FIELDS AND VISIONS

The 'African Personality' and Ghanaian Soccer

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Abstract

The concept of the "African Personality" was celebrated by the continent's first post-colonial President, Kwame Nkrumah. Sweeping to power in Ghana's first general election in 1951, Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party—inspired by Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois—espoused the doctrines of nationhood and self-reliance. The conceptual dimensions of Nkrumah's "African Personality" and the role he had in mind for Association Football (soccer) as an instrument of its expression are crucial points of this analysis. Here we attempt to locate Nkrumah's political ideal within the contemporary realities of the migration of young Ghanaian soccer talent, examining at the same time the socio-economic processes which act as "push" and "pull" mechanisms in the context of such migratory trends. While Nkrumah's "race-conscious," pan-African forces have been utilized in the face of post-colonial identifications, soccer loyalties and objectives which are far more immediate and parochial in character continue to supersede those surrounding national or "racial" interests. Ghana's domestic game and national selection are riven by ethnic and regional hostilities while interlopers from Europe—some acting alone, others as emissaries for European soccer clubs—have laid down roots in Ghana, recognizing the nation as a breeding ground for talented, and comparatively cheap, young soccer talent. We argue that such inveterate ethno-regional rivalries, along with the conditions of neoliberal capitalism and its instrumental system of uneven geographical development, have provided entry points for the post-colonial forces so maligned by Nkrumah. Furthermore, we question the wisdom of notions of belonging based on bounded units such as "race" and attendant expressions of "race-consciousness."

Keywords: Post-colonialism, Neoliberalism, W. E. B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah, African Personality, Ghana, Soccer

From now on we are no more a colonial but a free and independent people! . . . We are not waiting; we shall no more go back to sleep. Today, from now on there is a new African in the world. That African is ready to fight his own battles and show that the [B]lack man is capable of managing his own affairs. We are going to demonstrate to the world, to the other nations, young as we are, that we are prepared to lay our own foundations.

—Kwame Nkrumah (Losambe 2004, p. 44)

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After leading Ghana to independence from colonial rule in 1957, the nation's first President, Kwame Nkrumah, immediately sought to ensure that Europe understood the message of independent Ghana by making bold statements about Africa's strengths. The nation needed an institution around which its new sense of independent consciousness—which Nkrumah termed the "African Personality"—could cohere. In searching for such an institution, Nkrumah turned to Association Football (soccer). Formerly employed as a vehicle for anti-colonial protest, Nkrumah set about transforming the game into an expression of Ghana's post-colonial identity.

Nkrumah believed the game was capable of transmitting a sense of shared heritage (a "united African country") to the continent's youth. In pursuit of making this dream a reality, Nkrumah gave the Ghanaian national soccer team the nickname of "Black Stars"—a name derived from the Black Star line ships created by the Jamaican Black Nationalist Marcus Garvey. Garvey promoted the use of these ships to return the descendants of U.S.-based slaves to their African homeland and, at the same time, endorse global commerce amongst Black communities (Lewis 1987). In a move pertinent to Pan-Africanism, in 1957 four of the five independent African nations (Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Africa) formed the Confederation of African Soccer (CAF) and thereby gave African soccer its own administrative and voting power-bloc with Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), soccer's global governing body (Goldblatt 2006). The following year Nkrumah installed Ohene Djan—widely considered as one of Africa's most influential sports administrators—as both Director of Sport and Executive Secretary of the Ghana Football Association (GFA). Djan introduced sweeping changes: the Ghana National Football League was launched in Kumasi in 1958 and Djan sought to improve Ghana's national team by taking the best two players from each league team to form an elite squad, the Real Republikans (a name inspired by Alfredo Di Stefano's world-famous Real Madrid FC). His actions were vindicated when Ghana's Black Stars (with ten players drawn from Real Republikans) won the African Cup of Nations in 1963 and 1965 under the management of C. K. Gyamfi.[1] These victories quickly secured Ghana's position as the continent's leading soccer nation. The Ghanaian game now needed an enhanced international profile.

In 1964 Nkrumah inspired the creation of an inter-African Club Championship by donating 250 guineas towards the purchase of the Osagyefo Cup. In doing so he laid down the gauntlet for CAF and its newly-appointed leaders, by saying:

> It is encouraging to note that with progress towards the attainment of African unity at the political and economic levels, the interchange of sports and cultural activities is making its influence felt in the creation of a healthy atmosphere for African unity and independence. It is for this reason that I, as a citizen of Africa, have donated the Osagyefo trophy for the annual African clubs' championship to help consolidate the foundation of a continental movement to bring all Africa together in the field of sports. (Versi 1986, p. 33)

The current President of CAF, Cameroonian Issa Hayatou, has reflected on the symbolic importance of the confederation's creation:

> Born in the years of turmoil towards freedom, at the very beginning of the decolonisation of the [B]lack continent, and the newly recovered freedom of the African people, CAF immediately embodied tremendous hope, the one of African brotherhood stretching to the limits of the continent. (Darby 2002, pp. 35–36)

Global recognition for the African game would eventually follow. African nations were allocated only one of the sixteen places in the Mexico World Cup of 1970. This number had grown to two of twenty-four places by 1986. In the 2010 World Cup, hosted for the first time ever on the African continent, African nations occupied six of the thirty-two places.[2] That said, despite the Brazilian soccer icon Pele's prediction in 1977 that an African nation would win the World Cup by the end of the twentieth century, to date none has progressed beyond the quarter finals of FIFA's showcase quadrennial tournament (Runciman 2006). At the political level, the fifty-six votes available to CAF make Africa a very powerful power bloc at FIFA assemblies. With this power has followed controversy, as allegations of vote-buying by prospective and incumbent FIFA Presidents have emanated both from within and without CAF's group of constituent members.[3]

Here we seek to analyze Nkrumah's concept of the "African Personality" and his related hopes for Ghanaian soccer in light of the contemporary realities of Ghana's national game. Following interviews[4] with those involved in and charged with managing the development of soccer in Ghana, we argue that that the legacies of colonialism have proved impossible to overcome in the context of Ghanaian soccer. More specifically, rather than a tool for the unification of the nation and an instrument of resistance in the face of neo-colonial and neoliberal encroachment, the game has surrendered to both the imperatives of free-market capitalism and the intractability of ethno-regional rivalries. We therefore have to consider the limitations of Nkrumah's "African Personality" along with the global forces that have influenced the development of Ghanaian soccer. Firstly we should examine Nkrumah's vision for soccer as an expression of Pan-Africanism and, more specifically, the "African Personality."

A ONE MAN TEAM?

The soccer-related vision of Nkrumah was bound up with his own individual charisma. Following Nkrumah's ousting from power in 1966 by military coup, Ghana entered a period of soccer abeyance.[5] It wasn't until the late 1970s that the Black Stars emerged from the wilderness to win the African Cup of Nations in 1978 and again in 1982. Thanks to a firm belief in the importance of youth development, Ghana has been viewed for close to two decades as a hotbed of "raw" soccer talent. This belief originated in Ghana's first victory in the Under-17 World Cup in 1991 and its subsequent victory in 1995. Following these successes, scouts from European clubs have made regular visits to Ghana in search of talented young players, while the African Nations Cup held in Ghana in January 2008 was attended by talent scouts from no fewer than fifteen of the twenty English Premier League clubs seeking more experienced African players (Ornstein 2008). With Ghana's participation in the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, and European clubs clamoring to secure the signatures of Ghana's most promising young talent, one might argue that Nkrumah's vision for African soccer is becoming a reality. The players wearing the strip of the national team represent a proud post-colonial people. But do they espouse any sense of shared heritage?

