Government of Ghana gave the go-ahead for the establishment of the Ghana Book Development Council (GBDC) on 20th August, 1975. (The full story of the establishment of the Council can be found in our Annual Report 1977).

The principal objective of the Ghana Book Development Council is to initiate or promote such activities, as will ensure the full development of books. The Ghana Book Development Council has so far not only co-ordinated the activities of the existing associations of the book sector but has also initiated the formation of two more; these are the Ghana Book Designers and Illustrators Association and the Children's Literature Foundation. The former is to promote the development of the visual and structural qualities of the book and provide a wealth of illustration based essentially on African perceptions; the latter will promote the production and use of good quality books for children and young people.

That the book industry in Ghana is in need of improvement cannot be gainsaid: few books are published annually even though one cannot rightly attribute this to the death of Ghanaian writers. The fact of the matter is that there should be some revolution in the book sector, especially production and distribution. The search for a solution to the problems of the book industry in Ghana is, among other things, the *raison d'être* of the Ghana Book Development Council. And one of the most effective ways in which the GBDC can help organisations and individuals of the Ghana book world as well as disseminate useful and relevant information is the publication of a technical journal such as the Ghana Book World. The journal is intended also as a forum for the exchange of ideas. It is equally the expectation that it will make many more people in Ghana book-conscious.

The Ghana Book World is a bi-annual publication. It has not been possible to include advertisements in this issue. In subsequent ones, however, the Ghana Book World will certainly advertise your books and services. Why don't you help us to help you by sending us advertisements pertaining to the sector? You can also contribute articles for publication. Contributors of accepted articles will each be given ₵50 (fifty cedis) and five complimentary copies of the issue of the Ghana Book World in which their articles appear. All that is expected of a contributor is that the article should relate to the book sector and should be between 1,200 and 2,500 words; and, whenever possible, the article should explain in simple terms some problem of the Ghanaian book industry and how best to solve it. We look forward very much to your contributions and patronage

**Broadcast address by the Commissioner for Education and Culture, Mr. Ellison Owusu Fordwuh, to Launch the National Book Week on Radio and Television on Sunday, 6th November, 1977**

*Good-Evening, Fellow Ghanaians,*

I have come to the studios this evening to launch the National Book Week being organised by the Ghana Book Development Council from the 6th to the 11th of November.

On August 20th, 1975, the Government of the Supreme Military Council approved the establishment of the Ghana Book Development Council as an operating agency under the Ministry of Education. The Council was inaugurated on April 2nd, 1976. However, in view of the difficulty in getting suitable accommodation, the Council started full operation nearly a year later.

At this stage one may ask what the Book Development Council is and what it is expected to do. There are several reasons for setting up the Book Development Council. Ghana has reached a stage in her development where she needs an institution for the promotion of books because without a conscious effort to promote the production and use of books, the difficulties which at present plague the education practice, the creative effort and our cultural re-awakening may persist for a long time.

There is no denying the fact that education plays a fundamental role in human progress and that the primary function of books is to promote education. In spite of recent rapid development of other media of mass communication the book still constitutes a more substantial, enduring, permanent and sustainable means of deriving knowledge. In this country where the printed word is gaining ascendancy, there is the need for a state organ to monitor this ascendancy and ensure that as far as possible it makes the most beneficial impact.

It is with this objective in view that the Government of the Supreme Military Council set up the Ghana Book Development Council whose function, in a nutshell, is generally to undertake or promote such activities as will ensure the full development of books. The responsibility that has been placed on the Council is such that it cannot carry it out alone. It has under its umbrella, therefore, six Associations to help it to carry out its task. These are the Writers Association, the Publishers Association, the Library Association, the Federation of Master Printers, the Booksellers Association and the Book Designers

and Illustrators Association which is still in its formative stages.

Each of the Associations seeks the interest of its members whose organisations may be individual, private or public. The Ghana Book Development Council therefore co-ordinates their activities and provides a common platform for the exchange of ideas and experience. It is the duty of the Council to study and sort out the complex problems of the book industry and make recommendations for solving these problems for the economic, social and the overall development of the nation.

There are problems in the book sector of this country to which we must fully address ourselves now. For example, there are not enough suitable books in English or in the Ghanaian Languages, especially for Ghanaian children. Many of the available imported books are foreign in content while some contain inaccurate information. The marketing overseas of books produced in Ghana leaves much to be desired, yet the export and sale of books written and produced in Ghana can earn considerable foreign exchange for the country apart from their contribution to the enrichment of contemporary world culture.

To solve some of these problems, the Book Development Council recently teamed up with the Ghana National Association of Teachers and the Canadian Teachers Federation to hold workshops and seminars for selected teachers currently engaged in the writing of books primarily for Ghanaian children. Plans towards the inauguration of a Book Designers and Illustrators Association are at an advanced stage. In fact, the Association will be inaugurated next Tuesday. The importance of illustrators in the production of books, especially children's books, need not be over-emphasised. Besides, the Council has been providing consultancy to individuals and organisations. It has also been conducting research and providing services geared to solving problems connected with book development in Ghana. Above all, it attaches so much importance to book use, which, in any case, is the reason for the existence of books, that the Book Week has been set aside to bring home to the public the essence and importance of books in our daily lives. Thus, the theme chosen for this first Book Week is "Help Develop Books".

Starting from 10 a.m. tomorrow till Friday, there will be a Book Exhibition mounted at the Accra Community Centre. Other activities planned for the Book Week include an essay competition for secondary school, sixth form and university students, film shows, a debate, a colloquium, poetry recitals, and the presentation of book awards to writers of the pre-independence period.

Fellow countrymen, the economic situation of the country is such that the government alone cannot provide all the required number of books in the country for both children and adults. Although we would like most of our books to be produced locally we also realise the need to import books to supplement what is available locally. This, of course, helps the two-way flow of books for a balanced world development. However, due to financial constraints, the book situation has not been as one would wish both in local production and imports. I take this opportunity, therefore, to appeal to all organisations and individuals connected with the importation, production and distribution of books to help provide the public with books, especially children's books. By so doing they will be helping the development of the Ghanaian mind and life. This is in keeping with the theme for the Book Week: "Help Develop Books".

Thank you and good night.



# PROSPECTS FOR PAPER PRODUCTION IN GHANA

*by*

**F. W. Addo-Ashong**

PAPER has been used in Ghana for nearly five centuries now. Ghana's present consumption rate is one of the highest in Africa and this is because Ghana has a high literate population and enjoys a comparatively high standard of living by African standards. In 1966, the consumption of paper and paper products in Ghana reached a record level of 50,000 tonnes. This figure has dropped to an annual rate of about 40,000 tonnes due to import restrictions. With the increase in population, the level of literacy and the rising standard of living, it is safe to forecast an annual consumption of about 75,000 to 80,000 tonnes by the end of the next decade if there should be no import restrictions. Present paper imports into Ghana do not reflect the actual rate of consumption, for in Ghana every piece of paper gets used twice or three times before it is ultimately discarded; a superb example of recycling!

The common grades of paper imported into Ghana are newsprints, fine writing and printing papers, coarse wrapping papers and paper boards for packaging. Other grades of paper are imported but in smaller quantities.

## **Paper manufacture**

Modern manufacture of paper is dependent on the availability of certain basic inputs. The most important of these is the raw material. Fibrous raw materials such as wood, bamboo, bagasse and grass have been used for the manufacture of paper. The commonest of these is wood. However, it is not every wood that is suitable for pulp and paper manufacture. The preferred species are 'the ones with a light colour, low density and, above all, long fibre. Coniferous species have an average fibre length of 3 mm as compared to the average fibre length of 1 mm for broad-leaved species. The former are therefore generally preferred as they make tougher paper. In recent years a lot of temperate broad-leaved species have also been used for making paper of certain grades. The leading paper manufacturing countries of the world such as Canada, the Scandinavian countries, the Soviet Union and the United States continue

to derive the greater percentage of their wood raw material from coniferous species, mainly spruce and pine.

Other major considerations are the availability of large quantities of clean water, certain chemical compounds, cheap power and skilled labour. It is also important that transportation of both raw materials and finished products to and from the factory should be adequate and economical. Markets are important if the country's production is greater than its local requirements and excess products have to be exported.

In addition to the above, the producing country should have the necessary know-how to handle the available raw material. If the know-how is not locally available, it is advisable to go into partnership with a foreign country which has the necessary expertise. The same goes for capital. Pulp and paper manufacturing equipment is rather expensive. It is estimated that the machinery needed today to establish a pulp and paper plant capable of producing about 150,000 tonnes per annum will be around \$250m.

## **Prospects in Ghana**

Ghana has a total land area of 237,873 km<sup>2</sup> (91,843 sq. miles) of which 82,299.84 km<sup>2</sup> (31,776 sq. miles) are covered by closed forests. Of this about 85 per cent is covered by moist semi-deciduous forests and the rest by rain forest. The rest of the country is made up of savannah woodlands. Forest reserves in the closed forests amount to 16,513.84 km<sup>2</sup> (6,376 sq. miles). The reserves carry a total gross timber volume of approximately 0.39 billion m<sup>3</sup> (13 billion cub. ft.) but not all of this is available for paper manufacture as the present timber industry derives about 50 per cent of the annual cut from forest reserves.

What is more pertinent is the fact that all the naturally occurring tree species of Ghana are broad-leaved, i.e. short fibred. It is also significant to note that the forests of Ghana are heterogeneous and about 300 tree species of timber size have been listed in these forests. Of these, 14 species are considered to be of major economic importance, 12 are of lesser economic importance, 23 are of possible economic importance and the remaining 250 are " lesser known " species or species with no immediate economic prospects. These are generally grouped into economic classes I, II, III and IV respectively.

The heterogeneous nature of our forests makes them rather unattractive for large-scale commercial exploitation especially when it is expected to use a single species or a handful of species for a particular product, for example, Paper. Heterogeneity makes quality control difficult, if not impracticable, and the further afield one goes for the raw material the less economic becomes the venture. Transportation costs alone can thereby render a project uneconomic. Apart from this the great variety of physical properties such as density and colour make mixtures of species unsuitable for pulping when some species have a density of 0.8 and others have a density as low as 0.2.

Ideally, it is simpler to have a forest of uniform growth and fewer species. Unfortunately, Ghana does not have that type of forest nor are there any large-scale plantations for such a purpose. Few man-made forests in Ghana have been established as a result of taungya farming. Such farms usually do not exceed a few hundred hectares in any one place, and the farms are scattered all over the forest zone. It is estimated that the Forestry Department does not have more than 10000 hectares of taungya farms or plantations in Ghana. Species in these plantations have not been specifically planted for pulp and paper manufacture and include Teak, Gmelina, Cedrela, Triplochiton, Eucalyptus, (Utile and Terminalia species mainly, It has to be mentioned, however, that research conducted by the Forest Products Research Institute has proved beyond doubt that forest plantations in Ghana are capable of producing over 28.3 m<sup>3</sup> (1,000 cubic feet) of pulpwood per 0.4 ha. per annum. The potential to produce plantations of the required species therefore exists and advantage has to be taken of it.

### **Softwood plantations**

Because Ghana has only broad-leaved species in her forests it became necessary to introduce some tropical pines to provide long fibre for a future paper industry. Even though earlier attempts proved a failure in the F.P.R.I. has now succeeded in getting various softwood species established. With the inclusion of the right mycorrhiza in the soil media it is now possible to grow pines anywhere in Ghana, including the savannah woodland zone. Species such as *Pinus caribaea*, *Pinus occarpa* and *Cupressus* have been successfully introduced.

Currently, the Forestry Department with the support of the F.P.R.I. is establishing pine plantations at Daboasi in the Western Region. The procurement of seeds for this ambitious project has become rather expensive. But seeds need to be imported until such time that the F.P.R.I. is able to supply seeds from their own plots in Kumasi, Mpraeso and Benno in about five years' time.

