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Ghanaians Abroad and Their Ties Home:

Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Transnational Migration

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Ghana – From a Labour-Receiving to a Labour-Exporting Country

There are conflicting estimates about the number of Ghanaians resident outside the country. Twum-Baah (2005) puts the number of Ghanaians abroad at about one million persons while Owusu-Ankomah (2006) estimates that more than three million out of Ghana's current population of about 20 million persons live outside the country. The fact that such a large proportion of Ghanaians are living abroad is quite a recent phenomenon. Indeed, during the 1950s and the decade immediately after independence (1957-1967), many Ghanaians living outside the country returned home while a large number of migrants from the West African sub-region migrated to Ghana. During this period Ghana's economy was comparatively strong and therefore attracted a considerable number of political activists, scholars and foreigners to the country. Migrant labourers from the neighbouring West African countries came to Ghana in large numbers to work in the mines, cocoa plantations and as workers in the expanding civil service and the urban economy (Adepoju 2005: 26-8; Anarfi et al. 2003).

During the 1950s and 60s, small numbers of Ghanaians went abroad (mainly to the US, UK and Eastern European countries) under the sponsorship of the government to pursue advanced training that could not be obtained within the country (cf. Anarfi & Awusabo et al. 2000). This was as a result of the developmentalist policies of the Nkrumah government and the quest for manpower to rapidly transform the nation from an agrarian to an industrial country. This group of Ghanaian students and scholars who left the country for advanced training abroad during the 1950s and 60s can be regarded as the first generation of migrants abroad. They were commonly referred to in Ghana as the 'been to' (cf. Jeanett 2004). Owusu (2000) estimates, for example, that there were only about 100 Ghanaian immigrants, most of them scholars, in Canada in 1967. Many of the educated elite returned home to Ghana despite attempts by foreign governments to encourage them to stay abroad.[1] Others decided to remain abroad and constituted the group of highly qualified Ghanaian professionals (medical doctors, engineers, social scientists etc.) living abroad.[2]

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[1] The United States government, for example, tried to encourage Ghanaian and African scholars who had studied in that country or were on academic exchange programmes in the early 1960s to stay there by offering them US citizenship (personal communication of Prof. G. K. Nukunya, 15th March 2006 in Accra).

[2] To give just one example, Ghanaian medical doctors who trained in that country during the 1960s and 70s can be found in almost every middle-sized German city today.

During the 1970s, Ghana experienced a period of economic decline and political instability. The deteriorating economic situation and the falling standard of living compelled many Ghanaians to seek greener pastures abroad. The vast majority of Ghanaians migrated to the neighbouring West African countries, in particular, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire. Many of these migrants were unskilled persons but there were also large numbers of skilled persons (masons, carpenters, mechanics, drivers, etc.) and professionals (including lecturers, teachers, nurses, accountants, bankers, etc) (Peil 1995). During this period Ghanaians, especially those who could afford the high cost of travelling and settling abroad, began moving overseas in large numbers. Most of them went to the traditional English-speaking countries to which the educated elite had always migrated (that is, the USA and the UK). There were a few who were more adventurous and were willing to migrate to new destinations such as Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Italy and to a lesser extent, France, Spain and Portugal. This group of largely young migrants who emigrated abroad during the 1970s were commonly referred to as 'burgers', a German term that was used for all migrants irrespective of the country to which they migrated. This was probably because of the conspicuous and ostentatious dressing and lifestyle of Ghanaian migrants who had returned home or were just visiting from Germany (cf. Jeanett 2004).

Most Ghanaians who migrated to the neighbouring West African countries as well as those who went abroad were comparatively well received by the host countries. They were perceived as 'useful migrants' who had come to assist build the economies of the host countries. The main reason for this hospitality was that the 1970s was a period of relative prosperity for many of the West African countries (Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo etc.) that served as destinations for Ghanaian migrants. While the West African countries needed skilled and unskilled labour as well as professionals, the European countries required cheap labour that they could not obtain from amongst the indigenous population for their rapidly expanding economies. Indeed, many of the countries that Ghanaians moved into during the 1970s were (Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Canada) actively recruiting labour from abroad (Vernooij 2004). Generally, the second generation of migrants who left Ghana during the 1970s were not only well received but had legal residence status in these countries and could find employment, even if it often turned out to be lowly-paid, unattractive and hazardous work that many indigenes did not want to do. Some Ghanaian migrants, especially the professionals, were underemployed as they had to take up jobs for which they were overqualified. Nigeria recruited large numbers of Ghanaian teachers, lecturers and medical staff during this period. The francophone African countries, on the other hand, received large numbers of skilled and unskilled Ghanaians. Ghanaian teachers of the English language were particularly sought after in the francophone countries.