The issue seems to center upon vague notions of consciousness. In 1973, Nkrumah wrote in his seminal text *Revolutionary Path* that, "An important aspect of Pan-Africanism is the revival and development of the 'African Personality,' temporarily submerged during the colonial period" (p. 205). This idea was bound up with a shared sense of African experience: of history, heritage, culture and ambitions. This

wasn't a simple ideological entity, a romantic notion invoked to create a sense of continental solidarity. For Nkrumah, the idea acted as a basis for agency; one which ordered people's actions as well as their perceptions: "I was determined, soon after Independence had been achieved in Ghana, to take practical steps to revive the cultural and spiritual unity of the African people . . . so that the African Personality would become a strong driving force within the African Revolution, and would at the same time become a factor to be reckoned with in international affairs" (p. 205). Nkrumah, whom many credit with coining the term "neo-colonialism," saw these forces as exhibiting a number of characteristic features:

> Neo-colonialism is based upon the principle of breaking up former large united colonial territories into a number of small non-viable States which are incapable of independent development and must rely upon the former imperial power for defense and even internal security . . . Africa is one continent, one people, and one nation . . . nationality, race, tribe and religion are irrelevancies. (Nkrumah 1970, pp. 87–88)

In an earlier exploration of this paradigm, Nkrumah (1965) had drawn analogies (possibly more metaphorical than actual) with a region of Europe that had witnessed centuries of ethno-religious conflict: "Balkanisation is the major instrument of neo-colonialism and will be found wherever neo-colonialism is practiced" (p. 14).

This unity was assumed rather than proven. Nkrumah's political and intellectual battles for a Pan-African identity were inseparable from the achievement of independent economic strength, and central to these objectives was the desire to abolish tribal chauvinisms—which Nkrumah considered a product of a sinister British colonial administration policy of "divide and rule"—and the mechanisms of neo-colonialism. In spite of Nkrumah's hopes for national and continental unity, the Ashanti people of central Ghana constituted a bedrock of opposition to Nkrumah's notion of the "African Personality" and his plans for a one-party state (Asare 2002). Furthermore, ethnic affiliations were so deeply entrenched that one of the men responsible for Ghana's success on the soccer field was unable to escape their politics and antagonisms. Many Ghanaians vehemently opposed the renaming of the national stadium in Accra as the "Ohene Djan Stadium" because of a prior conviction in the early 1950s, and because the Ga ethnic group that controlled the Accra lands upon which the stadium was built was not consulted by the central government at the outset of the project.

THE "AFRICAN PERSONALITY" AND THE ROLE OF SOCCER

As we have seen, Nkrumah saw soccer as a vehicle for the expression of the "African Personality." For him, this notion would be instrumental in the re-awakening of African self-consciousness and somehow manifest the bonds which united African people—their history, culture, shared experiences and aspirations. The key conceptual ingredients of Nkrumah's African Personality were inspired by a variety of other Pan-Africanist scholars. The man who laid the most clearly articulated intellectual foundations for Pan-Africanist ideology was the U.S. citizen W. E. B. Du Bois, whom Nkrumah invited to Ghana following independence in order to conduct scholarly research into African history, culture, thought, and resources. This research would ideally have culminated in the *Encyclopaedia Africana*; however, their plans for

this text were scuppered by Nkrumah's forced removal from power in 1966 by military coup.

Building on work conducted by Black nationalist Alexander Crummell and Liberian statesman Edward Wilmot Blyden, Du Bois's efforts to produce a coherent Pan-Africanist ideology—contemporaneous with almost the entire period of European colonial occupation of Africa—developed alongside what he called the "autobiography of a race concept." His ideas about Pan-Africanism were developed in the shadow of debates taking place in late nineteenth-century science which contested the status and utility of the concept of "race" (Appiah 1992; Stepan 1982). These debates not only nourished but directly informed Du Bois's ideas of African nationalism and the basis upon which it should be asserted. In 1897, Du Bois delivered a paper titled "The Conservation of the Races" to the American Negro Academy in Washington D.C. He noted that, "in our calmer moments we must acknowledge that human beings are divided into races" (p. 75). This did not mean that he subscribed unerringly to the view of those colleagues who defended the integrity of biological "races." The notion of "race" he subscribed to was (ostensibly) socio-historical: "races . . . while they perhaps transcend scientific definition, nevertheless, are clearly defined to the eye of the historian and sociologist" (pp. 75–76). He went on to list eight "distinctly differentiated races," the task for each being the discovery and articulation of its message—as a race:

> The full, complete Negro message of the whole Negro race has not as yet been given to the world . . . For the development of Negro genius, of Negro literature and art, of Negro spirit, only Negroes bound and welded together, Negroes inspired by one vast ideal, can work out in its fullness the great message we have for humanity . . . the Negro people, as a race, have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make. (pp. 78–85)

Ghanaian philosopher and novelist Anthony Appiah (1992) has argued that Du Bois's socio-historical version of "race" relies on many of the same presuppositions as the scientific, biological conception he was at pains to distance it from. Appiah contends that to talk of "a family of human beings, always of a common history" and "sharing common impulses and strivings" would mean that these common impulses have no place among the criterion for membership of a group—to be part of any socio-historical definition of "race" they would have to be identified *a posteriori*. And, as he puts it, "if that is so, we are left with the scientific conception (of race)" (p. 52).

This was not the aim of Nkrumah who shared Du Bois's concern to emphasize that his conceptual tool was free from any biological undercurrent: "the African Personality is merely a term expressing cultural and social bonds which unite Africans and people of African descent. It is a concept of the African nation, and is not associated with a particular state, language, religion, political system, or color of the skin" (1973, p. 205). Defending the notion against charges that it bore the imprint of a biological conception of "race"—and writing from an avowedly "Afrocentric" perspective—Daryl Zizwe Poe (2003) stresses that the "African Personality" was "not essentially a race-based one but a race conscious one" (p. 10).

The choice to focus on a unitary "African Personality" was curious given that throughout the first half of the twentieth century a band of Europe's colonial psychiatrists—among them H. L. Gordon, J. C. Carothers, J. F. Ritchie, and Simon Biesheuvel—had used identical nomenclature to describe a generalized African mindset which lacked all balance and initiative, lived in the present, and was abandoned to momentary passions (Mahone 2007; McCulloch 1995). Their accounts, in many

instances reliant on interpretations of Freudian orthodoxy, were used to justify colonial subjection and undermine calls for African liberation; using the authority of psychiatric discourse to label the African population as 'pathological' and by extension hardly prepared for the psychological demands of independent citizenship.