## **Technical know-how**

It is obvious that Ghana at this stage does not have the expertise for the manufacture of pulp and paper. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research has trained a few pulp and paper scientists, but there is need to train more scientists and technologists. Ghana will therefore need the help of foreign experts until such time that sufficient numbers of scientists, technologists, engineers and chemists have been trained in the commercial production of pulp and paper. These experts have got to be trained to be able to handle the wood raw material that we have, viz., mixed tropical hardwoods first, and later, plantation-grown selected species such as Gmelina, Triplochiton and Terminalia.

## **Finance**

It has already been indicated that about \$250m will be needed for such a project. Financing of a project of this magnitude is best done at Governmental level and the appropriate Ministry of Government is already taking care of it. It should be possible also for individual Ghanaians to own shares in the project.

## **Feasibility reports**

A project of the above-mentioned magnitude has to be carefully studied as to its economic viability. Several feasibility reports have been prepared at the instance of the Ghana Government and each report, conducted by international experts, has confirmed that the project is viable notwithstanding certain technical problems which are considered surmountable. Since conditions seem to be constantly changing in the wake of the present oil crisis, it appears every report has to be updated and reviewed in the light of present-day costs before it is implemented. Such a revision has been considered and shall be undertaken soon. It is hoped that this exercise will be the last one as far as this project is concerned.

In conclusion it can be said that Ghana has suitable raw materials available for a pulp and paper industry. Conditions in Ghana favour rapid tree growth and, with the necessary research backing, it should be possible to grow coniferous species needed for blending with local short fibre species. The market is reasonably large for a medium-size paper plant and it is likely that neighbouring countries will take the surplus pulp and paper. If not, there should be a market overseas in view of the general shortage of paper in the world. Other inputs such as water and power are available in large quantities. In sum, it can be said that the stage is set for a viable pulp and paper industry in Ghana and it is up to the Government's Pulp and Paper Technical Committee to advise the Government to take the much

expected decision. Delays will be in no one's interest. Neighbouring countries such as Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Gabon and the Cameroun have either set up paper plants already or have reached an advanced stage in the establishment of pulp and paper mills. Since Ghana has a high consumption rate and also has the raw materials needed, it will be a pity if we have to import paper from a neighbouring country while the wood raw materials that we have remain unused. Modern technology has reached a stage where fibre length alone does not determine the suitability of species for paper manufacture. A bold decision is all that is needed now and this remains a challenge to the economists and technologists of Ghana while we continue to import paper and paper products from overseas.

# CHILDREN'S READING HABITS IN GHANA

*by*

**Juliana V. Sackey**

Two centuries ago, education was a privilege for a selected few. A century ago, there was an urge for universal education at least up to middle school level; and, of late, there are facilities to enable as many as possible to continue up to university level. Some children are now exposed to the mass communication media; and are subjected to the increasing tempo of general pressures. Their minds have become more capacious because of better upbringing; they take in things much faster because of the new cultural environment. They have become more restless, more eager, and more inquisitive than they used to be. Ghanaian children do not vary much from other children; they enjoy television programmes and laugh at humorous situations as they arise. They understand tragic and disappointing situations and react naturally. Their interests are as wide as subjects dealt with in books, and all they need is guidance for the right kind of books. Books that have elements that will exploit their capacity for being curious and push them on to what happens next; elements that will give the experience of pleasure that will go beyond the moment and will be repeated with each reading; in short, what can be termed suitable books. The development of a reading culture depends on the availability of a plentiful and varied supply of suitable literature from infancy into adolescence.

This judgment of whether a book is suitable depends very much on the ability of the reader to appreciate and apprehend the author. Virtually all books used in the country's education programme are written in English; the medium of instruction in schools is English as part of the "Accelerated plan in Education"<sup>1</sup> which aims at ensuring a general improvement in the use of the English language and a wider command over it. The child goes to school with the aim of learning to speak and write English well because such knowledge will enable him to earn a living and to share the culture of the developed world. The teacher also aims at, training the child to think and to build up new ideas to develop his whole personality so

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<sup>1</sup> GHANA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: Accelerated development plan for education. Accra, Government Printer, 1951.

as to enable him express his own feelings, thoughts and opinions.

In discussing children's reading habits, we realise that certain questions pose themselves: for example, Do Ghanaian children read? If not, could this be due to lack of proficiency in English, and could this be the factor militating against the acquisition of the reading habit?

It is very true to say that the main impediment to the acquisition of the reading habit among Ghanaian children has been the difficulties of understanding, thinking, and constructing in a foreign language.<sup>2</sup>

Ghana has no fewer than sixty local languages of which at least nine have been reduced to writing. However, none of these languages has emerged as a national language. Such being the case, it has become necessary to select English as the official language.

There is clearly a fundamental difference between the situations of a child learning to read in his mother-tongue and in a foreign language. In the case of his mother-tongue he already has a very considerable vocabulary relating to the environment which he has experienced. All he has to do is to relate what he knows already through speech to the visual patterns which constitute its written or printed forms. He knows how the language works, so words he does not know will often be deducible from the context, or they may be explained by an adult. Once he has begun to read, his vocabulary increases and he will therefore naturally enjoy what he reads.

The position of the Ghanaian child learning in a second language is very different. His stock of words is much smaller and he is very unfamiliar with many of the structural patterns and points of grammar, which will inevitably occur in any reading matter he comes across, not only at the stage when he begins to read, but throughout the course of learning to read. It follows that if the child is to read with understanding, what he reads must not only be within his general experience of life, but also within his linguistic scope.

He will not be able to understand the essence of the author's thoughts if the key-words are ones he has never met, or are being used in a sense with which he is not familiar, or he is not yet in a position to recognise the grammatical constructions which indicate the precise meaning of the sentence. However interesting, or amusing the matter of the text may be, the task of attempting to comprehend it will

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<sup>2</sup> OFORI-ATTA, Grace: "Notes on children's reading in Ghana". In "Library World". Vol. 64 No. 752, Feb. 1963 P. 219.

inevitably be so tedious that it will quickly be abandoned. This raises the question of what is needed at the various stages of the process of learning English in order to ensure that by the end of the school course the child will be well equipped to enjoy reading for pleasure.

Now, let us look into the popular method of teaching reading in schools. The teacher bases his teaching on the material in English course books, which contain very short chapters of reading matter followed by questions testing the understanding of the reader. This reading matter is not extensive, so supplementary readers have been added to story books to give the child exercise in extensive reading. The book is read slowly, aloud, by one person, chapter by chapter, and questions are answered at the end of each chapter. In this way interest in the stories is lost and the book is often abandoned.

This reading is done by a whole class of perhaps thirty-six children or more, the majority of whom lack the requisite reading readiness. When such circumstances force them to compete with children making normal progress, they develop feelings of frustration and avoidance reactions, and may give up the uneven struggle at the very beginning, which may make them fail to like reading. The amount of training thus acquired is not enough to make the child fluent or competent or urge him on.

The child does all his thinking in the mother-tongue and when he is constrained to translate this thinking into a foreign language (without adequate knowledge) the results are often mutilated, showing the inadequacy of the training that has been given. The difficulty of having to read in a second language is not the only deterrent to the acquisition of the reading habit.

Other normal factors, such as emotional handicaps on the part of the children who are normally dull in class are deterrents that interfere with children's reading, as is also directional confusion. For instance, when different unskilled teachers use different methods and approaches in teaching children to read, many children get confused and tend to dislike reading.

The various methods of teaching English, the skill and experience of the teacher, the methods of grouping the children, the goals of reading, and the quality of the available material to be used, determine the child's ability to read for enjoyment. 7

Another factor is broken school attendance. Naturally the child who is beginning to read in the foreign



language has to attend all the lessons from the beginning. If he misses several lessons his interest in the subject will be affected, especially if he happens to be a slow reader.

The following are further observations and studies made in the Central Children's Library in Accra from the record of issues of books borrowed. The most striking one is the direct relationship between the number of books borrowed from a particular field and the number of books available from that field.

For example, fiction constitutes a large group and more fiction books are borrowed than other types of books. The geography group comes second, general science group third and religion fourth. This is reflected in the same order in the number of issues.

There is evidence that books on every subject are used. There is a remarkable decrease in the number of issues during school holidays and on days preceding the holidays. Many children return their books for safe-keeping when they are going on holidays, knowing very well that they will not read during this period. There is evidence of a remarkable increase in the issues from the beginning of the school term.

The reservation records reveal subjects being discussed in schools. Certain books are borrowed more frequently as a result of stories told during story hour sessions. These reflect the responsiveness of the children.

To watch the child's choice of books and read interest more closely and to determine his need or guidance and also to check expected interest, fifty children were selected at a time from different types of schools, from all the forms and from both sexes. Their reading records were made for three months, over a period of 18 months. Evidence of their reading interest by these records reveals broad individual differences due to the different ages in one class and the social background. However, the following facts were noted:

1. Titles containing Adventure and Mystery are selected by both boys and girls.
2. Stories with African background are - popular for children of all ages.
3. Titles suggestive of girl preoccupations are shunned by boys, for example: The Basket of Flowers.
4. Boys mostly borrow books in cartoon strips, for example, The Adventure of Tintin by Herge.
5. Only boys read science fiction.
6. Very little reading of poetry and plays is done.

7. Both boys and girls read biography, if they have heard about the people before.

Their chief interests in imaginative literature are as follows:—

1. Fairy tales
2. Stories about other children
3. Animal stories
4. Mystery books
5. Adventure stories
6. Stories with African background
7. School stories
8. Science fiction
9. Short stories
10. Nursery rhymes and Picture books. Periodicals supplied are well used because they find them only in libraries. These are, Finding out, Young Elizabethan, Boys own. The most popular is Treasure because of the inclusion of legends and fairy tales.

Factual material is read extensively by both boys and girls, and there is evidence that they will read more if it were available. Very few follow titles in series.

At the end of the study a list of all the books on the individual records was made, and the most frequently used titles were thoroughly examined. I read most of them to discover the possible element of interest.

I discovered that both boys and girls read realistic stories and folk-tales, myths and other stories with universal theme. The most popular ones are the ones in which they can easily identify themselves, hence their enormous interest in books with African setting. However, we are increasingly aware of some disadvantages of the African books. They come out in paper' backs and in black and white. As a result, the children in the municipal primary and middle schools do not readily show interest in the few titles available, simply because they are readily attracted by the colourfully presented foreign books. They really begin to appreciate the locally produced books or books by Africans and with African setting in later years, especially the first year in the secondary school,

Initially, the books have to be introduced to them and they have to be really enticed through story hour sessions to read them. To assume that they will automatically read other titles after any one session is

wrong. Each book has to be specially promoted. Children from the private schools continue to read them without further promotions. Unfortunately, Ghanaian writers of Children's books have not started writing in series and it will take us some time to comment critically on their style of writing.

There is also evidence of the low reading standards of a number of children, so it has been difficult to encourage them to try new authors and different styles of books. This makes the demand on easy readers rather heavy and does not help to make any exercise mounted towards progression in reading any real success. The Central Children's Library has developed vacation reading schemes to encourage children to keep reading through the long holidays and also to provide an incentive to children to try a wider range of authors. Solid pages of texts make most children unwilling to try the book. The first page must take the reader straight into the story. It must introduce the characters, give some indication, of the type of story and must be easy to read, and have lots of conversation.

All children look for pace and action whether they are reading mystery, fantasy or familiar stories; description is a bore.

There is evidence of a major problem with comprehension. Many children can technically read a book without understanding what they have read. No meaning is conveyed, and although they enjoy listening to a story, they cannot get this enjoyment when reading to themselves. This is probably due to the fact that very often the language, theme and style are not appropriate to the Ghanaian context. We need more books and the right type of books to develop the reading culture.