During the 1980s the Ghanaian economy was still in the doldrums and the political situation in the country was chaotic. The trickling of Ghanaians abroad that commenced in the 1970s turned into a mass migration of the population. A politically repressive and iron-handed regime, increasing poverty and unemployment, shortages of basic commodities and the increasing impoverishment of large sections of the population meant that anybody who could leave the country decided to do so. Ghanaians migrated in large numbers to the neighbouring West African countries and to Western Europe and North America. The early 1980s also coincided with the period during which most of the destination countries were in financial difficulties. Ghana was in the midst of a Structural Adjustment and Economic Recovery Programme and economic conditions were still dire, even if it was improving slowly (Boafo-Arthur 1999; Gyimah-Boadi 1990). The 'oil boom' in Nigeria during the 1970s had ended abruptly and the country faced economic and social difficulties as well as a deterioration in the security situation. The devaluation of the CFA Franc affected the Ivorian economy. These two countries responded to the economic crunch and civil disorder by blaming West African migrants living in their countries. Both countries consequently expelled large numbers of Ghanaian migrants from their countries in the 1980s (Adepoju 2005; Anarfi et al. 2003).

The industrialized European countries also went through a period of economic downturn in the 1980s. The media in many European countries began to depict the influx of migrants as a 'wave' or 'flood' that would overrun their countries (cf. Ter Haar 2005). Consequently, the countries of the European Union (EU) adopted a very restrictive immigration policy that aimed mainly at preventing the so-called economic migrants from entering their respective countries. Migrants were depicted as persons who had come to benefit from their welfare system while some were accused of taking away jobs from the indigenes. There were waves of attacks on migrants, especially in Germany and Spain. Most of the EU countries changed their hitherto liberal asylum laws to keep as many migrants out of their countries as possible. They started making a distinction between the so-called political, economic and religious refugees and designated many countries, including Ghana as 'safe'.[3] Entry into the European Union countries became almost impossible for ordinary Ghanaians as most of these countries tightened their visa requirements. Ghanaians seeking to enter the EU were required to produce all sorts of documents many of which they could not honestly obtain. This resulted in massive forgery of documents, corruption, impersonation and the emergence of 'visa con-

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[3] Migrants fom these 'safe' countries were not entitled to refugee status and their applications for political asylum were immediately rejected.

tractors' in Ghana. Another result of these stringent immigration policies has been the rising numbers of individuals and organized groups set up to assist migrants to enter the European Union countries legally or illegally. Many Ghanaians who managed to enter the EU countries during this period were classified as illegal migrants (De Haas 2006; Mazzucato 2007; Nieswand 2005; Vermooij 2004). Since the mid-1980s, Ghanaian migrants have been given a very hostile reception abroad by the host population and governments. Some of them were forced to live and work illegally for a considerable period of time before they could obtain their residence and work permits.

As the door to Europe and North America closed during the 1980s and 90s, other opportunities opened in Southern Africa, where the newly-independent countries of Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, and South Africa began recruiting Ghanaian professionals. Many highly-trained and professional Ghanaians (teachers, lecturers, managers, doctors etc.) migrated to Southern Africa. They were soon followed by large numbers of Ghanaian migrants seeking their fortunes in that region.

Ghana's economy has seen much improvement since the economic decline of the 1970s and 80s. At the macro-level, infrastructural facilities have improved considerably. Nevertheless, income levels remain very low, unemployment and underemployment levels are also high while the rural-urban divide appears to ever widen, with large numbers of people, especially the youth, leaving the disadvantaged rural areas for the cities. Similarly, the desire to travel abroad to seek training and education and to improve upon the economic situation of individuals and households remains unbroken. Large numbers of Ghanaians, both skilled and unskilled, as well as highly trained professionals continue to leave the country.

So far, we have shown how Ghana has over the last 50 years been transformed from a labour-receiving to a labour-exporting country as a result of the downturn in the economy and the political instability that characterized life in the country during the 1970s and 80s. By the mid-1990s Ghanaian migrants were found in large numbers in West and Southern Africa, Western Europe and in North America. They had become one of the newly-created diaspora groups in recent times (Van Hear 1998). Indeed, it is now common saying in Ghana that 'every family has one member living outside the country'. The large number of Ghanaians leaving the country and the emergence of a diaspora abroad have resulted not only in a change in the way Ghanaians themselves view their kith and kin who have gone abroad but also in government policy and attitude towards the emigration of Ghanaians. In the past decade, successive Ghanaian governments have moved away from primarily lamenting about the brain drain of Ghanaian professionals to a policy of regarding the migrant as a national resource and attempting to make the best out of Ghanaians outside the country.

Two major directions can be deduced from government policies. The first involves a long-term approach that seeks to encourage skilled persons and professionals to stay in the country by improving wages and conditions of service of such persons. Furthermore, the government has tried to regulate and formalize the exodus of professionals. Foreign countries to which Ghanaian professionals migrate are expected to conclude an agreement with the country signing on a specific number of professionals for a limited period of time. Thus, Western European and Middle Eastern countries to which most Ghanaian nurses migrate would be given a contingent of nurses for a specified period of time. Nurses may then leave in batches in a planned and organized fashion. Furthermore, Ghana's development partners who benefit from trained Ghanaian medical staff are expected to contribute towards the training of such professionals in the country. The Ghanaian government hopes that a well-planned, coordinated and organized migration of professionals, especially one that involves the circulation of professionals, would replace the currently individually-organized and unplanned form of migration. This would result in a win-win situation for both Ghana and the destination countries (Zoomers & Naerssen 2007). Indeed, Ghana is already benefiting considerably from remittances received from its nationals abroad. According to The Bank of Ghana, remittances to Ghana from individuals, religious organizations and NGOs in 2005 amounted to over $4.5 billion, making it the largest source of foreign exchange for the country (Owusu-Ankomah 2006; see also De Hass 2007; Mazzucato et al. 2005).