Despite the game growing out of the English middle-class and being brought to the Gold Coast by the British colonial authorities—its dissemination assisted by the schooling procedures of the Christian missionaries—the soccer-inspired "African Personality" would, in Nkrumah's analysis, propel the African Revolution (Armstrong and Giulianotti, 2001). This revolution would subvert the anthropologically-conceived racial hierarchies which peddled the myth of African inferiority and were used to justify the genocide and capitalist exploitation that moved in lockstep with the European powers' annexation of the continent. Nkrumah was not alone in earmarking soccer as a political instrument. Other African nations have adopted the game to restore a sense of shared heritage and autonomy.[6] In South Africa, where, following its introduction in the second half of the nineteenth century, soccer has consistently provided rallying points for Black commercial and political enterprises, most saliently in opposition to apartheid (Alegi 2004; Bose 1994; Keech 2001).

Nkrumah bemoaned the influx of Western "aid" into Africa. For him, "aid" was simply a guise behind which lurked high-interest loans from foreign governments and international organizations. The fact that his continent's raw materials were shipped north and returned commodified, with an according premium attached, saw Nkrumah scathing in his analysis that "'aid' turns out to be another means of exploitation, a modern method of capital export under a more cosmetic name. . . . Without a qualm it (imperialism) dispenses of its flags, and even with certain of its more hated expatriate officials" (1973, pp. 239–242). This meant, so he claimed, that imperialism "gave" independence to its former subjects to be followed by "aid" for their development. His claims are still relevant. The ex-pat officials have long gone but the flags of the UN are evident in Ghana; the flag of FIFA flies in the national soccer stadium. Both organizations donate hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars in "soccer aid" to Africa—not all is spent on the purposes for which it was intended. Through its *Goal!* project FIFA ostensibly helps the under-funded African game "develop" but also harbors the expectation that African delegates vote the "right" way when the FIFA Presidency is up for grabs (Armstrong 2004; Jennings 2005). It also sends monies, apparel and personnel to Africa as part of its post-2001 adoption of sport as a tool in both reconciliation and development policies. Nkrumah would almost certainly have recognized elements of neo-colonialism in the new forms of dependency instituted by organizations such as the UN and FIFA.

Invested with hope and structured by the intellectual legacy of Du Bois, Nkrumah's analysis of exports and "aid" raises questions as to why he would place a premium on developing soccer talent when there was a good chance that the most talented indigenous players would—when the opportunity arose—migrate north to further their careers and increase their incomes.[7] In formulating an answer, the starting point may be to see what, in light of Nkrumah's vision, significant actors in contemporary Ghanaian soccer make of the current situation.

"FARM" CLUBS AND "RAW" TALENT: SOCCER AND NEO-COLONIALISM?

In Nkrumah's argument, the struggle against neo-colonialism should not seek to prohibit the capital of the developed world from operating in less developed regions.

Aware of the dangers posed by dependence on foreign (and particularly European) investment, Nkrumah did not advocate the complete expulsion of foreign capital. The crux for him was the conditions under which this capital operated; in pursuit of self-reliance politicians must strive to prevent the financial power of the developed world being used to impoverish the less developed. In his words, "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside" (1965, p. 1). For Nkrumah, the domestic market and local economy must not be damaged by over-exposure to foreign capital or any burdensome conditions attached to external investment. More specifically, such investment should not act as a cloak under which the African continent's most valuable natural and human resources are extracted; this extraction only hinders the development of local economies. The politico-economic realities of Ghanaian soccer present this ideal with some obvious challenges.

Some fifty years after the formation of CAF and Nkrumah's installment of Ohene Djan as Executive Secretary of the GFA, soccer "academies" are big business in Ghana. The proliferation of these "academies" occurred after Ghana's success at the FIFA Under-17 World Championship in 1991 and 1995. In 2008, English journalist Dan McDougall suggested that some 500 soccer academies were operating in Accra alone (McDougall 2008). Some institutions, while bearing the title "Academy," are in reality no more than enclosures containing a flat surface wherein children can kick a ball.[8] Some are more sophisticated, enforcing a policy of restricted entry and—by European standards—elementary facilities, not much beyond pitch-markings and goalposts. Some of these entities are African-owned, some have European funding; others have been established and funded by former Ghanaian soccer professionals. The purpose of most of the academies, regardless of origin or nomenclature, is to identify, nurture and sell young talent—the preferred market is Europe. The most prestigious academies are those part-owned by European clubs or those that claim a European connection. The echoes of colonialism are therefore distinct.

To critics these systems of player identification and recruitment are reminiscent of the way that Ghana's natural resources were extracted during the days of British colonial rule. The terminology alone is a clue. Lone agents or European clubs operate "farm" academies in order to locate and begin to process Ghana's "raw" soccer talent. Further refinement of such raw materials takes place after the transferal of players to Europe, whereupon a financial premium is attached after more "expert" training in the technical side of the game. Players thus become commodities traded for much larger sums of money than the amounts received by the "farm" clubs or local teams from which they were originally transferred.[9]

The most respected academy in Ghana is connected to the Dutch club Feyenoord of Rotterdam. The academy, which goes by its full name of the "Feyenoord Fetteh Academy," was created by the Dutch entity in 1998. Located in the Gomo Fetteh region just outside Accra, the Academy at its peak accommodated forty-eight young players aged between ten and eighteen. Most were drawn from Ghana but others came from the Ivory Coast and Nigeria. As part of the arrangement, Feyenoord also purchased the Ghanaian First Division club Kasoa Salgando as a means to "acclimatize" academy players to the demands of top-level, albeit local, soccer. Besides soccer coaching, the Academy required that all players partake in formal education up to secondary school level. How seriously this was taken by both student and academy officials is not fully known. In 2001, UNICEF part-sponsored the Academy and even provided teaching personnel. As part of the UN's promotion of soccer as facilitative of social objectives the academy players were contracted—

presumably because of their "role model" status—to travel the country instructing fellow citizens in HIV awareness. In its publicity, Feyenoord state that the academy's aim was to provide two players annually to its mother club in Rotterdam. To this end some players would be sent to Feyenoord's Belgian feeder club, Westerloo, in order to gain experience—and crucially, an EU passport—before ideally becoming stars of the Dutch professional soccer league, the Eredivisie.[10] A few players made the journey north, but none ever became established within Feyenoord's first team. However, Feyenoord were not the only Dutch club to establish a Ghanaian talent-scouting base.

In 1997, Ajax Amsterdam signed a joint venture with the Ghanaian Premier League team Ashanti Goldfield. This saw Ajax purchase a fifty-one percent stake in the club, with Ashanti Goldfield Company Limited owning the remaining forty-nine percent. Similar to the Feyenoord arrangement, Ajax sought to take two players annually to Amsterdam. However, in December 2002 the venture was abruptly cancelled with no reason publicly given (Pathmamanoharan 2003). The arrangement was clearly detrimental to the Ghanaian entity's domestic status; Goldfields won three consecutive titles between 1993 and 1996. After Ajax arrived in 1997, Goldfields suffered and have not won anything in local soccer since. In a personal conversation (in April 2008), Mumini Kadiri, former Ajax scout in the Eastern Region, stated that the reason Ajax left was because it wanted to benefit only from the sale of academy-level players and to this end was not interested in Ashanti's senior players. Ajax felt it unjust that it had to sponsor both junior and senior sections of the club, when it was only seeking to benefit from the youth system. Six months after the deal was terminated Ajax was fined 6600 euros by the Royal Netherlands Soccer Association (KNVB) for illegally employing three boys under the age of sixteen. One of the three teenagers was a fourteen-year-old Ghanaian named John Quansah. His presence at Ajax was technically illegal as Ajax acquired his services by applying for a three-month as opposed to a one-year visa. Receiving an expense allowance of just 180 euros per month during his time at Ajax, the club was avoiding paying him the legal rate of 1350 euros monthly. Training intensively, Quansah picked up an injury and consequently returned to Ghana; Ajax promised to check on his progress. However, Quansah claims he never saw anyone from the club again (Pathmamanoharan 2003).