# **THEMES FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN GHANA**

## **SUMMARY WITH OBSERVATIONS ON PAPERS READ AT THE LEGON SEMINAR ON THE WRITING AND PRODUCTION OF LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN, APRIL 1977**

**S. I. A. Kotei**

### **Introduction**

OF the present generation of educated Africans only a minimal percentage can make any pretensions to having a reading culture. All the same, there are people in their fifties, or younger, who can claim that they have a love for books and that it is an innate inheritance. This is quite possible. For most literates regular reading is not an activity which grew with them from infancy, but has been acquired compulsorily as a necessary chore. In the main, they read because it is an occupation necessity to do so. The middle-age group who have had transient experience in public service and have since retired continue to read in a mood of nostalgia and to equip themselves for a possible return, into political service for example,

The older men and women who were born in the late 19th century had no opportunity for higher education, but the bedrock of their primary school education was the ancient and contemporary classics. Besides, the method of teaching language in those days must have ensured a permanent craving for literature, and so the pupils have continued to read late into life. Indeed an important feature in the social history of Ghana was the formation of a number of Book Clubs and Literary Societies from 1876 into the 1930s<sup>1</sup> They flourished at a time when books were a very scarce commodity in the country, and this made co-operative ownership of books a socio-intellectual necessity.

In other respects the motive force behind the founding of Book Clubs closely resembled Jefferson's 1731 Philadelphia experiments in communal book ownership<sup>2</sup> but more so the English Book Club movement of the 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>1</sup> Alas, the original Gold Coast intelligentsia are no more with

us and teaching methods have of necessity changed with the school curriculum.

In more recent years a number of people have entered the 'bookish' professions like Teaching, the Ministry, Journalism, Printing and Publishing trades, not excluding Library and Information work. They must read occasionally because they have to, but hardly anyone of them can say that they chose these professions because they have a compulsive intellectual curiosity, or that their craving for the printed word was nurtured on books when they were much younger.

The simple reason is that fifty years ago the only books for children that could have created a permanent taste for reading were scarce, and too quickly read. Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tales, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and Bible stories for Children, were very exciting but could not by themselves have sustained interest in reading for very long.

The precocious ones went on to Shakespeare's stories for children and the like, but had to contend with alien registers and cultural assumptions which could not be identified with realistic norms in their particular society.

Therefore, those essential ingredients of self-identification and cultural relevance which help to prolong reading interest among children were absent.

The development of a reading culture thrives on the availability of a plentiful and varied supply of literature from infancy into adolescence. In content and context they have to be such books as would arrest and hold the interest of the reader so that he continues to ask for more. By this means, reading becomes a compulsive, almost involuntary habit.

To read from time to time because one has to, is not a culture function, if culture connotes a way of life that is learned, shared and is capable of being transmitted from generation to generation.

Since independence many African countries have decided that the formation of reading habit, like many other things that are a novelty, but are desirable for political, economic and integrated social development, must be introduced. Hence, both the new and old technology have been hurriedly pressed into service, without taking into account the psychological consequences of innovation.

Similarly, no less than 6 international Book Development Conferences have been held in West Africa alone in the past decade, with not a single one being concerned with the *innovative*, fundamental, role of children's literature.<sup>4</sup> Finally and somewhat apologetically the University of Ghana, Legon, hosted a national Children's Literature Seminar in April 1976, on writing and production aspects. The Seminar was attended by 140 writers, publishers, teachers, librarians, booksellers, illustrators and designers, including typographers.

In the developing world as a whole the Seminar was not a particularly unique event. There is a Book Development Centre for Asia, based in Sri Lanka which mounts occasional seminars and exhibitions of children's books. However, to the extent that the Legon Seminar brought together every expert that was involved in the writing and production of children's literature, and made them aware of each other's interdependence, the dialogues were revealing.

That reading could develop a child's cognitive skills and gradually make him more receptive to ideas that would enrich his adult life was a point that the Froebel and Pestalozzi-educated teachers would have liked to stress.

Another remark made by the Commissioner for Education, who opened the Seminar, to the effect that the attempt to evolve a literate culture out of the tradition could have a traumatic effect on the child's learning process unless his reading material was carefully controlled, was a note of caution to some children's librarians and publishers. Whether children read for profit or for pleasure, reading is an end in itself, and guided reading leads the child to an awareness of himself and his potentialities.

If a child is able to draw inferences from a simple folk-tale then perhaps in later years he will not find it so hard to isolate the issues which underlie more complex documents. We do not however know the mental arithmetic by which children draw inferences and build upon their experiences through reading. We may research our doubts but will not come out with any conclusive answers because of a number of imponderable factors.

Meanwhile we have to understand childhood itself and we shall probably discover that most children

have an innate ability to learn from reading, provided that their attitudes are of the right sort.

And such attitudes are best developed in secure and stimulating atmosphere both at home, at school and indeed at play. A child's reading material must relate to his natural activities and cultural environment, because it is important to accentuate his sense of belonging as well as his responsibilities to his own community. By careful selection he can then learn and benefit from the intellectual property of humanity at large.

### **Understanding the child and his society**

The first theme, as it were, to be adopted by the writer, is a perfect understanding of the child reader, his physical environment as well as his psychological and mental constitution. Christine Groothues's recent *Bibliography of child development in Africa*<sup>5</sup> tries to do this . She has brought together nearly 500 items of both published and unpublished research papers. The emphasis is on the pre-school child, therefore articles relating specifically to first and second cycle school children, adolescents and older children are more highly selective.

The compilation was the outcome of a meeting held at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, to make a wide variety of cognate data known to as many specialists as were concerned with child development in Ghana. Therefore, the scope of the bibliography was extended to include family studies that provide the vital framework into which more specific developmental studies can be better understood.

Altogether the Ghana bias accounts for nearly a quarter of the works listed. In addition, there is an Appendix of some 80 unpublished long essays submitted to the Institute of Education, University of Ghana, Legon, by diploma in education students, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for their examination.

The scope of Ghanaian contributions to the bibliography covers the entire range of child developmental studies, although a cursory examination of the titles of articles, papers and books indicates a predominance of social environmental studies. Indeed, any clear understanding of child behaviour, psychological and intellectual development, or more specifically their cognitive, perceptual and literate skills must derive as much from their family origins as from the wider milieu of the social and cultural

environment<sup>6</sup>.

To begin with, the writer should delineate mentally and literally the conditions that must be satisfied if reading as a social activity should flourish. He must not only know and understand the world of the child, he must also be able to communicate effectively to young readers such knowledge and understanding.

In actual performance, the child too must be literate enough to enjoy to the full emotional and educational benefits of reading. This can be taken for granted, but literacy here means the ability to correlate words with their cultural associations. The second more practical condition is easy access to suitable reading material. And thirdly such leisure periods as can be spared for reading must coincide with the availability of optimal physical facilities. These points will be elaborated presently.

Taken as a whole the process of socialisation of Ghanaian children today varies from the 'simplistic' traditional norms through the transitional phase of modernisation into the rarefied stratum of cultural sophistication. The majority of children belong to the first category, and live in pre-technical rural communities. They are progressively becoming more literate and generally better educated. But they still live on the outer fringes of a literate culture and therefore even where books are available the harsh realities of life do not permit the practice of reading as a developmental activity.

Very few, if any studies so far have addressed themselves to this problem, as to whether some incursions can be made through the social and economic barriers which prevent establishment of a reading habit among rural children. The right kind of literature can be made available but so long as environmental conditions are not conducive to change, this group must await drastic and more favourable conditions transcending the entire social structure.

Strictly speaking only about 25 per cent of children of school-going age are still unable to benefit from the long years of universal fee-free and compulsory policy of primary education adopted by successive governments since 1951. But in addition to this number there are several thousand semi-educated adolescents in danger of losing the little education they have had.



The low level of incentives to further education among many school leavers, the virtual lack of occupations which induce reading of any sort, and an absence of Libraries and Bookshops providing the necessary literature, have inflated the number of semi-literate rural folk. The actual position then is that those whose fundamental reading skills could have been sustained have lapsed into a coma for lack of reading materials. Let it be said<sup>7</sup> that the typical product of the government assisted school in any community is a functional illiterate.

### **Prerequisites to Reading Habit Formation**

It has been suggested that an important condition to the development of a book culture among young people is availability of the requisite literature in plentiful supply. Accordingly the Bureau of Ghana Languages, the Ghana Publishing Corporation and a few private and Mission publishing houses are now producing more children's books in both English and Ghanaian languages.

But their resources do not permit maximum output. It would appear from the statistics that publishing for children is a polite gesture only and not a determined effort to create a permanent base for progressive development of the book industry. Commercial publishers in particular have set aside the *fundamental* approach being recommended, obviously because of the cash nexus. It should be clear that neither the economic nor cultural future of publishing can be guaranteed until the juvenile readers of today (who are the book buyers of tomorrow) regard books as an essential domestic commodity.

The oversight is due to circumstances that are partially beyond the control of publishers. Most of them lack the requisite capital investment needed for a broadly-based, long-term programme that can cover children's books alongside textbooks and general literature. Consequently, production is geared to satisfying the immediate, more profitable needs of the public. Again, for lack of capital, and probably sales expertise as well, the channels of distribution of children's literature are not as extensive, or well organised, as those for adult literature. Ultimately therefore accessibility is a condition which leaves much room for improvement. More so as children are not sufficiently exposed to books at home. School libraries too are non-existent outside the urban areas.

But there is a more realistic economic problem which is connected with the third condition to reading, namely, leisure. It is true of most African countries that owing to the in occupational habits, a low cost of living index, plus a lower level of culture among parents, young children are made to bear some of

the burdens of the family income.

Among rural societies in particular, child labour is exploited not as an expression of adult callousness but entirely as a matter of economic necessity, to an extent that would make Charles Dickens wince in his grave. Reference is being made here to the sustained employment of children for various money-earning activities such as farming, hawking foodstuffs, baby-sitting, storekeeping, etc., depending on the particular occupation and the life style of the parents. In some families, children who would rather read than do house chores are regarded as lazy, in danger of losing their sight, or at worst they are on the verge of mental breakdown!

The second alarum can be taken seriously as most homes in villages do not have the benefit of suitable lighting for reading. Even in urban areas it was a common sight a few years ago that students would squat under street lights to read.

They must have had such powers of concentration as could subsume traffic distractions! But the commonest jibe inflicted on child bookworms who live in oral communities is one that might have been calculated to extinguish the reading habit thereafter. *Woresua akyekyere akyi?* (Are you discerning the signs and symbols on the shell of a tortoise?) Adult satire of this sort can do permanent harm to the incipient habit being formed.

One other factor which influences children's reading is observation of their elders' own reading habits. In Ghana children may lack both the example and the precept because most adults do not read at home. This is because there is a tendency among both rural and urban dwellers in Africa to prefer the communal life of mass participation to solitary activities like reading. Basil Barnstein<sup>8</sup> offers a partial explanation for this: Reluctance to break up harmony in any group exerts a negative influence on the search for knowledge (through reading for example). "Curiosity is limited and focused by the relatively low level of conceptualisation; a concern for the immediate prevents the development of a reflective experience". Therefore, reading takes place more in impersonalised societies—where abstract-categories and principles can—replace unique and specific experiences.

A book culture emerges in a society only after the communal structure has broken down sufficiently to release individualist forces in pursuit of individual aspirations—the search for truth and knowledge for

survival in a competitive world. Since tradition dies hard, we also have to consider certain prejudices that seem to be typical of oral societies. We note that even in ancient Greece<sup>9</sup> at a time when the intellectual and material conditions for mass book production were present the transmission of knowledge remained oral until well into the 5th century. Scepticism about the values of writing and reading was made respectable by, of all people, Socrates.