A second policy direction is to consider Ghanaians abroad as a resource from which Ghanaians at home can benefit from. Thus the Ghanaian government, institutions, and non-governmental organisations should be encouraged to develop close economic, social and cultural links with Ghanaians abroad and indeed the entire African diaspora abroad.

In the next sections we shall examine how the Ghanaian diaspora in Europe (especially those in Germany) have developed and maintained social and cultural links with relatives, friends and institutions back home in Ghana. In particular, we shall analyze how state and non-state actors such as churches, associations and other groups based in Germany foster and support social, religious and cultural links between Ghanaians abroad and those at home. The paper stresses that socio-cultural and religious relations between Ghanaians at home and those abroad are inseparably linked to economic exchanges between the two groups. Socio-cultural exchanges also engender development in Ghana as witnessed in increasing remittances, expanding trade, visits and tourism, provision of goods and equipment and the exchange of information, knowledge and technology. Furthermore, unlike financial remittances that are often depicted as moving in one direction (North-South), this paper will

show that social and cultural relations between Ghanaians at home and those abroad are reciprocal and operate in a two-way direction (North-South and South-North).[4]

Besides the use of secondary sources, this paper relies on the personal experiences of the author within the Ghanaian community in the Westfalen and the Ruhr regions of Western Germany between 1985 and 1993 as well as intermittent interviews and discussions with Ghanaians in Berlin and Halle/Salle between 2000 and 2005. The author has also obtained considerable information from relatives and friends living in Hamburg over two decades. Finally, information was also obtained from interviews with individual households, churches, returned migrants and policy makers in Accra between March and May 2007.

Ghanaians Abroad - From Integrated Elites to Transnational Migrants

In terms of numbers, there are probably more than a million Ghanaians living in North America and Western Europe. At least, another million and half Ghanaians live permanently in the neighbouring West African countries. While there are no reliable figures, it is estimated that more than 300,000 Ghanaians live in the U.S. The Ghanaian community in the U. K. is also considered to be about the same number. Besides these two countries, large numbers of Ghanaians are found in Canada (35,000), Germany (46,000), The Netherlands (35,474), Italy (44,000), France (26,715), Spain (20,405) and Switzerland (14,001) (Mazzucato 2007; Orozco 2005; Twum-Baah 2005).[5]

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[4] A lot of studies on the Ghanaian diaspora have recently focused on the remittances sent by Ghanaians abroad to their relatives and some institutions in Ghana. These studies, however, do not explain the factors that account for the growing remittances and the role that the Ghanaian state and non-state actors play in maintaining links and sustaining the interests of Ghanaian abroad in people, activities and events in Ghana. The support and remittances of Ghanaians abroad to their family members and relatives are perceived as activities that Ghanaians do naturally (see Mazzucato 2007; Orozco 2005; Owusu-Ankomah 2006 and many others). A second topic of particular academic interest recently is the establishment and growth of Ghanaian Pentecostal & Charismatic churches abroad, especially in Germany and the Netherlands (see Van Dijk 1999, 2002, 2004; Jach 2005; Nieswand 2003, 2005; Ter Haar 2005; Veernooji 2004 and others) and how these churches are linked with their 'mother' churches in Ghana and thereby exchange personnel and move goods to and from Ghana.

[5] Countries differ in the way that they compile statistics about migrants. In Canada and the United States for example, persons of Ghanaian origin who acquire citizenship through birth or naturalization cease to be Ghanaians, and although many must have emigrated from Ghana they are no longer captured in official records. Other countries distinguish between persons of Ghanaian nationality, persons of Ghanaian origin and Ghanaian emigrants. These differences account for the wide variation in the figures presented. Anarfi et al. (2003) using data from SOPEMI estimates that by 2001, 104,000 Ghanaians were living in the US and 114,335 were registered in Canada. Similarly, Mazzucato (2007: 4) has cautioned about the accuracy of these data. She indicates that although

We have already indicated that the first generation of Ghanaian migrants abroad were quite well received in their countries of destination in Europe (mainly the UK) and North America. Most of them were government-sponsored students who considered themselves as (future) members of the educated elite. They were quite well integrated into the British or European society and had high regard for British/European society, education, culture, etiquette and lifestyle. They came home as 'been-to', proud of their British/European education and training as well as the way of life (cf. Jeanett 2004). They were part of the 'fortunate few' who were trained abroad and returned home to take up leadership positions in private enterprises, industry, politics, the civil service and institutions of higher education in the country (Clignet & Foster 1966; Nieswand 2003). Some of them married abroad, further opening the way for their increased integration into British/European society. Of course, a section of the educated and business elite abroad had weak links to Ghana. Amongst them were many who considered themselves to be 'civilised' and did not appreciate their African roots, culture and tradition. At least, that was the impression that they created (Ter Haar 2005: 314).