Such flows of young labor and the issue of exchange value demand serious political and legal inquiry. A good place to start such questioning is with those elected to oversee the organization of soccer in Ghana. When asked about the role of youth academies in an interview in September, 2007, Dr. Owusu-Ansah, Director of Sports Development in the Ghanaian Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, argued that most people involved in their establishment were motivated by potential income. He was adamant that their priming of young players for the European market represented a form of slavery, in stating:

> If you talk about the old time slavery they came to pick the strongest men, the most healthy looking people to actually go and work and produce for them. Now in this modern age it has turned into looking for talented children. . . . It is actually truly modern slavery. . . . Most of these people that come in have the intention of spotting talents and they count on how much they can market the player and how much they can get. Everybody thinks of their profitability in their establishing academies. . . . Nobody does anything for the love of it.

Dr. Owusu-Ansah failed to provide concrete instances of this "modern slavery," preferring to discuss the issue in more abstract terms. Focusing on the generalities of

a problem often takes for granted the immensity of its scale, and thereby promotes an air of resignation. However, to level this accusation at Ghana's entire political elite—both past and present—would be unjustified. Recognizing the scope for impropriety within the Ghanaian game, in 1999 former President Jerry Rawlings asked Justice Nasiru Sulemana Gbadegbe to probe the activities of officials involved in the administration of soccer in Ghana, including an investigation into 150 overseas player transfers. Among those implicated in the inquiry were Nana Sam Brew Butler, the former Chairman of the Ghana Football Association and current Chairman of Cape Coast Ebusua Dwarfs, Ade Coker, the former Vice Chairman of the GFA and current Chairman of Accra Great Olympics, Jones Abu Alhassan, GFA Member and management member of Tamale Real United and George Adusei Poku, former Chairman of Asante Kotoko and current Chairman of Swedru All Blacks (Agyeman-Duah et al., 2000). The implication of these figures did not (in most cases) preclude their future involvement in Ghanaian soccer.

ACADEMIC ISSUES: TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS AND THE MARKET

Ghanaian academies seek to meet the demands of European clubs for young players by discovering and contracting players at ever-tender ages. Kwaku Ofori-Abrokwaa, Team Manager of MM Frankfurt,[11] an academy based in Akwatia in the Kwaebibirem District of the Eastern Region, described the academy's recruitment process in an interview in September, 2007: "When they are small boys, we contact their parents, and negotiate with them, and they come here and stay here." Asked about the duration of contracts signed by parents and/or young players, he responded: "Around three or four years, or as long as we can get them—a big contract. . . . If they're not good enough we'll ask them to leave (but) we want to sell them, then we have some funding for the academy." The facts of the matter are the following: children as young as eight are signed-up to an academy, often by virtue of an informal "legal" agreement between the academy and the child's parents/guardians. The ethos is consonant with the imperatives of capitalism—obtain an unrefined, low-priced product to nurture and sell on at a higher price.

The desire to move young, local-born talent to Europe was nourished by Ghana's professional soccer clubs. This had consequences for those employed by the national set-up. Discussing the recent resignation of a Ghanaian national junior team coach, Dr. Owusu-Ansah explained that the coach complained of pressure from domestic club managers who recognized the significance of their young players being included in national junior team squads: "He said the managers simply don't care about the results; they just want to get their players playing the junior team to improve their market value." Potential market value thus competed with objective soccer ability. The role of personality was second to marketability and branding, while the potential glory of the nation to be achieved through soccer had to compete with financial self-interest. This was a politics of the belly played out through the bodies of children.

Stories of minimum outlay for maximum return were frequent. English-born Joe Mulberry is a scout and coach for Right to Dream Academy[12] in Dawu, Eastern Region, a registered charity which operates on a non-profit, self-sustainable basis; all profits from its consultancy service, team hosting, and renting of facilities are re-invested into the running of the academy. He described, in an interview in September, 2007, how a rival academy[13] sustained its levels of profitability:

> The main person who runs soccer to make money is the guy who runs Liberty Professionals. It's very successful in terms of money making. He puts very little into the team and refuses to enter African competitions because it's too expensive . . . he doesn't pay that much, gets them (young players) on small contracts (i.e., small wages).

Mulberry did not mention the names of these "African competitions." This is curious given that Liberty Professionals are a member of the Ghanaian Premier League but have yet to qualify for the CAF Champions League or Confederations Cup.

Mulberry explained the vulnerability of young players who attended trials at his place of employ:

> It's a pretty intense three weeks. Especially for some who are ten years old, to be away from home for three weeks. . . . Normally we make a decision in the third week, sometimes a bit longer if we're really not sure about a player—he needs a bit more time to show if he can be coached, and if he can learn, which is a big problem with Ghanaian, or African players—can they actually learn? A lot of them can play, but they don't know what they're doing. . . . Most African players will fail because of the mental side of it and how they can't deal with the new situation they're in. . . . We have 'life classes' which are mainly directed at sport but some are based in Christian sport programs.

Along with such training in "the mental side of it," the readying of African players for the European market at times involves the manipulation of personal information. Questions have often been raised as to whether African teams tamper with the stated ages of promising players. For example, allegations that the stated age of Ghanaian soccer phenomenon, Freddy Adu, is inaccurate have been recurrent (Santos 2009). The assumed tampering is a form of market deceit, but is it inherently deceptive or a calculated response to European demand for ever-younger, "rawer" talent? Allegations of age-fixing often cite the lack of success achieved by African nations in senior competitions relative to their number of victories at age level tournaments (Under-17, Under-19, etc). Mark Gleeson (2003), one of Africa's most renowned soccer journalists, has described this failure to follow through on youthful promise as a "nagging credibility problem."