To him reading gave a specious sense of knowledge; mere words on paper could not convey profound truths; dialogues being a more appropriate medium of didactic communication. It is remarkable that Plato himself only wrote dialogues which were actually transcripts of oral discourse. These attitudes to the book have been noticed in most pre-literate societies. Thus, the lecture, recitation, conversation, debate and drama are much more preferred to the quiet contemplation of literature, in Ghana.

The following extract is one explanation offered by a Ghanaian sociologist.<sup>10</sup> "If reading is seen as a dominant cultural syndrome one can expect reward and appreciation, (but if it) is seen as a marginal cultural activity one might expect pity and sympathy." In the extreme form, Assimeng says that one could even expect punishment of one type or the other. As indicated anyone who shows some addiction to books faces ridicule, in certain communities. Another less involved reason why most adults do not read is lack of motivation, particularly achievement motivation. Since reading is a motivated activity for which some reward is expected there would be little point in reading unless one expects to achieve further rewards to compensate for the mental exertion entailed. For most people then reading should stop after the individual had obtained his degree or a lesser paper qualification that is sufficient to earn a living.

All said-and done most children do not see their parents reading and so --they too do not read; even if the facilities were made available.

### **The Folk-tale and Legend**

It has already been noted that in the creation of national literature, children's literature had been superseded by those intended for adults. This need never have been so since there is a a wealth of indigenous folk-lore easily adaptable to print. This could be done with advantage because a child's vision of reality is a compound of fact with fiction. He would much rather prefer a state of affairs predominated by fantasy, fun, and the bizarre; that is, a world in which the strange and the unusual mix with the unexpected but exciting adventure. The child's imagination transforms such happenings

whether imaginary or real into more realistic experiences. The humdrum day-to-day life can then be set aside.

Quiet eavesdropping on children's conversation, and current researches in child animism would confirm that a child would rather live in a world in which humans can communicate with lifeless objects (like toys) and by extension, human beings can commune with the superhuman. Apparently, they would rather hear the man in the moon speak, and see the abominable snowman in the flesh than do their homework. In the childlike imagination, natural and supernatural phenomena can claim a generic relationship with each other. These are the stuff of which Ghanaian folk-lore is made, and when translated in print would be the delight of children. Actually, this world of make-believe exemplifies those situations and emotions which appeal to children's imagination throughout the world

Every ethnic group in Ghana has its own heritage of folk-lore, and although the dramatis personae change according to the fauna and flora to be found in the locality, the moral injunctions of reward, immediate punishment, or inevitable retribution are constant themes. These form the majority. But there are other traditional tales about human behaviour although the characters take the guise of lower creatures, albeit performing roles that can be recognised in actual life situations.

Since the ultimate object of folk-tales is to ensure strict conformity with social norms, and other cherished values of the society, the morale of most tales is to censor deviant behaviour and reward solidarity. The ethnological explanation is that the simple society to which most Ghanaians still belong is one that is characterised by myths that give validity to the on-going pattern of social life; and in reality, life is seen in a cyclical fashion, and the supreme wish is to lead a conformist life so that at death one can join the faithful band of ancestors. This phenomenon has been mistakenly called ancestor worship. It is not, but rightly or wrongly, folk-tales do not differentiate the past from the present.

Natural disasters like famine also are depicted, their object being to advise the young to make provision for a rainy day. Similarly, there are stories in which the hero, fighting against insurmountable ordeals, emerges unscathed. Such stories are precepts to instil the spirit of endurance and achievement; not unlike the ordeals of the twelve labours of Hercules.

Children are by nature inquisitive and eager to know why things are as they are. Therefore, another

kind of re-told folk-lore will consist in stories that try to explain something, or which offer an acceptable context for a reality that is puzzling to the child. So, we should put together collections in the Kipling tradition.

The following examples of “*Why So*” stories are taken from one ethnic group in Ghana:

Why the Spider is bald

Why the Lizard keeps nodding

Why the Hen scratches the ground

Why the Vulture is frequently found at refuse dumps

Why the Crow is white around the breast and neck

Why the Black man has white soles and palms

And from another ethnic group the following How so stories:

How wisdom spread throughout the world how treachery came into the world

How death came to mankind

How the sea became salty.

*How the sky* came to be separated from the Earth

These may have mythical allusions, but as has been said literature for children has not got to be pedantic. Similar to these types and yet somewhat different, a collection could be made of indigenous folk-tales side by side with their parallels from the folk-tales of other countries. It should go down well with children as there are common motifs to folk-tales throughout the world—which after all goes to show that there is a common psyche among humanity of every race and clime.

There are folk-tales illustrating the cruelty of step-mothers towards their children as examples by the classic story of Cinderella, and many such others. One has not unfortunately found anything in our folk-lore resembling the American Davy Crockett.

## **Legends<sup>12</sup>**

Generally speaking, legends are stories about the doings of kings or chiefs and peoples in the days

before records were kept, but often these stories have been worked over or embroidered by popular imagination or the poetic fancy. In this country, I cannot think of any Ashanti King who has not left behind some exciting legend. If we single out Osei Tutu for purposes of illustration, the wealth of legendary material about him is quite remarkable, whether with regard to his early upbringing at the court of another monarch or his connection with the *Golden Stool*, a mystical symbol of Ashanti royalty.

Again, we may consider the legends of supernatural activities of priests: of the Ashanti Okomfo Tuda, of the Denkyira Kyenekye, or the Akwamu Okomfo Anokye and others. Recall the warlike or heroic exploits of ancestors, of Tweneboa Kodua, or Yaa Asantewa. In these you have legends of heroic sacrifices, of acts of selfless patriotism, of stirring wars, battles, victories, and defeats, involving both

In our own peoples with one another or with the Europeans. All these have the ingredients of a good children's story and are capable of appealing to children's imagination if presented to them in suitable literary form. Even the coming of our peoples offer such material. Think of the legendary origin of the Ashantis, of the Asebus among the Fantis, supposed to have come from the sea under a leader who was a giant, Asebu Amanfi.

Similarly, the coming of the Europeans to Ghana has left us many legends, along with the castles and forts they built. What an exciting tale, for example, could be woven out of the legend of the capture, by the Akwamu merchant-warrior Asamani of Christianborg Castle, now the seat of Government. The incident was one of diplomatic intrigue, conflict of interests, a bit of dilly-dallying until finally a subordinate chief outwits the big white Governor.

Much of the source material can therefore be found already recorded in history books, but the bulk of information still exists only in oral tradition. The writer who intends to make use of such material must therefore be prepared to undertake the arduous task of either combing the history books or of going round our villages and towns interviewing chiefs, elders and linguists for the relevant information.

In using legends as material for children's literature, we may, as in the case of folk-tales, adopt the comparatively easier approach of simply re-telling the legends in a language and form suitable for the readers. This has in fact been done by writers such as K. O. Kyeretwie in *Ashanti Heroes*, Anokye Wiredu's *Nii Ayi Bontey* and *Queen Amina*, and D. St. John Parson's in *Legends of Northern Ghana*.

The list may be added to. Much more demanding, however, is to use the legend for original creative purposes. While legends, unlike folk-tales, permit of manipulation, the exercise requires of the writer not only knowledge of the legends but also, what is even more important, a sense of historical perspective.

The writer must be able to project himself from the present into the legendary past in which he sets his story. It is therefore not surprising that not much children's literature of this kind has been produced. But although this appears difficult, perhaps it is not as difficult as it appears, for with us the past is really not very remote.

Most of our legends do not go back in time beyond four hundred years or so, and it can be assumed that life and manners in those days have not changed drastically from what they are today, especially in the rural areas where the events took place that are now legends of children's literature of this kind. I know of de Graft Hanson's *The Fetish Hide-Out*, which is based on the legends of the famous or notorious Fanti shrine of Nananompow. I happen to know that De Graft Hanson also has a manuscript with his publishers entitled *The Golden Oware Counters*, which exploits the legend that Ntim Gyakari of Denkyira was killed while playing oware with gold counters. There is also Kwarteng's, *My Sword is My Life*, and from foreign writers we have *the Speaking Drums of Ashanti*, by Martin Ballard, based on the disastrous expedition of Sir Charles McCarthy.

### **Drama for Creativity and Self-expression**

Following the trend of thought which seeks to exploit in writing, a child's mental and emotional Propensities, let us consider the possibilities of drama. Children will instinctively make time for play, even in the most appalling rural or slum conditions.

In its purest connotation, play is a gift that is programmed into child existence. It is the child's natural drive to explore his environment, and learn, by imitating his peers and elders. Instinctively, he prepares himself through play to surmount obstacles that may come his way in adult life.

Assuming then that drama provides a natural correlation between play and real life, which particular themes are more appropriate? First, drama is likely to appeal to children because it resembles their everyday activities. And yet is drama not the exact opposite of the folk-lore, the former being practical

and the latter acting on the imagination only? In another

**(Pictures in 4 pages before text continues)**

sense the two themes could constitute opposite sides of the same coin, because children must need dramatize their imagination. The child imagines that a piece of wood can be sensitized or even humanized and made to play a practical role in his world of make-believe.

At adult level any kind of imitation is consciously monitored, and limitations are clearly recognised. But at child level even when imitative-behaviour is known as such, total commitment and complete satisfaction can be obtained. This is an advantage which the playwright can exploit but only with perfect knowledge of the juvenile mentality and his verbal usages.

Because in the final analysis children are the creators of their own drama, and all that the playwright should do is choose the most appropriate words to organise the theme into a child's language registers.

Although strong, the temptation to write 'morality' plays which seek to induce children to conform with adult codes of etiquette, to inculcate moral values and conformity with social norms, can be avoided. It is possible that at the pre-adolescent level other media than the drama are more suitable for reinforcing societal values. As said, the folk-tale can be brought into service here, leaving drama for enjoyment only, while at the same time serving as a facility for self-expression. In other words, prose folk-tale could create the foundations upon which the society's grammar of values can be permanently understood leaving drama for *sheer joie du vivre*.

It must be emphasised that the playwright, whether he is preparing an adaptation of adult fiction or trying to capture make-believe must synchronize language with theme and *dramatis personae*. The language should assume the form of pictorial and auditory images. The words should be picturesque to assist in the development of concept formation. Every writer for children should be a conscious and deliberate artist, therefore abstractions would be less appropriate than concrete terms.

There is a tendency now, among Ghanaian writers, to pile up adjectives for decorative effect. Excessive use of this kind in children drama would slow down the action without particular gain in vividness.



Thus Ogden's *Basic English* suggests that it should be possible to communicate meaningfully, in play or speech, with a basic vocabulary of 20,000 English words of the General Basic English Dictionary. This should be much more preferred because the manipulation of different words would offer much more excitement, and many more images on which the fruitful imagination of the child can play.

It can be assumed that the writer of children's play has a highly developed sense of observation and can conceive of possibilities that are not so obvious. If Ghanaian children can write their own versions of nativity plays, in their own words, and sporting their own traditional costume, this is clearly an example of spontaneous self-expression. It is also a demonstration that the child is interested in this particular theme. And yet his dramatic experience is limited and his mastery over his own native diction is embryonic.

The adult writer therefore will have to adapt for children, adult plays having 'juvenile themes'. J. B. Danquah's *The Third Woman* which derives from the Akan folkloric version of the Creation, comes to mind. Ananse Kokuroko, the King of Heaven, orders his Angel of creation to produce new types of men and women. But alas, the first and second women were not different in any particular respect from the ordinary. The King of Heaven thereupon commands creation of a Third Woman, and the result is Oni the heroine. Oni in Akan means "here she is". And she is a stately, beautiful queen of peace. Her domicile on earth could be likened to that of the Jewish Christ whose mission was goodwill to all men.

