

PART THREE

Becoming and Unbecoming  
Amphibious Subjects in Hetero/  
Homo Colonial Vortices



## Palimpsestic Projects

### *Heterocolonial Missions in Post-Independent Ghana (1965–1975)*

Sometimes, Kwame, I think Ghanaians are some of the most hypocritical people I know. The most hypocritical being those Ghanaians who go to church. When it is corruption, they don't talk. When men abuse women, they don't talk. When it is politicians stealing from them, they won't talk. When pastors tell them lies and steal their money, they won't talk. But let it come to homosexuality. That alone will get them so angry. What is wrong with Ghanaians and homosexuality? As a sasso who goes to church and believes in the Bible, which I think is a wise book, I have never for the love of God understood why Ghanaian Christians are terrified by LGBT+ issues. They are OK with everything wrong, except homosexuality, which, mind you, is not wrong.

—FOSTER (AUGUST 2014)

In October 2019, Mr. Moses Foh-Amoaning, the executive director of the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPHSRFV),<sup>1</sup> expressed outrage at efforts by the Ghanaian government to incorporate the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CES) program into national educational policy. The coalition declared on various media platforms that six years was a particularly young age to introduce concepts about sex and gender to children. In fact, they were critical of a module in the program titled “being male and female,” which, in their opinion, was an “active strategy” to normalize LGBT+ presence in Ghana. Joining in the homophobic chorus was the then president of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council, Paul Yaw Frimpong-Manso, who called the policy “comprehensive satanic engagement.”<sup>2</sup> This was not the first time the coalition had expressed outrage at the LGBT+ issues in the country. Since its founding in 2013, the coalition has waged a campaign against what it calls “the LGBT+ problem in Ghana.”<sup>3</sup>

Some members and allies of LGBT+ human rights organizations in Ghana took to Twitter and Facebook to express umbrage at the coalition while simultaneously mocking them.<sup>4</sup> That something as fundamental as a policy intended to widen the existing curriculum on sex and gender triggered a moral debate was interpreted as ridiculous by critics of the coalition. Indeed, the backlash against the backlash echoes Foster's rather penetrative suggestion in the epigraph that Ghanaian Christians will malign homosexuality and remain silent on issues that affect them directly on a daily basis—corruption, domestic violence, economic underdevelopment, and so on. Foster's apprehension at the anti-LGBT+ positions taken by the coalition illustrates two key points that are highlighted in this chapter. First, how anxieties around allegedly nonnormative sexual and gender formations work to consolidate the heterosexual nation. And second, how the backlash at the increasing visibility of LGBT+ human rights politics by formations like the coalition resurrect anxieties expressed by Christian organizations toward polygamy at the dawn of Ghana's independence.

The coalition's outrage exemplifies the organization's attempts to engage in smear campaigns against the LGBT+ community in Ghana. For example, the invasion of the LGBT+ Rights Ghana office in February 2021, which drew global attention to the state of LGBT+ issues in Ghana, vividly captures the central role the coalition plays in policing sexual citizenship. Shortly before the office was invaded, a ceremony had been held to celebrate its opening on January 31, 2021.<sup>5</sup> Widely publicized on Facebook and attended by high-profile foreign dignitaries like the Australian high commissioner to Ghana and the Danish ambassador to Ghana, the ceremony created a fanfare that attracted mixed reactions on social media in particular and Ghanaian media in general.

Affronted by the fact that an LGBT+ office was not only inaugurated but was openly called LGBT+ Rights Ghana, members of the coalition and politicians demanded that the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) government close the organization. In the ensuing days, members of Ghana's National Security raided the LGBT+ Rights Ghana office, locking it up.<sup>6</sup> For the coalition, Westernization is to blame for the LGBT+ presence in Ghana, the same Westernization that introduced Christianity, Western education, Western forms of government, Western economic practices, Western development aid, and so on.

In this chapter, I examine letters exchanged between the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and Christian Aid (CA), a Christian humanitarian organization based in Britain, between 1965 and 1975 to illuminate the historical contexts anticipating the coalition's homophobic vitriol. In a move to normalize monogamy in post-independent Ghana, the CCG, with financial support from CA, established the Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life (CCMFL) in 1961 to "promote positive Christian teachings on sex, marriage, and family life."<sup>7</sup> Although the CCMFL projects were nationwide, in this chapter, I focus on the committee's projects in the Volta Region, Ghana's easternmost region, bordering Togo, to explicate

how heterosexualization and heteromonogamy were construed as necessary for Ghana's advancement into modernity.