This is not a one-way process. Tom Vernon, Manchester United's Head Scout in Africa and Director of Right to Dream, interviewed in October, 2007, believes that it is African players themselves who at times lie about their ages because of pressure from Europe:

> The players do do it, there is no disputing that but a lot of it is driven by the European market rather than by the African players . . . they don't physically mature as quickly. But the European markets want players to fit the system and come and play from eighteen to thirty-two. I think Roger Milla is probably really the only one who told the truth and he was still scoring goals in the World Cup aged forty-something.[14]

Vernon's allegation that the European market has a large bearing on the issue of age-tampering in Ghanaian soccer points to the wider market-friendly measures imposed on the Ghanaian economy under the neoliberal policies of multinational organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Crawford 2009). Attached to the debts Ghana has

accrued from the IMF in order to make payments on private loans were conditions to ensure the "liberalization" of the Ghanaian economy. These orthodox neoliberal measures, collectively termed "Structural Adjustment Programs" (SAPs), were designed to increase money flow into the debtor nation by promoting exports in order to pay off its debts and, broadly speaking, promote the shrinking of the state and the valorization of individual responsibility. In more concrete terms, the implementation of SAPs has endorsed labor deregulation, capital mobility, privatization, trade liberalization, and the reduction of public expenditure (Harvey 2005; Wacquant 2009).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Ghana was a faithful adherent to the neoliberal policies of the Bretton Woods Institutions such as the IMF. However, following over two decades of stabilization and adjustment programs, Ghana remained highly indebted and poor. In the mid-1990s Ghana was ranked 133 on the Human Development Index (HDI), in 2004 its ranking was 131, while the most recent rankings saw Ghana appear in 152nd place (UNDP 2009). Policy failures have been blamed on endogenous factors, including bad governance and policy implementation, corruption and a lack of transparency. In human terms almost half of Ghana's population lives in absolute poverty, while commitment to privatization has led to user-fees in health and education, putting both public goods out of reach of large swaths of the population. Though a rhetorical shift in the policy of the IMF has seen SAPs displaced by Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) which promote local ownership and social capital, what both pragmatic neoliberalism and the purer neoclassical model it replaced have in common is an almost exclusive focus on reforming the domestic economy, and less on transforming the disparities of the global economy, largely ignoring the call by African states for market access, reduction of tariffs, fair trade and increased foreign aid (Smith 2006). As Nkrumah would have been quick to argue, and Vernon's claims attest, the liberalization of the Ghanaian economy has hardly spelled the liberation of the Ghanaian people from the iniquities of the capitalist world-system and its logic of uneven geographic development (Harvey 1989; Soja 1989).

AGENTS OF CHANGE?

Over the past decade more and more people—native and otherwise—have staked a claim to the status of "soccer agent" in Ghana. As noted by observers such as BBC journalist Clive Myrie (2008) and Culture Foot Solidaire,[15] Ghanaians give those who claim to assist the passage of potential young players the title of "middlemen," while such "middlemen" prefer the more official-sounding "agent." The motives for their "assisting" of young players are not always transparent. Such individuals are rarely licensed; of Africa's 367 officially licensed agents, Ghana only has five percent (eighteen) despite the nation being considered as one of the continent's main centers of player movement (FIFA 2008). In this milieu it is not rare for eight-year-old boys to have their fathers and uncles acting in such an ill-defined capacity. In other cases trusting parents relinquish the fate of their children to smooth-talking "agents" who talk-up their child's talent and the ability of the Academy to bring soccer-related riches beyond the parents' dreams. In the context of global soccer, the boundaries of the permissible and the ethical are negotiable—and African soccer is no exception. In Ghana the absence of any effective "policing" of procedures by the Ghana FA, the Ministry of Youth or indeed soccer's governing bodies is troubling.

All interviewees attested to the presence of "rogue agents" in Ghana. Defending the absence of any legislative attempt to control such people, Dr. Owusu-Ansah argued that "the government has not interfered with the work of soccer agents. We

allowed the Ghana Soccer Association to scrutinize the agent's license to see whether they are FIFA registered." Meanwhile he estimated that Ghana hosted only "one or two" of the Africa-based agents accredited by FIFA. There were far more men involved in this capacity than was officially recognized. Baba Jamal, Deputy General Secretary of the National Democratic Congress and Owner/Director of the Frankfurt Academy, in a September, 2007 interview, spoke of numerous "rogue" agents who systematically targeted rural areas which evidenced high levels of both poverty and illiteracy. Their choice of destination is calculated: "these people (rogue agents) go there and say 'I'll help you go to Europe'. And the family will even sell their house and give it to him, and that is the end of it . . ." Legally, soccer clubs both in Africa and Europe are not permitted to deal with unlicensed agents. However, the unlicensed agent overcomes this proscription by working with a licensed agent, the monies are worked out between the two parties and all is seemingly above board. Nobody probes too deeply into the whys and wherefores of such movement. The few instances of such research have produced very troubling findings, not least the recent work by Norwegian journalists Lars Backe Madsen and Jens M. Johansson (2008) whose exposé of the transfer saga involving Nigerian teenager John Obi Mikel detailed allegations of death threats, kidnapping and illegal contracts.

The conduct of indigenous agents factored in the exploitation of children for short-term gain. What emerged throughout discussion with aspiring players, academy coaches and parents was that African parents and some Ghanaian players rarely trusted "Black" African agents. Joe Mulberry spoke of some young players' tendency to unquestioningly sign for "White" agents who were implicitly assumed to have more personal integrity and better access to soccer's global network. As a consequence, the European entrepreneur "can go about it signing loads of different players. They're easy to sign as they want to sign for a White man," Mulberry said. This potential for exploitation was not always identified by Ghanaian interviewees. Baba Jamal thought the presence of White European agents was good for soccer as most insisted upon minimum standards of professionalism from the academies and coaches with whom they dealt: "European agents who come here and want to insist on certain things . . . and if you don't do it, they won't accept them." Such arrangements can be very lucrative. Dutch writers Broere and Van de Drift (1997) explain how an Italian agent brought boys in their mid-teens from Ghana to European clubs in exchange for twelve percent of their monthly salaries. Australian sports journalist Les Murray, interviewed in August, 2007, thought such an arrangement was equitable in comparison with other deals he knew of: "FIFA thinks it's immoral for an agent to collect more than ten percent. But there have been cases where an agent has collected eighty percent and the player doesn't know."

While very few aspirants "make it" as soccer superstars, others, having travelled to Europe and failed to make the grade, end up in unskilled jobs or in relative penury. Having gambled and lost, the issue then turns to blame. One European soccer agent operating in Africa, the Italian-born Domenico Ricci, believed that blaming "soccer" was wrong. According to him:

> CAF is hiding behind reality. The young players are leaving because in Africa there is no money and too little competition. They (CAF) should be working to make the whole structure African soccer more professional. There are good agents and bad agents. Some of the unlicensed locals have no real idea how to operate, and some of the Europeans are unreliable too. (Oliver 2004)

In this human and ecological context clear elements of neo-colonialism remain; European agents operating in Ghana represent a soccer and world-system which

marginalizes the economies of the Southern hemisphere. Despite Nkrumah's fears that Ghana would continue to rely on former imperial powers for assistance and security, standards of professionalism and integrity in Ghanaian soccer are today identified with "White," European visitors. Furthermore—and again consonant with imperatives of neoliberal policies which espouse market individualism and the entrepreneurial spirit—indigenous agents exhibit a clear willingness to exploit fellow Ghanaians for self-aggrandizement, following the calculus of enterprise and risk rather than any ethical attachment to notions of unity and national or continental independence.

PROMOTING NATIONAL SERVICE?

Besides questions of morality surrounding the methods by which Ghanaian youngsters are made more marketable to European buyers, the migration of young players has important implications for the standard of domestic soccer in Ghana. This issue challenges Nkrumah's vision of national pride and the creation and maintenance of a level playing field with the former colonialists.[16] Nkrumah's views resonated in the words of Dr. Owusu-Ansah who lamented the fact that Ghana's best players no longer plied their trade at home:

> You cannot expect a league system where you don't have good talents playing in the league to be successful. . . . That constantly lowers the standard of the league in this country whilst it's always improving the standard of soccer elsewhere.