If it is preferred that the hero and heroine should play juvenile roles, the opportunity for the playwright is almost without limit, because he can create several variations of the same theme: A new-born baby as the central dramatis persona: the mother as a symbol of love and procreation; the mystical star as a guiding principle. The three old and, wise men *actually worshipping* a new-born baby, with whom they can easily identify themselves, could inculcate the virtues of humility. The distance in time and space between Bethlehem and Accra, assuming it had been noticed, could vanish if the theme can be so manipulated.

Babies of mysterious, supernatural progeny, adoring mothers, parents living in humble surroundings, why the poor should not be despised because they have a potential for greatness—the entire morale of the nativity, in piece-meal fashion or treated as a whole—can be found in Ghanaian traditional lore. Therefore, the writer should have no difficulty finding source materials for which the children

themselves have demonstrated liking.

Other probable themes can be perceived in the more natural: father and mother, teacher and pupils, buyer and sellers in a market setting, etc., roles which children can dramatize for an hour or more, without the intervention of an adult stage manager. There is therefore the possibility of dramatizing that natural tendency among girls be vying together to tell tales out of school, or gossip about the day's events. Boys also play at manhood, in which hero-worshipping is highlighted. They could imitate a contemporary or historical personage or fictional characters like the three musketeers, even anthropomorphic dragons and centaurs. There would seem to be no limit to the playwright's thematic references.

A teacher at the National School of Languages at Ajumako in the Central Region carried out research into children's games for the Children's Drama Development Project being organised by the Institute of African Studies at Legon. His findings would seem to confirm that the above ideas are practicable. He writes as follows:

There could be a correlation between games and folk-tale...

Select games that can provide a suitable background and easily combine with the story to make its dramatization lively and educative<sup>13</sup>.

Ghanaian writers appear to be maintaining a low profile in this medium. As individuals they may not have fully grasped its potential; but more likely the royalties obtained from books in the Ghanaian languages have never been as high as those for books in English. This explains why the Government-sponsored Bureau of Ghana Languages and the Christian Mission publishing houses account for nearly all the Ghanaian language books published in Ghana.

Financial reward apart, a more fundamental constraint has been an educational system which continues to emphasise the English language as the more supreme medium of official communication as well as for personal intercourse. For higher level education and occupation in the more advanced professions leading to social acceptance, mastery of the English language is important. And this has had its repercussions in diverse ways.

And so, the traditional oral medium of expression having been relegated to a lower order of priorities

its literature also has been neglected. The multilingual phenomenon characteristic of all African countries also has made writing in Ghanaian languages uneconomic, because each language group is so small that publishing is not an economic proposition.

By 1961, however, movements in cultural revivalism had been harnessed to ideological conversion.

From an alien way of organising cultural experience an attempt was made by the First Republic to adopt a more authentic scheme of social reconstruction. This complex of objectives brought in its train the teaching and writing of Ga, Ewe, Akan, Nzema, Dagbani and three other languages as the principal media for broadcasting information and culture.

In the area of publishing, however, the Bureau of Ghana Languages, having for many years published newspapers and encouraged the senior citizens to produce prose style literature, continued to specialize in translations of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Hymnaries, plus an occasional novel, even attaining the level of modern classics like *Adote Shelen Kome* by the Reverend Enoch Klufio.

The flexibility of the language was amply demonstrated, its imagery was found to be equally rich; even the African pantheon was shown to be comparable in numerical as well as mystical substance with the Greek. Thus, Professor Ofori Appiah's<sup>14</sup> translation into Akan of Homer's *Iliad Book III*, paved a way into heroic prose poetry. But sadly, the potential sank into oblivion. Until Homer's universal delight should inspire another creative genius, not only to translate the classics but to reduce them to the level of the child, writers must exploit traditional themes.

For example, Efua Sutherland's poetic drama *Edufa* is no imitation of *Faust*, or the Greek tragicomedies. It is based on the traditional belief that some successful men pawn their souls or those of their loved ones to the devil to gain riches and influence. In lyrical vein the author dramatizes Ampoma, the beautiful and talented wife of Edufa who unknowingly pledges her soul to the devil in furtherance of her husband's ambitions.

Riddles, despite their penchant for *the double entendre* could introduce children to poetry when suitably presented. Simultaneously, they would help to sharpen the wits and train the memory. One could find a good selection among the various ethnic groups resembling Chinese and Japanese one metre poems.

Then also there are recitative lyrics which when combined with favourite games become a permanent literary heritage that can be passed on from child to child.

I went fishing            Ta hin ta

I caught nothing        Ta hin ta

O mother, mother      Ta hin ta

Try hunting             Ta hin ta

Try snaring             Ta hin ta

Or trapping             Ta hin ta

In defiance and abject frustration, the child finally exclaims a negative

***Ta hin ta hin ta hin ta***

Traditional customs and ceremonies have a rich repertoire of incantations: Libation, oaths, prayers for the new-born and the deceased, praise songs and recitations, wedding songs and many other verbal art forms. But because of their antiquity the language is somewhat archaic and the idiom, in many cases quite incomprehensible, the particular usage having become obsolete. Thus listeners who do not belong to the socio-linguistic area concerned are completely at sea. Of course a listener who is indigenous to the cult or clan that gave birth to a series of oral poetry can deduce meaning from most archaisms, but only because of frequent usage during festivals or customary rites.

Fortunately, every oral tradition can depict change in a modern frame of reference without affecting the original old values. Indeed, there are modern compositions of the older forms, which can be adapted or retold to juvenile audience! In the following extract taken from an anthology of funeral dirges<sup>15</sup> it can be seen that the sheer poetry of the piece, with hardly any morbid sentiments can be understood by the child reader without adaptation. The original was composed for drumming. Drum poetry tends to be stilted in style, because of the physical limitations of medium of expression. A translator's verbal dexterity could however produce pleasant oral and auditory effects. Here is an invocation of the dead by a distressed orphan:

Mother! You know our plight.,

You know that no one has your wisdom

Mother you have been away too long

What of your little ones left behind?  
Alas!  
Who could come and restore our breath?  
Unless my father Adom himself comes  
Alas, alas, alas!  
Quite often it is a struggle for us.

The above poem would not at all be out of place in a child's anthology of poetry. In the first place the average Ghanaian child is made to believe that the living are at one with their ancestors so there is nothing weird in invoking the dead; in the second place this piece could as well express homesickness for a parent who has gone on a long journey. More importantly—the- Akan version is full of such rhyme and rhythm as could be sung at play.

Kwesi Brew's, *The Dry Season*, composed originally in English, could equally have been rendered in the Fanti or Ewe language without losing the theme, and possibly -with enhanced meaning:

The year is withering: the wind  
Blows down the leaves;  
Men stand under eaves  
And overhear the secrets  
Of the cold dry wind  
Of the half-bare trees.  
And soon, soon the fires  
'The fires will begin to burn  
The hawk will flutter and turn  
On its wings and swoop for the mouse  
The dogs will run for the hare  
The hare for its little life.

Unlike most other humanist oral literature, the above poem does not carry any moral injunction or edicts for social control. It reminds one of Tennyson's works and other nature poems like *Wind in the willows!*

Most proverbs, riddles, aphorisms, and other forms of verbal art are designed to establish canons of

good behaviour between individuals, and to stress social conformity as good in itself. Bad behaviour is censored and good conduct is validated by maxims, for example. In short, the oral tradition is the verbalisation of the social norms and laws which govern inter-personal relations. The following prayer for the new-born baby among the Ga is an example:

Attention Mothers and Fathers

May all and sundry prosper

May we all come together when summoned

May we find water when we dig a well

And when we drink thereof may we feel satisfied

May this child who has come always look ahead

May he respect the world

Long life to his father and mother

And may he work to support us all

May members of his lineage forgive his faults

May he not steal neither-be--wicked

A discreet child waits for the wind blow before he talks

May he know that black means bad luck and white victory

He came with black hair may he depart with white

Mothers and Fathers are we not agreed on this?

## **Conclusion**

In this article an attempt has been made to present in three broad sections, the possibilities for the development of creative writing meant for Ghanaian children. The prose form has selected the folk-tale and legend only. But in this medium will be found adventure stories, historical novels and other themes.

Peggy Appiah's *Gift of Mmoatia*, in which live children are brought face to face with dwarfs marks a transition from the pure folk-tale to modern themes of travel, discovery and adventure. And Esther Mfodwo and Juliana Sackey raise the tempo of modernity with a breath-taking freshness that is admirable for style as well as treatment.

Efua Sutherland's *Playtime in Africa* should by now have encouraged other playwrights to exploit traditional games placed in a dramatic setting. However, only Cantey's *Mystery of a Cockcrow*,

published many years later, has followed suit. On the whole, the drama definitely occupies second place to the prose form. Neither in quantity nor quality has this medium reached attainable level. As poetry, hardly any works designed for children have so far been published.

In the long run it is the message, and not so much the medium that matters. The psychological nature of reading when combined with the child's innate preferences for reading matter, should determine every aspect of children's literature, from conception to creation.

If the ultimate aim of writing is reading with comprehension, then the writer has to take account of the mental age of the reader together with his cognitive skills for a start. Reading involves several kinds of responses and psychological processes; and whether literature is designed for adults or children, the perceptual, discriminatory, critical and problem-solving factors have to be integrated to make a wholesome piece of writing. In the context of imaginative literature, comprehension refers, not to the subject matter of a book but full appreciation of content in its social and cultural reference.

This is the reason why no attempt has been made in this general treatment of children's literature to follow the theoretical categorisation of age with reading interest. Assuming however that the writer could well find them useful let us note the theorists' observed preferences.

First, that children under five delight in rhymes as well as animal and nature stories. But by this age the average Ghanaian child has yet to acquire a reading skill, sufficient to enable him to combine rhyme with reason. That being so his parents should read to him, but most parents cannot read, and those who can have other preoccupation. When the time comes the above prescriptions should be written into here-and-now stories of everyday events, reflecting the youngster's own routines based on his enactive and iconic experiences.

By the late Primary School years, children are supposed to have risen to stories of action, adventure, realism mixed with mystery, humour, mischief, sports and achievement. Indeed books on these themes are available in our bookshops and libraries, but the context of reference is neither here nor there, except perhaps in their dreams.

Later, they develop a taste for reading books in series. One's own children would consume all of Enid Blyton's quaint stories in a few weeks, but is the language, theme and style appropriate in the Ghanaian context?

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# **THE NEED FOR UNIFORMITY IN THE WRITING OF GHANAIAN LANGUAGES**

by

**K. Opare**

GHANA is one nation made up of people of various ethnic groups. It is a fact that there are some differences in the way of life of every group, but it is equally true that there are many similarities between the lifestyle of one group and that of others and that these similarities are stronger than the differences. It is these similarities that have bound us together as one nation, one people.

To maintain this unity, therefore, we should always stress the things that bind us together rather than those that divide us; things that really make us one people. It is therefore incumbent upon every citizen to find such things as will help foster this national unity and suggest ways and means of putting them into practice. There is no doubt that a person who puts forward such good ideas will find supporters who will add their voices to his and help to make them materialize.

It is in this belief that I am putting forward the proposal for uniformity in the writing of Ghanaian languages.

In 1971 the Government came out with what may be referred to as a -new policy on the study of Ghanaian languages. However, this policy affected teaching and learning in the educational institutions only, or, to be more specific, the first cycle institutions. But now the time has come for the problems connected with the study and development of our languages to be viewed in the right perspective. We need a policy that covers every aspect of them both within and outside the educational institutions. The purpose of this article is to highlight certain aspects of the policy. And these are the alphabet and, to some extent, orthography.

## **A Ghanaian Alphabet**

It is estimated that there are over sixty languages and dialects in Ghana. Only a few out of this number have been reduced to writing. Initially, and for a long time, it was only Twi and Fante (now known together as Akan), Ewe and Ga that were written. But now there are no fewer than NINE 'officially recognized' written languages. These are Akan, Dagaare, Dagbani, Dangme, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Kasem and Nzema. These are the languages being studied at the School of Ghana Languages, Ajumako, and other educational institutions, and it is in these languages that the Bureau of Ghana Languages produces books. In addition to these nine however, there are a few more that have been reduced into writing in the North; and more are still being written.