The second generation of migrants consist of those who left Ghana in the 1970s until the mid-80s during the period of economic decline. They were mainly blue-collar workers although some of them were highly-trained professionals. They were still quite well received in the destination countries and many did obtain work abroad, although quite often below their qualifications. This group of Ghanaians were socially and economically quite well integrated into the individual European countries in which they lived.

The third generation of Ghanaian migrants abroad were those who left the country since the mid-1980s. They were the largest in terms of numbers and were also dominated by large numbers of unskilled and uneducated Ghanaians. This group of migrants was largely unwelcome in their new destinations. Irrespective of their motivation for travelling abroad, they were considered by most Western European governments as economic migrants who had come to take advantage of the economic benefits and social security system in these countries. These migrants had to contend with the most hazardous and lowest paid jobs, usually the ones that most indigenes did not want to do. Socially, they were largely isolated from the mainstream society wherever they settled. Partly due to the high cost of accommodation but also due to discriminatory practices of the host population, most of these Ghanaians settled in suburbs almost completely inhabited by migrants and the poorest sections of the indige-

in 2003 there were about 18,000 Ghanaians officially registered in the Netherlands, about 40,000 Ghanaians registered at the Ghana Embassy in that country for the 2000 Presidential Elections in Ghana.

nous population. As the population of immigrants in these suburbs grew, the indigenous middle class population moved to 'all-white' suburbs. Over the years, suburbs with a high population of migrants were neglected by the city authorities. The public buildings, institutions, and infrastructure in these suburbs were allowed to dilapidate. Essential services including the maintenance of parks, streets, walkways, the collection of garbage etc. were not done regularly. Migrants' suburbs soon gain notoriety for being a place for drug dealers, criminal gangs, alcoholics and the down trodden in society. This is the social environment under which many third generation migrants from Ghana live abroad. In Berlin, for example, many Ghanaian migrants reside in Kreuzberg and Neu Kölln, suburbs dominated by Turkish migrants while in Amsterdam, most Ghanaians are found in the foreigners' quarter of Bijlmer. In a sense, most migrants are socially excluded from the societies in which they reside.

Third generation Ghanaian migrants in Germany have maintained close social, economic, political, cultural and religious links with Ghana mainly because of the hostility of the indigenous population and the various forms of discrimination they face in that country. They are more likely to remain transnational migrants than the first and second generation of Ghanaians in that country. Third generation Ghanaians abroad have also maintained a strong attachment to their relatives and friends at home. Besides, they have ties and obligations in both Ghana and in their countries of residence. These strong links home are demonstrated not just in the close and regular contact with relatives and through the remittances that they send to their relatives back at home but also through the investments (in housing, trading, small-scale manufacturing etc) that they make in Ghana. Ghanaians abroad are also culturally linked to Ghana through the networks and home-town associations that they organize and participate in, the joint celebration of Ghanaian public holidays and ethnic festivals, the patronage of Ghanaian food and dresses, their forms of worship, and the creation of Ghanaian traditional institutions such as chiefs and queen mothers abroad (Nieswand 2003; Schildkrout 2006). Their livelihood abroad is broadly associated with the numerous cultural goods that they receive from home. Many European cities have seen the spread of 'Afro shops' owned and managed by Ghanaians where food items, cosmetics and other goods imported from Ghana are sold.

Writing about the Ghanaian diaspora abroad, Orozco (2005: 6) notes that:

> "…Ghanaians are a relatively well-established diaspora in the countries that they live in, and they simultaneously maintain strong ties with their homeland. The manifestation of diaspora linkages is observed in a number of ways: their global spread, their commitment to send money both over time as well as to their practical contacts with the family and community, and their financial in-

terests in the homeland. There are other manifestations in the form of social and political organizing that produce significant feedback about social transformations on both sides."

Nieswand (2003: 128-131) has argued with respect to Ghanaian migrants in Germany that many of them are motivated to maintain links with their home societies because of the high social status that they gain in doing so. This, in his view, compensates for their loss of value in the German society. In Germany, most of the Ghanaian migrants experience marginalization and are considered as 'backward, poor and marginalised'. They have problems getting jobs that correspond to their qualifications. They are therefore forced to take up work which they would not do at home. Back at home, on the other hand, the migrants are perceived as being 'socially successful, modern and wealthy'. Their relatives do not know or pretend not to know about the conditions under which their sons or daughters live and work in Germany. Nieswand refers to this phenomenon as a 'paradox of migration', that is, 'living in two status systems with contradictory attributions of prestige at the same time' (page 129).