Kwaku Ofori-Abrokwaa, Team Manager of MM Frankfurt, echoed these sentiments and noted that the effects of migration were also being felt within the Ghanaian national team:

> If the quality players leave for greener pastures you see that the exciting players are no longer in the league so spectators may not want to go the stadia anymore. It has a negative effect on our league . . . it makes national team cohesion very hard because the players don't know each other and it's expensive for us to get everyone together.

By contrast, Baba Jamal argued that such migration has had minimal negative effect on domestic soccer:

> People go to trials . . . and come back with fresh ideas. Teams now want to measure themselves with European levels so they are doing everything to improve their standards. They are doing well at the national level not because all of them are from here, but because some of them are playing in difficult and more competitive leagues. So, I don't think it has affected our situation . . . it has made us more professional.

Jamal's views with regard to professionalism were echoed by Dr. Owusu-Ansah:

> We recognize the fact that most of the talents that leave Ghana improve upon their standard of play because of improved facilities and quality training, good nutrition, good medical care and of course expert techniques.

While mindful of the way that the European market and its demands have shaped the commodification of young Ghanaian players, Joe Mulberry argued that, regardless of the ethics of treating human beings as "tradable objects," it was unlikely that players such as "(Michael) Essien or (Sulley) Muntari will care that they have been used as commodities." Ghana's most talented players did not migrate to Europe against their will. Not only were facilities immeasurably better in Europe, but the financial rewards were exorbitant in relation to the wages on offer in Ghana's domestic professional league (Oliver 2004). Having moved to Europe, many Ghanaian players send regular payments home in order to support close friends and family. This has become an increasing trend among Africa's economic migrants. In 2005 the amount of money sent home by Africans via "remittances" totaled approximately $17 billion (Mutumi 2005). Charity director Mr. Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie (2005) suggested the figure could be as high as $200 billion. This money has become crucial to Ghana's domestic economy, though while big monies arrive in the shape of such remittances, many Ghanaian professionals continue to leave for the United States or the United Kingdom in the hope of securing a future for their families (Bump 2006).

The debate over the "brain drain" seems to be drowned out by shrill accusations of "slavery" and the "brawn drain" of young soccer professionals.[17] Few could fail to admit that what Europe offers is devastatingly attractive. Furthermore, the history of the global game is based on player movement from poor clubs to affluent ones, with the consequences always favoring the rich clubs nested within rich economies. The movement of talented players to soccer's core is integral to the game and as a result the global game has developed a dependency culture which is largely consonant with the dynamics of the economic world-system (Darby 2002).[18]

POLITICS AND UNITY IN GHANAIAN SOCCER

Throughout Ghanaian history political machinations have influenced proceedings on the soccer pitch, with the domestic game hosting one of the most politically-driven rivalries in African sport (Fridy and Brobbey, 2009). Since its inception in 1957, the sixteen-team Ghana Premier League has been dominated by the nation's two biggest clubs, the Accra-based Hearts of Oak and Kumasi-based Asante Kotoko. The former is considered the team of the National Democratic Congress Party (NDC);[19] the latter is the team of the New Patriotic Party (NPP).[20] The NDC, led by Jerry Rawlings, held power between 1981 and 1990. During this period Hearts of Oak coincidentally won several domestic trophies, attracting the nation's best players and biggest sponsorship deals (Fridy and Brobbey, 2009). Since the NPP came to power in 2000, Asante Kotoko took over as the nation's dominant soccer power until Hearts eventually re-gained the championship in 2004. Only one other team besides Hearts and Asante has won the Premier league since 1977.

Soccer cultures divide as much as they unite. Asante Kotoko's fan base is largely drawn from the Asante people who originate from the Kumasi region; Hearts of Oak enjoy support from the Ga ethnic group. The rivalry is bitter and long-standing. In 1990, when Hearts of Oak were eliminated from the African Champions League, Kotoko supporters took to the streets to celebrate. Fixtures between these rivals have resulted in riots, widespread criminal damage and the loss of lives. In a 1989 fixture between the two clubs, the Kotoko player Sarfo Gyanfi refused to shake hands when the teams were presented to President Rawlings prior to kick-off because he thought the President had interfered in match officiating in previous fixtures between the two clubs. In May 2001 violence between rival fans at the fixture held at the Asante

Kotoko stadium caused panic amongst police and spectators, with the resulting stampede causing the death of 126 people (Darby et al., 2004). The clubs received no punishment for the behavior of their fans; the police instead were deemed culpable for inciting violent behavior. A 2004 Hearts-Kotoko fixture was postponed until January 2005, ostensibly to avoid the fixture clashing with the Presidential and Parliamentary election which took place on December 7, 2004. The game was considered too volatile to be played around election time. In its organization and support the game in Ghana has thus exhibited a spirit of internal antagonism not envisaged by Nkrumah.

Even at boardroom level antipathy is evident. In October 2000, Oheneba Charles, a member of the Ghana FA, accused the FA Chairman, Alhaji Jawula, of attempting to implicate him in an alleged bribery scandal involving Asante Kotoko. A national newspaper claimed that Charles agreed to accept one million cedies ($686,000) in exchange for "showing leniency" towards Asante Kotoko. The clubs themselves have contributed to their mutual antipathy. In 2005 each accused the other of match-fixing. Exasperated expats have left the country in the face of such corruption and widespread malfeasance. The former Barnsley FC and Grimsby Town FC player David Booth managed Asante Kotoko for just one month. Upon resigning he denounced the corruption he had witnessed and questioned the competence of the Ghanaian Soccer Association. He also described the near-impossibility of winning away fixtures due to corrupt referees (Oliver 2004).

Other commentators believe the Ghanaian FA is inherently corrupt (Tetteh 2009). In 2001 the then Chairman of the GFA, Ben Koufie, admitted to receiving $25,000 at a reception organized by the Governor of Nigeria's River State after a decisive World Cup qualifying fixture against Nigeria—a match that Ghana lost, with Nigeria thereby qualifying for the 2006 World Cup Finals. Despite this, Koufie's fellow GFA members passed a vote of confidence in him and exonerated him from any wrong-doing. However, in May 2005 the GFA sacked Nyaho Tcmakloe from the position of Chair after only one year in office. Facing charges of criticizing the Executive Council and describing the administration of Ghanaian soccer as "absurd," he threatened to identify those whose negative practices had plunged the game into its present quagmire. Rather than deal with the allegation, the GFA sacked the accuser.

The problem of soccer-related corruption in Ghana seems intractable. In early 2007, four clubs in the Ghanaian second division were demoted and suspended for one year following charges of match fixing. Going into the final game of the season, Great Mariners and Nania FC (whose owner is former Ghanaian international Abede Pele), were both attempting to gain promotion. At half-time in their respective matches the score was 1-0. At full-time, Mariners had won 28-0 and Nania won 31-0, which meant Nania gained promotion by virtue of goal difference. It was widely claimed that money changed hands at half time in both games, although all parties protested their innocence. In May 2007, Nania FC and their opponents that day, Okwawu United of Nkawkaw, had their suspensions overturned by the GFA because of a lack of evidence. However, in September all four clubs were banned from playing for one season and each fined $5000; Abede Pele was cleared of all charges of match-fixing (Jones 2007).