Since each of these languages has got an alphabet of its own it can be said that there are more than nine alphabets in Ghana (see Appendix A for the nine "official" ones). But a close look at them shows that there is not much difference between them really. In fact, they have so much in common that they can be said to be very similar (see Appendices B and C). It will therefore be good to bring these alphabets together and construct one national alphabet out of them (see Appendices B (1) and C (1)). Then the writers of each language will select the letters they require to write their language from this "common pool".

I wish to add however that the work is not simply combining the existing alphabets. There should be a general language survey of Ghana. Then the sound systems of those languages that have not as yet been written should be studied and new symbols for sounds not as yet represented in any of the alphabets added to the existing letters. However, since such a project requires long-term planning I would suggest that in the meantime work should begin on the unification of the existing alphabets so that when the long-term project is completed whatever letters need be included are added.

I can see at least three main advantages in having a Ghanaian alphabet: educational, economic and political-

1. *Educational:* Certain sounds that are the same or almost the same in speech in some languages but which are not represented differently in writing will be written the same way. For example, each of the

following letters or groups of letters will be written the same way in every language:

"n", "ŋ", "ng" which stand for (ŋ)	
"j", "gy" (dz)	" (dʒ)
"ch", "ky", "ts"	" (tʃ)
"dw", "jw"	" (dʒw)
"hy", "sh"	" (ʃ)
"hw", "shw"	" (ʃw)
"tw", "tsw"	" (tʃw)

so that we shall not have the same word spelt

Kwadwo, Kwadjo, Kwajo,

Kwadzo

Agyei, Adjei, Ajei, Adzei

ngma, Uma, nma

tswa, twa, etc.

Every learner (at a certain stage of his learning) will then be required to know all the letters of the alphabet, and this will make the learning of other Ghanaian languages easier for him.

2. *Economic*: When typewriters are being ordered, instead of ordering a particular type for each language because of the differences in the alphabets, one type will be ordered for every language. This will reduce the cost of production and cut down the price of the machines considerably.

3. *Political*: One national alphabet will help us Ghanaians to think of ourselves as one people. As matters stand now the different alphabets stress the differences rather than the similarities in our languages and therefore the various ethnic groups, thus encouraging disunity; and it is for this reason that some people get sentimental in matters affecting their languages or even dialects.

Some people might argue that there is no need for a national alphabet since there is a move to construct

a West African Alphabet. The idea of a West African alphabet is a laudable one. I would even go further to suggest an African Alphabet. But how soon will this idea materialize? Certainly not in the foreseeable future. In the meantime, we can have our Ghanaian alphabet, so that until this idea of a West African or African alphabet becomes a reality, we can have something to work with.

Not only that; at international conferences it is advantageous for delegates from a particular country to speak with a united voice. We should therefore remove any differences that exist among us and agree on certain issues so that we can speak with a united voice when the need arises. I therefore deem it my bounden duty to propose the construction of one national alphabet for Ghana, and call upon all literate Ghanaians, especially the educators, to help achieve this objective.

## **A Ghanaian Orthography**

One alphabet for Ghana does not necessarily mean a common orthography in all respects for all the Ghanaian languages; however, while talking of a unified alphabet we should also take a look at the various orthographies. It may not be easy to have a common orthography owing to the differences that exist in the structures of the various languages; but certainly, a way of bridging the gaps can be found.

## **Spelling**

One thing that needs immediate attention is spelling. The writing of certain names, for instance, should be standardized. I have already cited some examples; and here are a few more that need standardizing:

Amma	Laate
Yaw	Yao
Kpandu	Kpando
Kumasi	Kumase
Sogakope	Sogakɔfe

There is no reason why these words and others cannot be written the same way. A name should be written as the indigenous people call it but it may be pronounced differently by other people.

So that we may write:

apaya  
Araba  
Asante  
Xɔxɔe

but differently pronounce them

apaka

Alaba

Ashanti

Hɔhɔe.

Even here there is no reason why such words cannot be pronounced correctly. With a little effort every Ghanaian can pronounce the words of his neighbour's language well.

Different ways of spelling the same name for instance serve no useful purpose. I remember when I once used one form of spelling rather than the other to address a letter to a friend he wrote back to say that he was not a member of a particular ethnic group for his name to be spelt that way. There is no doubt that he was offended; and this is one of the evils that different ways of writing the same words can do in a country. As matters stand now there is much room left for people to operate in that we have all sorts of spelling of the same word, especially names, and more so personal names, e.g.

Asante	Asantey		
ɔkyere	Okyere	Otchere	
Ata	Atta	Attah	
Kofi	Cofie	Coufie	Kuoffie
Botwe	Botchey	Botchway	
Amegashi	Amegashie	Amegasi	
Oben	Obeng	Aubin	Aubyn
Kwame- krom	Kwame- krome	Kwarne- kufom	

And this has led to variants of the same name either in spelling or pronunciation, or both.

Kwadwo	Kwadjo	Kwajo
Kodwo	Kojo	Kwodwo
Kwadzo	Kodzo	Kwadzo
Cudjo	Cudjoe	Cujo

and some even write Kwado because they are not sure of the correct spelling.

Here I want to stress the need to write our personal names and those of our regions, districts, towns, etc. correctly—names that are indigenous to the particular people to whom they refer, e.g.

Atua	not	Attuah
Bokɔ	not	Borcchor
Koote	not	Quartey'
Ɔpɔn	not	Oppong
Akyern	not	Akim.
Akuapem	not	Akwapim or Akuapim
Asante	not	Ashanti
Kyebi	not	Kibi (Allowance may be made for slight variations in spelling of personal names, e.g. Kwadwo, Kodwo, Kwadzo because of differences in dialects, etc.).

One wonders why after many years of independence we still cling to the wrong colonial names and practices. For instance, there is no reason why we should write double consonants, e.g.

Ɔppɔn instead of Ɔpɔn

Attua instead of Atua

Annɔ instead of Anɔ

And the `h' and 'y' at the end of words, and the 'r' in the middle (personal names in particular) are superfluous, e.g.

Annoh          Amartey

Attuah          Lartey

Attah          Sarpong

Nanyoh

The variation in spelling may be due to two causes: either that is how a foreigner (European) first wrote it or those who bear such names want to appear sophisticated.

Here the problem of the representation of certain sounds correctly in writing comes to mind. Many of the typewriters in this country do not have some of the letters in our alphabets such as ε ɔ d f γ η υ and because of this we tend to substitute such letters as e o d f/p h n v/w. This fact partly explains the differences in the spelling of some words. But again, this need not pose a problem really. We can have machines with Ghanaian language letters on them made for us. In fact, we must have such machines so that we can write

Baafoɔ not Bafuour or Bafour or Bafoo

Boohene not Boohene

Bomso not Bomso

Sebe not Sebe

Aseseeso not Aseseeso

### **Representation of Sounds**

And how accurately are the sounds in our languages to be represented in writing? Should it be one to one correspondence? i.e. should there be a symbol or letter for every sound, bearing in mind such things as vowel harmony and assimilation? Should we write

ɔbɛdidi or obedidi

ahendi or ahindi or

ahenni or ahinni

mbofra or mmofra

nda or nna?

### **Word Division**

Another area is word division. Let us take the writing of the pronoun and verb for example. There are now two schools of thought: one, that the two should be written together; and the other, that they should be separated. In the interest of uniformity and national unity, and in order to make the learning of other Ghanaian languages easier for a student, it is important that we find one way of writing this and other words so that a person who can speak another Ghanaian language, or a person who only understands it, or a person who wants to study it can write it, at least fairly correctly.

And, of course, whichever way we choose should be our own without reference to any foreign language.

For example, we need not write

Ɔre ko

E e ya

E le dzodzom

Ɔ kyeri na

simply because in English it is

He is going

for our languages and English, or, for that matter any foreign language, have got different structures.

Nor should we write

Ɔreko

Eeya

Eledzodzom

Ɔkverina

simply because this is how the foreigners taught us to write it and we have been doing so for over a hundred years. We should be prepared for a change, for even such a language as English which has had a long period of writing is still undergoing changes. The modern trend is to make writing less difficult than it has hitherto been.

We are very grateful to the foreigners who constructed our alphabets and orthographies for us. But the time has come for us to re-examine what they have done and find ways of improving upon it. In certain respects what they have bequeathed us tends to divide us, that is, one language group from the other. And even within the language group there are disagreements; some people want a revision of the existing orthography of their language in the light of changes that have taken place since the first one was constructed; but others would not have it. As a result, when committees are set up to examine existing orthographies it takes them a long time to come out with their reports; and when they do, there is disagreement over, even opposition to, their recommendations.

At present some language groups are revising their orthographies. The Ga have finished working on theirs; and the committee set up to have a look at the Akan orthography has almost completed its work; and at the moment a committee is revising some other orthographies. All this is a healthy sign of the interest that Ghanaians now take in their languages. However, I would suggest that these revisions should not be made in isolation. And this is where the National Consultative Council for Ghanaian Languages comes in. Since this Council is a truly representative body, the main objective of which is to coordinate the efforts of the various bodies, institutions, agencies and individuals engaged in the teaching of the Ghanaian languages and the provision of literature in them to promote their teaching and learning, and since it is this body that the Government looks up to in matters concerning the development of Ghanaian languages, it may be worth its while to examine without delay all the existing alphabets and orthographies with a view of carrying out the much-needed reforms that have been pointed out in this paper.



There are of course many other things to consider as well. One such thing which needs immediate attention is the question of Translation. Should we translate or transliterate, adopt or adapt?

Then also the Government Policy on the teaching and learning of Ghanaian languages should be looked into. How far has it been implemented? Is it far-reaching? etc. A *Language Survey* of Ghana needs to be undertaken also since it will help determine what letters to add to the existing ones, what languages to teach, etc. But the question of a National alphabet as well as orthography will be enough for the moment.

## APPENDIX A

### The' Official ' Ghanaian Language Alphabets

Language	Single Letters	Multiple Letters
1. AKAN	a b d e ε f g h i k l m n o o p r s t u v w y z	dw dz gy hw hy kw ky nw ny ng tw ts
2. DAGAARE	a b d e ε f g h i k l m n o o p r s t u w y z	gb kp ky ngm ny mh
3. DAGBANI	a b d e ε f g h i j k l m n η o o p r s t u v w y z	gb ch kp ny ηw sh
4.. DANGME	a b d e ε f g h i j k l m n o o p r s t u v u w y z	ng ngm kp gb ny ts
5. EVE	a b d d e ε f f g y h x i k l m n η o o p r s t u v u w y z	gb dz ny kp ts kw dzy tsy
6. GA	a b d e ε f g h I j k l m n η o o p r s t u v w y z	gb gw hw jw kp kw ny ηm ηw sh ts shw tsw
7. GONJA	a b d e ε f g h i j k l m n η o o p r s t u v w y z	ch gb kp kw ny ηm sh
8. KASEM	a b d e ε f g h i j k l m n η o o p r s t u v w y z	ch gw kw ny ηw pw
9. NZEMA	a b d e ε f g h i k l m n o o p r s t u v w y z	dw ky hy nr nw kp tw ny hw gb gy

## APPENDIX B

- (1) All the Alphabets combined (Unified Alphabet)
- (2) A Comparison of the Alphabets

Language	a	b	d	d	e	ε	f	f	g	γ	h	x	i	j	k	l	m	n	η	o	o	p	r	s	t	u	v	u	w	y	z	z	32	
1. AKAN ...					-																													24
2. DAGAARE ..																																		24

3. DAGBANI ..	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28
4. DANGME ..	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
5. EUE .. ..									30
6. GA .. ..	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
7. GONJA .. ..	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
8. KASEM .. ..	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
9. NZEMA .. ..	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24

Appendix B (1) Note: A dash (—) shows that a language has not got the particular letter in the alphabet. The blank spaces indicate that the particular letters are common to the languages concerned.