Ghanaian Associations and Networks Abroad

This section will examine the establishment and growth of different types of associations amongst Ghanaians abroad. These range from small networks of village associations that involve individuals coming from the same settlement or traditional area to national associations whose membership is open to all migrants with Ghanaian citizenship, of Ghanaian descent or who have some family roots in Ghana. We shall examine how the social, cultural and religious roles of these networks and associations impact on the lives of individual migrants abroad as well as how these networks/associations contribute to maintaining links and close ties between Ghanaians abroad and those back home Ghana. We shall also indicate how Ghanaian migrants, under the auspices of these associations and networks are constructing a new life and identity abroad in line with a model that is imported from home (cf, Vernooji 2004; Nieswand 2003). The focus will be on Ghanaian networks and associations in Germany.

Ghanaians abroad belong to a host of different social groups, clubs, networks and associations which may either have a more formal character with a constitution stipulating rules and regulations binding all members of such associations or operate as an informal group bringing together Ghanaians with common interests (cf. Owusu 2000). Irrespective of the form in which they are organized, these networks typically involve Ghanaians who share a common

interest by coming from the same traditional area, town or village, belong to the same tribal/ethnic group, are member of the same religious denomination, belong to the same club (women's association, sporting club etc) or are members of the same political party. There are also national associations that bring together people of Ghanaian descent and their relatives and friends. More recently, there has been the tendency to form one overarching national association in each country with a large population of Ghanaians abroad.

In Germany for example, the most common village/area associations include the Ashanti Akim Kuo, Obo Citizens Union, Oguaa Kuo and many others. Even more common are the tribal/ethnic groupings and associations including the Ashanti/Asanteman Union, Brong-Ahafo Union, Ga Union, Fanti Union, Kwahu and Akuapem Union that are found in virtually all of the major towns including Hamburg, Stuttgart, Oberhausen, Dortmund, and Cologne, to mention only these few. Some of the well-known church-based groupings include the Ghana Catholic Mission-Hamburg, Bethel Church-Stuttgart, Presbyterian Church-Cologne, New Life International Ministry-Mannheim and the numerous 'Ghanaian' Churches that are springing up throughout Germany. There are also several social clubs such as the Progressive Women Association, the Onnuado Kuo, the Old Timers Club and the Ghana Black Stars Supporters Club. Existing alongside these clubs, groupings and associations are the numerous national associations called 'Ghana Union' that are found in all the major German towns including Hamburg, Duesseldorf, Cologne, Munich, Berlin, Mannheim, and the Ruhr Region. The various national associations have been brought together to form the Union of Ghanaian Associations in Germany (UGAG), a non-political, non-ethnic and religiously neutral group with membership open to all Ghanaian associations, clubs and religious bodies and individual Ghanaians resident in Germany.[6] The UGAG seeks to unite Ghanaians in Germany, coordinate their activities and serve as the mouth-piece of the Ghanaian community in Germany. Finally, the three major political parties in Ghana (that is, the New Patriotic Party, the National Democratic Congress and the Convention Peoples Party) all have very active branches abroad, especially in the UK and the USA. These political clubs bring together Ghanaians who share their party philosophy, policies and tradition.

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[6] There appears to be a recent trend towards the formation of national associations in all the countries with a large Ghanaian diaspora. Besides in Germany, such national associations exist already in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland and Austria.

Besides the 'Ghanaian' churches which do sometimes have a rather large nominal member-ship[7], most of these clubs and associations have only a handful of members usually ranging between 20 and 150 members. These associations typically have executives to manage and run their affairs. They organize regular meetings, usually about 4-5 times in a year. Attendance at these meetings is however low partly due to the heavy work schedule of many members but also as a result of the fact that Ghanaians abroad belong to two or more of such associations and hardly have a good overview of their meeting days. Meetings are held in the home of a member on a rotational basis or in one of the public buildings (*Jugendhaus*, *Auslaenderbuero* or the *International Begegnungszentrum*) in the town.

Apart from a few specific objectives that may be limited to members of any particular association, the overall objectives of most of these clubs, networks and associations are rather similar. Usually, there are three basic goals that are common to all of these groupings: First of all, they aim at fostering unity and amity amongst their membership abroad, supporting each other in difficult times and strengthening the bonds amongst their membership. It is common for members of a group or an association to share occasions of joy such as births and marriages as well as stressful situations such as deaths, illnesses and accidents through visits and get-togethers. These groups also assist their members and all other Ghanaians in their locality with immigration and accommodation issues as well as with the education of their wards.

Secondly, they all aim at promoting good relations between Ghanaians abroad and the host population. Generally, relations between the Ghanaian community abroad and the host population tend to be rather strained as a result of the existing stereotyping and negative images that Ghanaians and blacks in general have in these Western countries. This is particularly the case in non-English speaking countries such as Germany, Netherlands, Italy and Eastern European countries. While promoting and defending the interests of their members, these associations also organize social and cultural activities that project a positive image of Ghanaians in the host country. For example, the choir of the Ghana Catholic Mission in Hamburg is well known for its active participation in activities organized by Catholics in Hamburg and the promotion of a positive relation between Ghanaian and German Catholics. Several bi-national associations have also been formed to assist improve relations with the

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[7] Some of these 'Ghanaian' churches have a rather mixed congregation including migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. A few Germans may also be found within these congregations. The membership of the Ghana Catholic Society – Hamburg is estimated at about 900 persons (Regina 2005).

host population. Some of these include the Ghana-German Association in Hanau, the Ghanaian Canadian Association of Ontario, the Ghana-Ireland Friendship Association and many others. Ghanaian groups also seek to establish harmonious intercultural relations with all other groups of foreigners, especially those of African descent. In Germany and other countries, the Ghana Union is a member of the association of foreigners in that country. These groups of foreigners (*Auslaender*) often have links with the town and state officials through the official representative for foreigners' affairs (*Auslaenderbeauftragte* or *Integrationsbeauftragte*).