Those having to deal with such issues gave their opinions on the scale of corruption in Ghanaian soccer. Baba Jamal summed up the situation as he saw it:

> It's improving but not too fast. I am speaking as a politician and as an administrator, because both aspects have the same problem—corruption in our gover-

> nance and corruption in high places. It starts at the top and down. We can't just solve the soccer corruption problem. . . . We have to keep it under some manageable level.

GFA General Secretary Kofi Nsiah, when interviewed in September, 2007, was more pessimistic, stating that:

> One way or another it (corruption) is a problem in every facet of life because if for instance you have trained and trained well and there is an element of corruption in the competition then the competition loses its value and then people lose interest in the game. Soccer is a commodity that we need to package and sell. If an element rears its head in the game, then people will lose confidence in it, people will not attend matches and people will not sponsor it commercially because with corruption the results of matches are already predetermined and it is a big issue that we are against.

His views were supported by Kwaku Ofori-Abrokwaa: "Yes, it (corruption) is a problem. Especially when we play these league matches (against) those who have money and influence. . . . The referees are not very fair—you can influence them."

While the GFA talk the language of business, treating the domestic game as a product to be packaged, marketed and sold, the corruption endemic to the domestic game sees a weary resignation on the part of those who try to prosper within it. Nkrumah's trenchant assertion that "tribe and religion are irrelevancies" has hardly been borne out in the context of Ghana's political landscape and the realpolitik of Ghanaian soccer. Ethno-regional chauvinisms have been deepened by the Ghanaian nation's attachment to soccer as successful entrepreneurs seek to buy influence for their ethnic or regional grouping. The kleptocracy that governs so much of Ghanaian soccer—one that subordinates unity and the long-term development of the domestic game to parochial loyalties and short-term gain—pushes promising talent to other continents; just as "White" interlopers are identified as more reliable and capable agents, the standards of professionalism to which the organizers of Ghanaian soccer aspire are identified with the former imperial powers. Faced with the consequences of Ghana's unwieldy insertion into the capitalist world economy and the conditions of its continued membership as mediated though organizations such as the IMF, in conclusion we should question whether the faith invested by Nkrumah in soccer and the African Personality was misplaced.

SOCCER AND THE DYNAMICS OF BELONGING

Nkrumah's vision for Ghanaian soccer has failed to become the reality he anticipated. If we remind ourselves of the rousing rhetoric which appears in our epigraph, one could argue that soccer does permit the male representatives of Ghana to fight battles on the world stage in their role as proxy warriors. The most recognizable Ghanaians in the world are so because of their soccer abilities. Players such as Michael Essien are a huge source of pride and identification for the people of Ghana while the Black Stars remain a touchstone for expressions of nationalism (Brown 2007); indeed, the team's popularity has even gained a foothold in neighboring countries (Commey 2007). That said, the European-funded academies that have arrived in search of cheap, young players with the objective of flying them north are the most revered. Other academies have to unearth "raw" talent only to sell it to

European clubs for profit. Indigenous "rogue" agents seek their share of the spoils, while the propositions of those hailing from Europe—licensed or not—prove attractive to young Ghanaians. In domestic soccer, bitter ethnic and regional enmities are a powerful influence and allegations of corruption are widespread. Those interviewed lament this state of affairs and welcome the "professionalism" of European interlopers—both in the shape of clubs and agents.

Nkrumah's hope of a restored "African Personality" providing a basis for belonging alongside the ability of soccer to act as a unifying force, more specifically as an articulation of African oneness, remains a dream. He identified the recovery of the "African Personality" as a mechanism of post-colonial belonging; however, the contemporary realities of Ghanaian soccer demonstrate that this sense of shared heritage cannot be readily "recovered" (if, indeed, it ever existed). The compound effects of African heritage and European intrusion provide the only adequate explanation of the present situation. The "African Personality" would have to be recovered amidst the legacy of British colonialism and, more specifically, the way it conditioned Ghana's incorporation into the capitalist world system and judged its readiness for independence. It was this system which guaranteed the continued intrusion of colonial forces under the guise of neo-colonialism and the related imperatives of neoliberal capitalism. As C. L. R. James (1977) commented in his account of Nkrumah and the latter's role in the Ghana Revolution,

> On the night of the celebrations of independence, Nkrumah told a vast crowd that Ghana was "forever free," a sentiment excusable and under the circumstances legitimate. But in the event of, for example, a civil war in Ghana, British Imperialism, disguising itself in the mantle of the United Nations, will go in again to protect British life and British property. (p. 28)

Asked whether his government followed Nkrumah's vision of using soccer to showcase the strength of an independent Ghana, Dr. Owusu-Ansah, Ghana's Minister of Science, Education and Sports, replied: "That is not the case now. There has been a paradigm shift from that vision. We now want to use sports for development and peace. We believe in the vision of the United Nations in sports for development and peace." As his comments clearly demonstrate, Ghana now welcomes the UN in terms of both its philosophy and its donations, be they "development" or sport-led.[21]

CONCLUSION

The fate of Ghanaian soccer has been determined by its place in the game's world-system, itself largely a result of the capitalist world-system's hierarchical structure (Darby 2002). As already noted, the SAPs attached to IMF loans have opened up the Ghanaian economy, increasing exports at rates favorable to large transnational firms and other wealthy investors. Soccer has been no exception. In 2000 Michael Essien was bought by French club Bastia from the Ghanaian side Liberty Professional for an undisclosed fee. He was sold three years later to Olympique Lyonnais for $8.17 million. In 2005, Lyon and Chelsea agreed a $37.6 million fee for the midfielder, which at the time made Essien Chelsea's most expensive signing of all time. This chain of transfer deals reflects the commercial and economic circuitry of soccer's world system. Essien gave Ghana global publicity and sporting renown and made money for both his indigenous people and the European clubs who traded him. But there is still a feeling of unease in the monies involved and, more specifically, the sum

that the Ghanaian club, Liberty Professional, may have received when this string of transactions was set in train.

Any criticism of the economic complexity of contemporary soccer should also consider the game's ability—stated or assumed—to act as an instrument of unity and inclusion. It is a global idiom and the aesthetics of the game can reduce the world to a common humanity (Foer 2004). Nkrumah was correct to recognize the power that the game has; African fans have at times cast aside national rivalries in favor of wider Pan-African and post-colonial identifications, while the recent World Cup in post-apartheid South Africa was an opportunity for powerful expressions of African unity—Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Algeria adopted Puma's "African Unity Kit" as their official third uniform for the competition (McNicoll 2010; Vidacs 2004). But as this paper has shown, soccer cannot be relied upon to be a unifying force; it is as likely to reflect local antagonisms as it is to salve them (Armstrong and Giulianotti, 1999, 2001).

If he were alive today Nkrumah would doubtless lament the continuing influence of neo-colonial powers over his home nation in the form of the neoliberal measures forced upon its domestic economy—measures which have seen Ghana's marginal position in the global market entrenched rather than meliorated. However, the foregoing account attests as well to the many complex and multifarious senses of belonging which are at times structured by, embroidered and/or expressed through sporting loyalties. It has underlined the difficulty such identities pose for those who would seek to mobilize them through appealing to the bounded and ungainly units of "race" and nation, "tribe" or religion. In Ghana, ethnic rivalry remains relevant as does reliance on former imperial powers for policies and standards of professionalism and efficiency, in soccer as in the wider politico-economic sphere.