Here, I generate a series of questions fundamental not just to this chapter but to my project overall, namely: How did heteromonogamous projects consolidate heterosexuality as Ghanaian? How are colonial/Christian missionary projects to liberate Africans from atavistic polygamous practices analogous to contemporary queer liberal activists' attempts to rescue LGBT+ citizens from violent homophobic regimes? Lastly, how is the coalition a palimpsestic iteration of the Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life (CCMFL)? The sense in which I use *palimpsest* here aligns with Ella Shohat's description of time as "scrambled and palimpsestic, in all the worlds, with the premodern, the modern, the postmodern, and the paramodern coexisting globally" (1998, 20). Hence, I assert that the environments in which LGBT+ humanitarian projects unfurl are defined by multiple publics, subsumed under colonial (European) and customary (indigenous) publics. These publics are palimpsestic not just because they normalized heteromonogamy but because they anticipated the homonegative reactions against LGBT+ visibility in Ghana. If the palimpsest is "a parchment on which writing has been partially or completely erased to make room for another text," or a document with "faint traces" of something that was, then the NCPHSRFV, which opposes homosexuality in the contemporary moment, has traces of the CCFMFL projects.

#### SITUATING THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF GHANA

The Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) is an organization comprised of a membership of "twenty-six member churches and three Christian organizations."<sup>8</sup> Its members currently comprise Orthodox, Protestant, and neo-Protestant denominations. The new Protestant formations include the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Established on October 30, 1929, by five churches, the CCG includes the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Church, the Ewe Presbyterian Church, the English Church Mission (Anglican); the Presbyterian Church of the Gold Coast (Ghana), and the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The Orthodox and Protestant members of the council differ doctrinally and liturgically; yet, under the banner of the CCG, they have historically supported Christian marriage and family life. They have also recently been outspoken against the liberalization of same-sex sexual politics in Ghana. Leading members from Catholic, Protestant, and the new wave of Pentecostal denominations have participated in the condemnation of homosexuals. Most denominational leaders have also relayed their dissatisfaction with what they regard as the government's apathetic stance, warning it to refuse any funding and donations granted by organizations in the West that support gay marriage and rights.<sup>9</sup> In a book bearing the same title, Paul Gifford has described this new wave of Christian denominations in Ghana as constituting "Ghana's New Christianity."

Gifford's (2004) apt framing highlights the vexed composition of Christianity and Christian practices in postcolonial Ghana, under conditions sometimes contested by Protestant and Pentecostal churches. These churches are conceived as being radically opposed to Orthodox churches, which in Ghana comprise Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist. Despite such fissures, the CCG remains an organization that fosters interchurch partnerships between Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal denominations in Ghana. The core mission of the CCG is to "search for unity and to work with members on issues of social concern and be the voice of the voiceless in society."<sup>10</sup> While the organization serves as the face of Christianity in Ghana, it also plays a crucial political role for the Ghanaian government, offering advice on issues of social, political, moral, economic, and cultural significance. Not only does the CCG advise members of government but it also holds them accountable for social and political issues affecting Ghanaians; some of the organization's leaders are also key members of the Council of State, one of Ghana's most respected political advisory institutions. In this chapter, I speculate that the normalization of heteromonogamy under the watch of the CCG's subsidiary, the Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life (CCMFL), deepened the CCG's relationship to the nation-state.

#### CIVILIZING MARRIAGE: ELIMINATING POLYGAMY FROM THE "HEART OF DARKNESS"

At the dawn of Ghana's independence, the country inherited discourses on the naturalness of the Christian nuclear family and compulsory monogamy. As Angela Willey argues, discourses on proper marital conventions, tied to Victorian values, emphasized "the institution and regulation of heterosexual monogamy . . . as essential to the superiority of 'Christian nations' over 'Polygamic races'" (2006, 532). The assumption that polygamous societies were inferior justified Christian and colonizing Europeans' pursuit of civilizing projects that cemented Christian heteromonogamy. What I capture as a heterocolonial project, which is the melding of colonization with heterosexualization, crystallized European culture as the bastion of civility in several African contexts. Hence, African sociocultural formations that did not conform with European cultural forms were immediately racialized as atavistic (Tallie 2019, Ray 2015; Epprecht 2008).

As the Africanist historian T. J. Tallie provocatively notes, among the Zulu of colonial Natal in the moment of the colonial encounter, polygamy and vernacular practices like *ilobolo* (bridewealth) emerged as sites for the construction of racial difference. These cultural practices and formations served as justification for Europeans to distinguish themselves as superior while regarding Africans as inferior. This distinction solidified Eurocentric assumptions about African difference. In meticulous detail, Tallie pointedly notes: "Whether or not indigenous

African women themselves saw polygamy as a means of negotiating their position in an agrarian society mattered very little to settlers. In newsprint, missionary pamphlets, and travel literature, Natal's settlers consistently depicted women as oppressed by barbarism of their men—particularly through *ilobolo* and polygamous marriages” (2019, 19).

The racist logic that African polygamy was an institution that oppressed women is overturned in the terse anthropological essay entitled “Sexual Inversion among the Azande,” by the British social anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard. In the ethnography, Evans-Pritchard describes how polygamy presented women (and men) with the opportunity to create erotic and intimate connections. Providing insights into the intricate intersections between polygamy and homosexuality among the Azande in precolonial Sudan, Evans-Pritchard observed that these practices shifted with the appearance of Europeans. “Male and female homosexual relationship,” argues Evans-Pritchard, “seems to have been common among the Azande in past times. Between males it was approved in the bachelor military companies. Between females it is said to have been a frequent, though highly disapproved of, practice in polygamous homes” (1970, 1428).