Thirdly, all of these clubs and associations seek to strengthen their ties and links with Ghana. The most common form of maintaining links with Ghana at the associational level include adopting deprived groups, churches and benevolent institutions at home that they regularly support through the transfer of funds, equipment and experts. Most of the philanthropic activities of Ghanaian associations abroad are concentrated in the health and education sectors and are often sent to deprived communities, government institutions, churches and non-governmental organizations in Ghana. These typically involve sending beds, medical equipments, medicines and training gadgets to health institutions as well as the construction or rehabilitation of classroom blocks, and the provision of learning materials and equipment to basic schools in Ghana.

In the next section we shall examine in detail the activities of Ghanaian churches in Germany and analyze the emergence of Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic churches as well as Ghanaian Catholic communities in Germany and other European countries. Whilst Ghanaian Catholics struggled within the German Catholic community for their own form of worship, the pentecostalists who migrated to Europe formed churches in their new destinations either in alliance with other Pentecostal churches in Germany or with the assistance of their 'mother' churches in Ghana. Thus, social and religious ties are maintained in a two-way direction within the pentecostal/charismatic as well as the Catholic communities. Specifically, the section will examine the social, cultural and religious roles that Ghanaian Pentecostal and Catholic churches play in the lives of individual migrant and how these churches contribute to maintaining links and close ties between Ghanaians in the diaspora and their church communities in Ghana. It also indicates how Ghanaian migrants, under the auspices of the church, are constructing a new life and identity in Germany in line with a model that is imported from home.

Ghanaian Churches Abroad

Christianity is the most dominant religion in Ghana with more than two-thirds of the population (68.8%) claiming membership of one of the Christian churches. The rest of the population are Moslems (15.9%) and adherents of traditional religion (8.5%). Catholics with a population of 1,446,223 persons (15.1%) constitute the single largest denomination in the country. The group of churches under the label of 'Protestants' are about 1,822, 661 persons (that is, 19.1% of the population). Churches grouped together under the umbrella of Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, however, constitute the largest group of churches in the country.[8] They are about 2,391, 929 persons, which is about 25% of the population (GSS 2002). There are also a small number of independent African churches.

The most significant development in the religious landscape in Ghana since the 1980s is the sharp increase in the congregation of the Charismatic/Pentecostal churches. The spread and growth of these Pentecostal/Charismatic churches coincided with the period of economic decline in Ghana during which most Ghanaians found it difficult to make ends meet. The newly established churches brought some amount of hope and confidence to their congregations at a time of national gloom (Gifford 2004). Most of these Charismatic/Pentecostal churches are typically led by a strong and powerful leader who is also the founder of the church. Charismatic/Pentecostal churches, in particular, are often characterized by the fact that they do not have a clearly laid out structure of leadership and a church hierarchy. The management of these churches rests largely in the hands of a small group of charismatic pastors and founders. The membership of these Pentecostal churches are dominated by young middle class professionals and businessmen most of whom look forward to a prosperous and successful life. This is reflected in the main strands of their church teachings that emphasize prosperity and success in life. Their leaders are also noted for leading an opulent lifestyle and living in some of Accra's plush residential areas. Materialism permeates all aspects of church teachings and being financially successful in life is considered a blessing of God and a goal to be attained by all members. Their church services are participative and

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[8] These include the mainline protestant churches that originated from Europe such as the Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, Ghana Baptist Convention, Lutheran Church and the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches. It is not always easy to clearly differentiate between Pentecostal and Charismatic churches based on their theology and form of worship. Many Pentecostal churches are members of the Ghana Pentecostal Council and include the Church of Pentecost, Apostolic Church, Church of Christ, and the Christ Apostolic Church. The Charismatic churches are a more recent phenomenon and tend to be identified with a strong leader. These include the International Central Gospel Church, Action Church International, World Miracle Church International, Lighthouse Chapel etc.

exhilarating involving long periods of dancing, singing, and bible study. Members of these churches have a strong bond and this is evident in the extensive social support that they provide each other. Members are provided not only with spiritual support but also economic, social and psychological support. Charismatic/Pentecostal churches in Ghana are noted for their extensive and aggressive use of the media for advertising their churches, spreading their religious messages and proselytizing (Gifford 2004; Omenyo 2002; Sackey 2001).