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NOTES

1. The Africa Cup of Nations, also referred to as the African Nations Cup (ANC), is the main international association soccer competition in Africa. It is sanctioned by the Confederation of African Soccer (CAF) and was first held in 1957. Since 1968, it has been held every two years.
2. The increasing number of World Cup berths allocated to African nations has met with resistance. See Darby (2005) for discussion of this issue in the context of broader First World-Third World power relations.
3. Sepp Blatter's re-election as FIFA President in 2002 was largely dependent on votes from members of CAF. According to Farra Addo, Vice-President of CAF and President of the Somalian Soccer Association, many votes were bought. Indeed, Addo claimed to have been offered $100,000 to vote for Blatter (CNN.com/WORLD 2002).
4. All interviews were carried out on behalf of the researchers by Timothy Skinner.
5. Lieutenant General Joseph Arthur Ankrah, who came to power in 1966 following a military coup, sacked Ohene Djan from his position with the sports Ministry and dismantled Real Republikans, while soccer didn't register on the political agenda of Kofi AbrefaBusia, Prime Minister of Ghana between 1969 and 1972.
6. Other African leaders such as Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia, Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria and Mobutu Sésé Seko in Zaire sought to employ soccer as an instrument of nationalism and independence following the decolonization of sub-Saharan Africa.
7. As early as the 1920s and 1930s, when Egyptians were among the first African imports to Britain and Algerian immigrant workers and students first arrived in France, Africans had made their presence felt in Europe's domestic leagues (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001).

8. Analyzing the flow of soccer talent from Africa to Europe, Darby et al. (2007) proposed a four-tier typology. In the first are African-founded academies; these are both owned and operated by National federations or African club sides. Other academies are privately funded, quite often by ex-players seeking to invest their former earnings. The next tier is occupied by non-affiliated or ad hoc academies. Established by inexperienced staff inadequately equipped to manage such establishments, the lack of funding available to these academies is often reflected in their poor standard of facilities. The final category contains African-European academies; these involve an agreement between an existing African club or academy and a European club, or a European club purchasing a controlling stake in an African satellite club.
9. For a comparative view on the issue of the commoditization of athletes, and more specifically on the metaphor of slavery, see William Rhoden's (2006) analysis of Black athletes in American sports.
10. Belgian regulations allow individuals to gain EU citizenship after spending a comparatively short period in the country. This is a factor in relationships between clubs such as that between Feyenoord and Westerloo and Arsenal FC's former relationship with Belgian club Beveren.
11. Affiliated by the Ghanaian FA, MM Frankfurt is based in Akwatia, in the Kwaebibirem District of the Eastern Region, home to the largest diamond mine in Ghana. The academy's owner is Baba Jamal, a charismatic politician who is the Deputy National Secretary for the NDC Party and was the NDC's candidate for Akwatia in the December 2008 elections. Mumini Kadiri (now the Head Coach) formed the academy in 1995, naming it Frankfurt Babies in homage to the German Bundesliga side, Eintracht Frankfurt, where Ghanaians Tony Yeboah and Tony Baffoe played in the 1990s.
12. Right to Dream is registered as a charity in Ghana, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom and United States. Its website states, "Our vision is to offer underprivileged children who are drawn from a background of extreme poverty, the opportunity to reach their true potential in life through sport and education and ensure that these children are motivated and empowered to make meaningful, lifelong contributions to their community and country" (www.righttodream.com).
13. Liberty Professionals was an academy set up on the outskirts of Accra in 1997 to "portray the scientific approach to the management of a soccer club in the Africa sub-region" (www.libertypros.com). What such a scientific approach consists in is not elaborated on the club's website. The academy boasts of having "affiliates in Europe" and can count Michael Essien—formerly of Bastia and Olympique Lyonnais and currently of Chelsea—among its alumni. The club's sponsors include Sarson Sports USA, a sporting goods wholesaler based in Fountain Valley, California. The current President of Liberty Pros is Sly Tetteh, a man who also acts as Director of Global Soccer Management, an organization which recruits and manages a number of soccer players across the continent.
14. Such allegations are not entirely uninformed. A study conducted by medical researchers and funded by FIFA and the AFC (Asian Soccer Confederation) over four international competitions found that "on the basis of the results of the MRI examination of the left radius, the officially stated ages of U-17 players may not be correct in all cases" (Dvorak et al., 2007).
15. A French organization concerned with the illegal trafficking of people to Europe, Culture Foot Solidaire, was formed in 2000 by former Cameroonian International Jean-Claude Mbvoumin as a support for young African soccer players in Europe. The organization is supported by International Organisation for Migration, International Centre for Sports Studies and the Ministry of Sports in France.
16. Interestingly, of the thirty-eight coaches who have managed the Black Stars since Ghana gained independence in 1957, twenty-four have been recruited from outside Africa, with the majority of these coaches hailing from Europe.
17. In November 2000, Pele, widely acclaimed as the greatest player of all-time, compared the international transfer of young players to the slave trade: "In Brazil, Argentina and Africa it is most dangerous. It is like with slave ownership" (Copeman 2000). Partly in response to such concerns, in 2007 soccer's governing body, the Fédération Internationale de Soccer Association (FIFA), banned the transfer of players who were under the age of sixteen. The following year President of FIFA, Sepp Blatter, referred to the game over which he presides as "modern slavery" (Lay 2008). His comments were followed by a declaration from World Player of the Year, Cristiano Ronaldo, that he was being treated "like a slave" by former employers Manchester United (Thornley 2008). Ronaldo was

responding to United's insistence that he honor a five-year, £100,000 ($154,000) a week contract signed the previous summer.

18. Darby (2002) has employed Wallerstein's theory of the capitalist world-system as an analytical template to explore the magnitude and direction of global soccer's political, economic, and cultural flows which reflect and impact upon power differentials within FIFA. He argues that within soccer a world-system has been developing since the late nineteenth century, driven by the proliferation of global playing contacts, institutional and political relationships, coupled with a steady increase in the economic resources available to those involved with the game in "developed" nations. The result is a soccer world-system wherein any observable development of the game in Africa "has been dependent on the opportunities provided to it by FIFA's administrative centre and core constituents" (p. 176).
19. The National Democratic Congress is a social democratic political party in Ghana founded by Jerry Rawlings, who was Ghana's Head of State from 1981 to 1993 and the nation's President from 1993 to 2001. A member of the Socialist International, the NDC's 2004 Manifesto called for an end to "the current atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust and marginalisation" (NDC 2004).
20. The New Patriotic Party is a liberal democratic party in Ghana and one of two dominant parties in Ghanaian politics. The party is center-right, but is considered to be more liberal than its leading rival, the NDC. Former president John Agyekum Kufuor came from among its ranks. The NPP is a member of the International Democrat Union.
21. See Akindes and Kirwin (2009) for critical evaluation of such "Sport for Development" policies in the context of sub-Saharan Africa.

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