## APPENDIX C

### (1) All the Multiple Letters Combined

### (2) Distribution of the Multiple Letters

(1) Language	ch dw dz gb gw gy hw hy jw kp kw ky mh ng nr nw ny ɲm ɲw pw sh ts tw dzy ngm shw tsw tsy	28
(2) 1. AKAN ..	- dw dz - - gy hw hy - - kw ky - ng - nw ny - - - - ts tw - - - - -	12
2. DAGAARE	- - - gb - - - - - kp - ky mh - - - ny - - - - - - ngm - - - -	6
3. DAGBANI	ch - - gb - - - - - kp - - - - - ny ɲm - - sh - - - - -	6
4. DANGME	- - - gb - - - - - kp - - - ng - - ny - - - - ts - - - - -	6
5. EUE ..	- - dz gb - - - - - kp kw - - - - - ny - - - - ts - dzy - - - - tsy	8
6. GA ..	- - - gb - - hw - jw kp kw - - - - - ny ɲm ɲw - sh ts - - - shw tsw -	13
7. GONJA ..	ch - - gb - - - - - kp kw - - - - - ny ɲm - - sh - - - - -	7
8. KASEM	ch - - - gw - - - - - kw - - - - - ny - ɲw pw - - - - -	6
9. NZEMA ..	- dw - gb - gy hw - - - kp - ky - - nr nw ny - - - - - tw - - - - -	11

Note: (A) A dash (—) shows that a language does not use the particular multiple letters.

1            2            3            4            5            6

(B) ch-ky-ts    dw-jw    hw-shw    hy-sh    rim-ngm    tw-tsw

Groups of multiple letters representing the same sound

(C) i. gy—j            ii. ng-n

Multiple letters representing sounds which are represented with single letters in other languages.

## APPENDIX D

(a) We can have one common alphabet comprising 32 single letters (more or less). We can have 22 multiple letters (more or less) instead of the present 29 if we select only one out of each group in X.

(X) 1. ch ky ts,(Y) (i) gy j

2. dw jw (dz) (ii) ng η

3. hw shw

4. hy sh

5. ηm ngm

6. tw tsw

Supposing " gy " and " ng " are replaced with single letters there will be a further reduction, in the number of multiple letters and an increase in that of the single letters. On the other hand if " j " and " η " are replaced with multiple letters there will be a reduction in the number of single letters and an increase in that of the multiple ones.

# A SHORT HISTORY OF PRINTING IN GHANA

by

J. E. K. Yankey

## **Ghana Publishing Corporation**

We learn that printing with separate types in the Gold Coast started from the second half of the 19th century. Prior to this period, there had been in circulation daily newspapers in Accra and Cape Coast, but all had been handwritten. Unfortunately, the actual date when a change from handwritten newspapers to printed ones occurred cannot be precisely determined now. However, there is evidence that in 1857 and 1858, a production of a regular newspaper called Accra Herald was started in Accra but was hand-written as well. The title was changed in 1859 to West African *Herald*. Records available further indicate that one Charles Bannerman, the sole owner and editor of this paper, wrote to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London to report that he had started a "small paper" and as there were inadequate printing facilities in the country, he was compelled to learn the Art of Printing all by himself so that he could impart the knowledge acquired to others in his business to enable his paper to come out daily.

The birth of the West African Herald was followed later by two other printed newspapers, namely: The Christian Messenger and Examiner and Christian Reporter, and in 1874 James Hutton Brew of Dunkwa-on-Offin established a press to print a bi-monthly paper called The Gold Coast Times.

Information gathered so far appears to suggest that the earliest known printing with single types must have begun in the then Gold Coast in 1859. Apparently, printing that was done up to 1874 was characterised by the production of newspapers and periodicals only. But, unfortunately, as specimen cannot be found, it is hard to comment on quality of printing and also determine what type of machines and equipment were used.

Commercial printing started about 1874, the same year James Brew established his paper, The Gold Coast Times. The Governor of the Gold Coast in 1857 had signed an Order at Cape Coast Castle for a printing machine from the United Kingdom. The machine on arrival was installed in Cape Coast, but in 1875 was moved to Accra and installed at the Christiansborg Castle. This small press had a staff of

seven and a Nigerian Head Printer. It formed part of the Secretariat and was administered by the Colonial Secretary.

As business continued to expand in 1886, it became necessary to move the entire press from the Castle to a small building within the present Victoriaborg Press of the Printing Division of the Ghana Publishing Corporation. In 1902, it was renamed the Government Printing Department. The First Government Printer was therefore appointed and charged with the responsibility of running the Press. Among jobs initially undertaken were printing of stationery items and general forms for Government Departments. In the same year, the Gold Coast Railways set up their own press in Sekondi, in the Western Region of Ghana, to produce Railway Tickets and meet other printing requirements.

The years 1907 to 1928 saw remarkable development in printing in the Government Printing Office. New printing machines and equipment were acquired. They were: Monotype Caster, Monotype Keyboard, " Linotype Machines, 5-1/2 H.P. Tangyes Oil Engines, two Double Crown "Brehmer" Cylinder machines, Demy "Brehmer" Cylinder machines, Foolscap Folio " Faloon" Platen machine, Crown Folio "Chandler and Price" Platen machine, 32-inch Guillotine, 34-inch Double Striker Ruling machine, Three Folio Folding machine, Gold Blocking Press, Wire Stitching machine, Rotary Perforating machine, Paging machine, Stereo-typing machine, Circular Saw and a Card and Millboard Cutting Machine.

In 1932, High Speed printing machines and more monotype machines were added to existing machines to cater for the increasing demands of Government Departments. With increased productive capacity, the press was thus capable of undertaking the printing of forms, books, estimates, Blue Book, annual and other reports, ordinances, Legislative Council minutes and the Gazette.

The 1940s marked the beginning of the establishment of private commercial printing houses in Accra and the provincial capitals. Presses that sprang up during the period were:

- (i) Accra -- Independent Press, City Press, Presbyterian Press/Scottish Press, Faith Press, Lona Press, Efic Press, Ouseo Press, Statesman's Press, Nyaniba Press, and Roman Catholic Press.
- (ii) Sekondi-Takoradi — Central Printing Press, Hope Press, Bechwe Press and Quick Service Press.
- (iii) Cape Coast —Mfantsiman Press.
- (iv) Kumasi—Abura Press.
- (v) Tamale—The Dagomba Native Administration Press, which was later absorbed by the Government

Printing Department.

In 1952, Assembly Press, the third Government Printing, Press, was established purposely to undertake the printing of the Hansard, Legislative Instruments, Departmental Reports, Gazettes and Presidential Speeches. By the close of the decade. the Government Printing Department had gained considerable reputation for quality printing, reliability and sufficient experience in Security Printing.

Increasing demand in the early '60s for printed materials of all kinds by training colleges, secondary schools, the universities and the general public coupled with the Government's decision to supply free textbooks to all schools in the country, necessitated the immediate establishment of a modern printing press at Tema capable of providing services which the existing presses, both Government and private, were unable to provide.

In 1960, a contract to build and equip the Tema Press was signed between the Ghana Government and Messrs. Polygraph Export of Berlin, an East German firm. As the Press was primarily intended to supply printed materials to educational institutions and the general public, and book printing being a specialised business requiring careful planning, up-to-date machinery and equipment and craftsmen of high ability, the Government ordered very fast and highly efficient machines from the German Democratic Republic, Western Germany and Great Britain. Furthermore, a number of technical personnel were selected from the Government Printing Department and sent on attachment courses in West Germany and the German Democratic Republic. The scheme was aimed at equipping them with the necessary skills that would enable them to man the new machines that were to be acquired for the proposed press.

The actual installation of the machines started in 1963, and in 1964 the press was ready to be commissioned. Among the jobs it could immediately undertake during the first year of full production were illustrated papers in colour, technical journals, scientific literature, magazines, textbooks, stationery and exercise books and newspapers.

On 1st March, 1965, the Ghana Publishing Corporation was established by Legislative Instrument No. 413, thus making the Government Printing Department comprising five presses (Accra, Takoradi, Tamale, Tema and Victoriaborg Presses) a division of the new Corporation.

Towards the end of the decade, a new development started. Men of limited resources who could obtain outside capital entered the printing trade. Consequently, many private printing presses were set up in all the regions of the country, about 80 per cent of which were established in Accra alone.

**Address by the Commissioner for Education and Culture, Mr. E. Owusu  
Fordwuh, to honour Ghanaian Authors of the Pre-Independence Period: at  
a Banquet held at the Continental Hotel on Friday, 11th November 1977**

DISTINGUISHED GUEST, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

We are gathered here tonight to accord twenty authors of our dear country the singular honour of having distinguished themselves in literary works, and in some cases, pioneering literary efforts of the pre-Independence period. Nine of these authors are being honoured posthumously. This is the first in the country's recent history that a conscious effort has been made to give national recognition to distinguished authors—dead and alive. It gives me great pleasure to be here with you tonight to present awards to the authors present here and share their joy.

Samuel Johnson has said: 'The chief glory of a country rises from its authors'. It is therefore true to say that authors are national assets. But it is also true to say that most authors have had very little monetary rewards from their efforts. For several years, and in most countries, authorship has been a poorly paid profession. Very few authors, even in advanced and prosperous countries with a high rate of literacy, are able to support themselves solely on the earnings of their writing. Usually, we find that an overwhelming majority of authors are people in other lines of work for whom writing is incidental.

If, therefore, literary activity is to contribute to the creation of a national identity and culture, then there is an urgent need to identify, nurture and reward authorship. I am particularly pleased that the Ghana Book Development Council has instituted the Ghana Book Award to cater for this need. It is my hope that the awards will become established as a major act of recognition of, and reward for, literary talent in Ghana.

Since authors alone cannot carry out the enormous task of book development, it is gratifying to learn that the Council will as from next year extend its awards to deserving illustrators, publishers, printers, booksellers and librarians.

The sole criterion for the selection of recipients of awards in literature is QUALITY, and this will apply at all times. The criteria for the selection of recipients in the other Book Sectors will be determined by



a Book Week Committee appointed by the Council. The Council is not bound to make awards in all sectors in any particular year.

It is a fact that authors are the initiators of literary works. But such works will never see the light of day if the authors do not have honest publishers to publish them, efficient printers to print them and hardworking booksellers and librarians to get the finished works to the ultimate consumer—that is the reader.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the authors we are about to honour tonight fall all into two groups: those who have departed this life and those who are alive and are here with us tonight. Our distinguished dead authors made noteworthy and, in some cases, unique contribution to the development of Ghanaian languages and literature generally. Some of them made prodigious contributions to world-wide scholarship and letters. These authors are Kobina Sekyi, R. E. Obeng, Dr. R. E. G. Amartoe, Dr. A. W. Amo, Dr. J. B. Danquah, John Mensah Sarbah, D. A. Pupilampu, Rev. G. R. Acquaaah and Dr. C. A. Akrofi.

A citation for each of these authors will be read to you presently. To honour their memory, the Ghana Book Development Council will have their names and citations engraved on plaques. The plaques will then be mounted at the Central Library in Accra for posterity.

If some of us here did not have the good fortune of meeting the dead authors in their lifetime, we are indeed privileged to see our distinguished living authors in person tonight and to hear what has made their contribution to Ghanaian languages and other literature noteworthy. The authors are Professor J. H. Kwabena Nketia, H. D. Yeng, J. S. Kaleem, S. J. Obianim, Rev. H. K. B. Setsoafia, J. A. Annobil, Rev. E. J. K. Klufio, S. S. Fuseini, S. P. Wedjong, Bishop J. A. Essuah and A. A. Opoku.