The Pentecostal/Charismatic churches recognized the deep spiritual vacuum that existed amongst Ghanaian migrants abroad. Having no church structures in the destination of these migrants, the churches began to look for ways in which they could establish links with members of their congregations who had travelled abroad in search of greener pastures (cf. Ter Haar 2005). Some of the Charismatic churches initially encouraged their members to join other churches in the communities in which they resided. It did not take long, however, for the Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic churches to discover the benefits of establishing branches abroad. The roots of these newly-formed churches are to be found in the prayer groups that Ghanaian Christians in the large cities abroad organized. These prayer groups were held in abandoned halls, disused car parks, and in the homes of members on a regular basis. As their membership grew, they began to meet regularly. By the late 1990s, some of the Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic groups had established small congregations in the major European cities. Some of these churches did not see themselves solely as 'Ghanaian churches' but wanted to expand their membership amongst the indigenous population. Similarly, Charismatic/Pentecostal churches in Ghana also realized the usefulness of being international by establishing branches abroad. It thus became fashionable for Ghanaian Charismatic churches to rename themselves by adding the word 'international' to the official name of the church in Ghana. Pastors from the 'mother' churches in Ghana were sent abroad to lead the newly-established churches in an attempt to ensure continued links with the church in Ghana as well as ensuring theological purity. Thus we have the Christian Action Faith Ministries International, the International Central Gospel Church, the Alive Chapel International, World Miracle Church International, Bethel Prayer Ministry International and many others. The inclusion of the word 'international' in the names of these churches was not only symbolic. It was also to spread the message that these churches were expanding so rapidly that they were now to be found all over the major cities of the world. Besides, the word 'international' also conveyed the meeting of being modern, and having extensive links abroad, in particular in the rich industrialised countries. The name change was also to strengthen the link with the 'mother church' in Ghana and indicate to their membership abroad that they were all part of one global Ghanaian family. Ghanaian Pentecostal/Charismatic churches

were thus able to create a transnational network linking their members located across Africa, Europe and North America

The Ghanaian Catholic community in Germany, on the other hand, had a long struggle with the indigenous Catholic church before being able to bring their particular culture, history and experience into their Catholic faith. A small community of Ghanaian Catholics has existed in Hamburg since the 19th century. However, it was not until the 1970s, as the population of Catholics in Hamburg expanded that they were able to press their demand for their own church service within the Diocese of Hamburg/Holstein. Besides the fact that the Catholic Church has always considered itself to be a universal church, it was feared that allowing the different nationalities to worship separately would divide the German church and intensify the social and religious exclusion of foreigners within the church and society. The preference, until the 70s, was therefore for Ghanaian Catholics to join their German counterparts within a parish. However, as the membership of the Ghanaian Catholic community in Hamburg grew, it became increasingly difficult for the church leadership to justify their integrationist approach. The Ghanaian Catholics were incessant in their demand to be allowed to worship in English, the need for an English-speaking priest, as well as for English hymn books to boast attendance at mass and enable Ghanaian Catholics who were attracted to the Pentecostal churches to remain loyal to their catholic faith. The report of a delegation from Rome that studied the peculiar situation of the church in Hamburg as well as the intervention of the Ghanaian and German Catholic bishops paved the way for increasing autonomy for Ghanaian Catholics in Hamburg. In 1981, a German priest who had lived in Ghana for several years and could speak English was assigned to the Ghanaian Catholic community. Furthermore, Ghanaian Catholics were allowed to have a separate worship service from their German counterparts. In 1982, the Ghana Catholic Society was formed in Hamburg with a membership of 180 persons. Currently, the Society has 900 members (Jach 2005). Ghanaian Catholics in Hamburg have since had other priests with missionary experience in Ghana as well as a Ghanaian priest studying in Germany. From Germany, the idea of bringing all Ghanaian Catholics living in a particular area together to worship and network spread to the Netherlands, Italy, United Kingdom and Canada (Jach 2005: 255). In 1985, returnees from the Catholic community in Hamburg formed a branch of the Ghana Catholic Mission-Hamburg in the Ghanaian city of Kumasi. This has further improved and increased transnational cooperation and social relations amongst Ghanaian Catholics in Hamburg and those in Kumasi.

The Role of Ghanaian Churches

We have already indicated that the social and economic conditions under which many Ghanaians (especially the third generation migrants) live abroad are quite deplorable. Many of them are confronted with difficulties immediately they arrive abroad. Often without the required residence and work permits they are forced to employ unorthodox means to regularize their stay abroad. Vernooij (2004) has indicated that it is not uncommon for Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands to live and work in that country, initially as illegal migrants using the residence and working permits of their friends, until they are able to obtain their own permits. Given the rather stringent immigration and residence laws of these countries, many Ghanaian migrants are forced to work illegally in the hope of accumulating adequate funds to be able to obtain resident permits often through entering into 'arranged marriages'.[9] Without any form of employment, newly-arrived migrants are unable to participate meaningfully in the host country. They are compelled to live on cash and material gifts provided by their friends and relatives.