Each of the recipients will be given a cash prize of ₵500 and a citation. At this point it is proper to mention that the Board of the Authorship Development Fund, set up by the Government to encourage authorship in Ghana, contributed ₵3,500 towards the cash awards to the recipients.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I now want you to join me to congratulate our distinguished authors on their meritorious contribution to the development of Ghanaian literature. Writing to most of you has been incidental. You have spent many solitary hours, days, weeks, months

and, in some cases, years to produce your work for the enrichment of your country's literature and culture. Some of you became so absorbed in your work that you may, at one time or other, have neglected your marital duties. I would like to assume that there has been no threat of divorce from the wives of our distinguished authors on this score. If my assumption is right, then I congratulate them, too, on their forbearance. It is not for nothing that some of your husbands' works have been dedicated to some of you. That is an honour and a recognition of your patience and probably your encouragement. Your husbands have not finished serving Ghana yet with their literary talent. So, we expect you to bear with them a little longer when they appear to love the solitary confinement of their studies more than you. They may also spend several days out of the marital home to carry out research for their manuscripts. Please give them every encouragement and let us get the best out of them.

Now, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, what do we say to our young student guests? We congratulate you on winning the essay competition at the University level. You will be presented with book prizes and I hope the books will encourage you to greater achievements.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I now have great pleasure in presenting to you the 1977 Ghana Book Award recipients in Literature.

Thank you.

# A REPORT ON THE 1ST NATIONAL BOOK WEEK

by

**A.P.K Adzaho**

## **Ghana Book Development Council**

The most significant achievement of the Ghana Book Development council since its inauguration was the organization of the first ever national book week which was held from 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1977. Activities for the Week whose team was “Help Develop Books” included a book exhibition, a colloquium, an open forum, poetry recital, an essay competition and the award of prizes to selected Ghanaian writers of the pre-independence period.

The Book Week was launched on GBC-TV by the commissioner for Education and Culture, Mr E. Owusu Fordwuh, on the 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1977. In his launching speech, the commissioner said; among other things: “Ghana has a reached a stage in her development where she needs an institution for the promotion of books, the difficulties which at present plague the education practice, the creative effort and our cultural re-awakening may persist for a long time.” The National Book Week, he continued, had been set aside to bring home to the public the essence and importance of books in our daily lives.

## **Book Week Committee Members**

Mr. A.G. T. Ofori	..	Chairman
Mr. Atukwei Okai	..	Member
Nana Kwaku Mensah	..	Member
Mr. E. A. Odai-Mensah	..	Member
Mrs. Euphemia Asmah	..	Member
Mr. N.K Adzakey	..	Member
Mr A. P.K. Adzaho	..	Secretary

## **Book Exhibition**

A Book exhibition, which highlighted the activities marking the Book Week, was declared open by the

Senior Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Mr. S.E. Arthur, on behalf of the commissioner on 7<sup>th</sup> November.

## **Venue**

Accra Community Centre

## **Participants**

Ghana Publishing Corporation

Afram Publications (Ghana) Ltd.

Sedco Publishing Ltd.

Ghana Universities Press

Bureau of Ghana Languages

Curriculum Research and Development Division (Ghana Education Service)

Oxford University Press

Cambridge University Press

Macmillan Education

Minerval Books and Stationery Supplies

Ghana Bible Society

University of Ghana Bookshop

Information Services Department

The British Council

The Soviet Cultural Centre

The Indian High Commission

The Australian High Commission.

## **Sales**

These were carried out in the forecourt of the Community Centre by participants who had books for sale. About C12,000 worth of books were sold. However, sales could have been much better if participants had been able to order more books for sale during the exhibition.

## **Attendance**

Attendance at both the book exhibition and the other evening programmes was not as one would have wished. Interviews with a cross-section of members of the public brought to light the cause of the unsatisfactory attendance:

- (a) the non-availability of books for the public to buy, in the case of the book exhibition;
- (b) inadequate publicity.

The Secretariat of the Ghana Book Development Council has taken note of these comments and is taking measures to improve upon future exhibitions.

## **Panelists**

Notwithstanding the unsatisfactory attendance nearly all the panelists and poets invited to feature in the various evening programmes honoured the invitation. The contribution of these panelists—made up of writers, critics, librarians and publishers—brought into sharp focus the current book situation in Ghana. It was educative.

## **Essay Competition**

An essay competition on the topic "Books in my Life" was organised at three levels—secondary, sixth form and university—in connection with the Book Week. Prize winners at the University level were:

- 1<sup>st</sup>.....Robert Yebo (University of Ghana, Legon)
- 2<sup>nd</sup>.....S. H. Mills (University of Ghana, Legon)
- 3<sup>rd</sup>.....Theodore Ocansey (University of Cape Coast).

The competition at the secondary and sixth form levels was cancelled in view of the fact that entries received were not representative enough since some regions did not submit any entries because of the short notice given.

## **Ghana Book Award**

For the first time in the history of the country, the Ghana Book Award was instituted by the Ghana Book Development Council. The aim of this award is to recognise and reward the author's contribution to the literary development of the nation and to encourage him to achieve more. The award is also meant to serve as a source of inspiration to the budding writer. It is hoped that the awards will cover the entire book sector of the country—authors, publishers, printers, booksellers, librarians and book

illustrators and designers in future. For the first award, however, only authors of the pre-independence period were considered. After three sittings a Book Award Committee which was appointed to select deserving recipients selected twenty award winners comprising eleven living and nine dead authors. They were:

**(a) Living Authors and their Citations**

1. J. H. KWABENA NKETIA—In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the development of Ghanaian Oral Literature and the study of the culture of Ghana as is manifested in his work *Akwansosem Bi* published in 1952, and the scholarly work *Funeral Dirges of Akan People* (1954).
2. H. D. YENG—In recognition of his signal contributions to the development of National Literature in the pre-independence period, specifically through the publication of stories, a primer and other reading books in the Dagaare Language.
3. J. S. KALEEM—In recognition of his commendable contributions to the growth of National Literature in the pre-independence period, especially by publishing delightful animal stories and other reading materials in the Dagbani Language.
4. S. J. OBIANIM—In recognition of his praiseworthy contribution to the development of National Literature in the pre-independence period, notably in his linguistic study *Evegbe nuti nunya akpa evelia* (1954).
5. H. K. B. SETSOAFIA—In recognition of his unique contribution to National Literature in the pre-independence period notably in regard to the originality revealed in his dramatic work, *Mede Ablotsidele alo Esinam kple Dadzi*, published in 1956.
6. E. J. K. KLUFIO—In recognition of his unique contribution to National Literature in the pre-independence period, notably in regard to the creative imagination and felicity of language revealed in his Ga novel *Adote Shelen Kome* published in 1950
7. J. A. ANNOBIL—In recognition of his excellent achievement in the exploration of the cultural heritage of the Akan, especially in his renowned literary work *Mbo-Na-Ye* published in 1950.
8. S. A. FUSEINI—In recognition of his signal contribution to the growth of National Literature in the pre-independence period, notably through the publication of a grammar of the Gonja Language in 1955.
9. S. P. WEDJONG In recognition of his praiseworthy contributions to the development of National Literature in the pre-independence period, notably through the publication of educational books in Kasem Language.

10. RT. REV. J. A. ESSUAH—In recognition of his tremendous contribution to the National Literature notably in regard to his pioneering work in the development of the Nzema Language as revealed in his *Nzema Nzelele Nee \_Mwoma Nee Edwekpa Buluku* (Nzema Prayers, Epistles and Gospels Book) published in 1936 and Mesukoa Nzema

(I learn Nzema) Readers 1-6 for Primary Schools, published between the years 1943 and 1952.

11. A. A. OPOKU—In recognition of his praiseworthy contribution to National Literature in the pre-independence period, notably in regard to his literary works in Akuapem Twi, namely, Asensusuw Ho Nyansa (Logic), published in 1946 and Odehuro (The Yam Festival) published in 1953.

### (b) **Dead Authors and their Citations**

1. DR. R. E. G. ARMATTOE—In commemoration of his unique contributions to the growth of Ghanaian Scholarship and Letters, notably through his scientific work *Materia Medica* published in 1946 and his volume of poetry *Between the Forest and the Sea*, published in 1950.

2. R. E. OBENG—In commemoration of his noteworthy contribution to the development of Ghanaian Literature, specifically through writing the novel *Eighteenpence*, published in 1943.

3. DR. J. B. DANQUAH—In commemoration of his unique contribution to National Literature in the pre-independence period, no less in his mother-tongue than in English, as evidenced in his noteworthy Akuapem Twi publication *Nyankonsem* (Fables of the Celestial) published in 1941; and in his theological work *Akan Doctrine of God* (1944) and finally in his legal treatise *Gold Coast: Akan Laws and Customs and the Aim Abuakwa Constitution* (1928).

4. D. A. PUPLAMPU—In commemoration of his unique contribution to Dangme Literature in the pre-independence period, notably in regard to the pioneering work done in reducing Dangme into writing through his book *Dangme Munyu Tubo* (Adangme manner of speech) published in 1953.

5. G. R. ACQUAAH—In commemoration of his meritorious contribution to the upliftment of National Literature in general and Fante customs and culture in particular, as revealed in his pre-independence publications *Oguaa Aban* (1939) and *Mfantse Amambra* (1947).

6. C. A. AKROFI—In commemoration of his unique contribution to National Literature in the pre-independence period, notably in regard to pioneering efforts revealed in his literary work in Akuapem Twi, namely, *Twi Kasa Mmra* (A Grammar of the Twi Language), published in 1937.

7. KOBINA SEKYE—In commemoration of his epoch-making contribution to National Literature in the pre-independence period, as evidenced by his dramatic work, *The Blinkards* published in 1915.

8. DR. A. W. AMO – In commemoration of his signal and prodigious contributions to world-wide scholarship and letters notably through the publication of philosophical works in the Latin Language in the Eighteenth Century.

9. J. M. SARBAH--In commemoration of his praiseworthy contributions to National Literature and scholarship in the pre-independence era, notably through the publication of his *Fanti Customary Law* in 1897.

The sole criterion for the selection of the award recipient was QUALITY. Each of the living authors was awarded a cash prize of ₵500 (five hundred cedis) and a citation. These prizes as well as those for winners of the essay competition were distributed to the recipients at a banquet held at the Hotel Continental, on 11th November, 1977, to crown activities for the Book Week. The citation was read by the Chairman of the Ghana Library Board, Mrs. Frances Ademola; the Commissioner for Education and Culture distributed the prizes.

Earlier, on that same date, the living authors had been presented to the Head of State at the Castle by the Commissioner for Education and Culture.

The memory of the dead authors was honoured with a citation each. Work is in progress to have plaques bearing their names mounted at the Central Library in Accra.

The Ghana Book Development Council acknowledges with thanks the roles played by the various individuals and groups to make the first National Book Week a success.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Authorship Development Fund especially for donating the sum of ₵3,500 (three thousand five hundred cedis towards the award of cash prizes to the living authors.

**(c) Members of the Ghana Book Award Committee**

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|-------------------------|----------|
| 1. Mr. A. G. T. Ofori   | Chairman |
| 2. Dr. E. O. Apronti    | Member   |
| 3. Mr. D. E. K. Krampah | Member   |
| 4. Mr. K. A. Yirenkyi   | Member   |
| 5. Mr. D. A. Nimako     | Member   |
| 6. Mr. B. K. Ofori      | Member   |



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|-------------------------|-----------|
| 7. Mr. N. K. Adjakey    | Member    |
| 8. Nana Kwaku Mensah    | Member    |
| 9. Mr. Addo Osafo       | Member    |
| 10. Mr. A. P. K. Adzaho | Secretary |