This is where the role of the Ghanaian churches comes in handy. Ghanaian churches do not only provide a place of worship for migrants abroad but are engaged in social, cultural and economic activities that link them with Ghana. The churches are often the first point of call for newly-arrived migrants and do provide support to poor and distressed Ghanaians. It is in the churches that these migrants can share their experiences and frustrations abroad and meet people with similar fate. Experiences are shared about how to meander ones way through the excessive state and communal bureaucracy in the host country. Migrants may also be offered legal assistance in case of difficulties with the local authorities. Generally, the churches also serve as the meeting place for the isolated, lonely and home-sick migrants. Writing with respect to Ghanaians in the Netherlands, Choenni (2002: 24) maintains that Ghanaian religious institutions have "an effective social importance, not only as meeting point, but also for material and practical matters. That is a function necessary in the Dutch context because the Dutch society and government are reserved and acting restrictively to newcomers'. Ter Haar (2005: 316) also concludes that "the religious beliefs of many Ghanaian Christians equip them with the spiritual strength and social contacts necessary to survive, and even to begin the long climb up the ladder of social responsibility in a country that has

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[9] Such 'arranged marriages' may cost up to 5000 Euro, without the guarantee that their supposed partners would abide by the terms of the marriage contract. Personal communication of a Ghanaian resident in Hamburg, 15th April 2007 in Accra.

gradually become more hostile to foreigners" (see also Van Dijk 2002). In Germany, the Ghana Catholic Society assists their members as well as other Ghanaian migrants in dealing with the arbitrariness and discrimination they suffer at the hands of German public officials. They also support members having difficulties with visa and work permits, and in the search for employment and accommodation in Hamburg.

These churches link their members with their congregations in Ghana. They also serve as a reliable link with family members, relatives, and friends in Ghana. The churches abroad provide financial support to congregations in Ghana and elsewhere. They also support development projects undertaken by churches and non-governmental organizations in Ghana. Churches in Ghana support their congregations abroad with pastors and missionaries. Besides their religious functions, these pastors provide social, psychological and moral support to Ghanaians living amongst an increasingly hostile population.

The key messages of the Ghanaian churches abroad, just as is the case with the Charismatic/Pentecostal churches at home, also reflect the difficult economic situation of their members. The emphasis is on bringing 'hope', 'success', 'winners' and 'victory' to the congregation and the goal is to bring wealth and prosperity to the congregation (cf. Gifford 2005: 45). Nieswand (2003: 130) argues with respect to Ghanaians in Germany that "the empowerment and prosperity discourse of these churches promises to provide believers with the spiritual means to overcome the symbolic, material and legal obstacles to the affirmation of the constructed self-image".

The role of Ghanaian churches in the construction of migrants' identities has often been emphasized. Ghanaian churches, unlike those of the host countries, are able to communicate with their members in a language or metaphors that they can recognize and understand. Furthermore, the Charismatic churches in particular place emphasis on a "practical and rhetorical modernist discourse that deals with central experiences of migration, reflect them religiously and empowers the believers to further action". By providing the platform on which migrants can consider themselves as being modern and successful they contribute to strengthening and stabilizing the identities of migrants.

Summary and Conclusions

Transnational studies have drawn attention to the fact that many migrants are engaged in both their countries of origin as well as the receiving countries. Using the example of Ghana-

ian migrants in Germany, this paper has analyzed the growing social and cultural links between Ghanaians at home and those abroad. The new generation of Ghanaians in Europe are mainly young, unskilled and adventurous persons looking for greener pastures away from home. The trained professionals are often underemployed. Most of these migrants belong to the lowest echelon of European society and are forced to survive by doing menial jobs. They face enormous social discrimination and exclusion and a generally hostile host population and governments. The result of these insecure livelihood and social pressures is that most migrants are compelled to build and maintain close social, cultural and religious networks in the countries in which they live in, while at the same time cultivating the links with their relatives, friends and institutions back home in Ghana. In the Ghanaian example, the churches serve as a unique institution that supports migrants socially, financially and psychologically. The churches also provide them with a sense of identity and self-worth within an increasingly hostile host society. They also contribute economically to the development of Ghana through their numerous development projects, remittances, transfer of technology, exchange programmes etc.

A central argument of the paper is that the hostile environment, racial discrimination and social discrimination under which many migrant Ghanaians abroad live compel them (especially the third generation migrants) to remain increasingly transnational. They have one foot at home and another abroad. They have to invest at home and maintain links with relatives, friends and social institutions that they are familiar with to gain the social status, recognition and identity that they are deprived off abroad. This paper has also shown that ties between Ghanaians at home and those abroad are promoted and supported by individual Ghanaians and institutions both in Ghana and abroad. Social, cultural and religious exchanges between Ghanaians abroad and those at home form the bedrock of many of the development programmes and projects and financial remittances that are often highlighted today. Material resources coming from Ghanaians abroad are reciprocated by the social, moral and religious support of individuals, relatives, groups and associations in Ghana. The latter is indispensable to the growing financial and material remittances to Ghana. Finally, the paper has indicated the emergence of new transnational social and religious institutions that are building networks in an increasingly globalized world.

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