The male homosexuality observed by Evans-Pritchard among the Azande is attributed to two factors. First, the Azande were a highly militaristic culture with military organizations made up of married men and “bachelor companies, some of whom would always be living in barracks at court, to take boy-wives” (1970, 1429). Second, there was a shortage of women of marriageable age, leading to the phenomenon of “boy marriages.”<sup>11</sup> Even in the days before the arrival of Europeans, homosexual relationships were commonplace in Azande culture. To buttress this point, Evans-Pritchard not only cites other scholars to suggest that it would be misplaced to theorize that homosexuality among the Azande was introduced by the Arabs,<sup>12</sup> but also provides compelling evidence on the entwinement of polygamy and lesbianism. I cite his explanation at length here:

It can be said generally that a woman who is one of three wives would not sleep with her husband more than some ten nights a month, one of six wives more than five nights, and so on. One of the many wives of a prince or of an important commoner in the past might not have shared her husband's bed for a month or two, whereas some of the dozens, even hundreds, of wives of a king must have been almost totally deprived of the sex life normal in smaller homes. Adulterous intercourse was very difficult for a wife in such large polygamous families, for the wives were kept in seclusion and carefully watched; death on discovery, or even on suspicion, would have been the penalty for both the wife and her lover. It was in such polygamous families, Azande say, that lesbianism was practiced. (1970, 1431)

By providing an example of how polygamy became a fecund domain for the unfolding of female homoeroticism, I am not disputing the fact that polygamy, like monogamy, was patriarchal at its core. Rather, I suggest that polygamous practices

yielded opportunities for queer intimacies and desire in ways that made polygamy not only antithetical to monogamy but antithetical to the heterocolonial intent at the core of colonial expansion. And as Tallie's (2019) and Evans-Pritchard's (1970) historical observations suggest, the anxieties generated by polygamy reinforced European attachment to heterosexuality and the racialization of polygamy.

Polygamy may not have been the only institution that unsettled European colonial presence; indeed, the presence of female-headed societies, cultures where women played significant roles in the public sphere, also troubled the colonists. As the Nigerian anthropologist Ifi Amadiume spells out in her *Afrikan Matriarchal Foundations* (1987b) and *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (1987a), respectively, the Western categories of gender and racial difference displaced native logics and interpretations in ways that gravely affected the crucial roles women played in community and nation-building. Situating the foundations of African matriarchy in Egypt, Amadiume goes a step further to perspicaciously unsettle its demonization in Western epistemology. Evidently, the existence of female-headed societies questioned as well as threatened parochial constructions not only of gender and sexuality but also of the family that colonizing Europeans brought with them to Africa. In view of this, the eventual elimination of the coexistence of matriarchal and patriarchal formations may have been key to the redefinition not only of gender and sexual difference, but also of racial difference. Within this trope, patriarchy distinguished Europeans from Africans, reinscribing a fixed and immutable view of gender and sexuality all the while furthering racial differentiation. Thus, in this formulation European patriarchy was construed as "modern" as opposed to a "primitive" African patriarchy.

Meanwhile, some scholars have outlined how African marital formations, unlike those established by Christian missionaries and colonists, did not rely on rigid notions of gender and sexuality. The phenomena of "male daughters" and "female husbands," which Amadiume (1987b) observes among the Igbos of Nigeria, as well as the androgynous practices quite common to African spiritual formations, demonstrate the rigidity of precolonial gender and sexual representations. Italo Signorini's ethnological examination of the phenomenon of "friendship marriages," or *agonwole agyale*, among the Nzemas of southwestern Ghana is notable (1973). Calling it "marriage between two persons of the same-sex," Signorini shows how practices of friendship between men unsettled heteromonogamous notions of marriage institutionalized under Europeanization and Christianization. Friendship marriages emphasized the contiguous character of heterosexual and "same-sex" marriages among the Nzema. Heterosexual marriage was made stable by the friendship marriages, revealing the fluidity of marital unions and the institutions that orchestrated them. In the wake of Europeanization and Christianization, these fluid marital formations and erotic subjectivities were racialized as backward, deeply anchoring white heteropatriarchal monogamy as an advanced marital form.

This representation of monogamy as natural and normal was supported by race-scientific discourses spewing out of phrenology and craniology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Willey 2006; Newman 1999). The phrenologist Lorenzo Fowler, in his book *Marriage: Its History and Ceremonies; with a Phrenological Exposition of the Functions and Qualifications for Happy Marriages* (1847), offers grand unscientific narratives on how the composition of the skull and the size of one's reproductive organs determined a successful monogamous marriage. Fowler proceeds to unequivocally argue that the more proportioned one's reproductive organ, the better suited the person was for monogamous marriage. Fowler's sexological extrapolation, it goes without saying, circulated as scientific fact in a moment in which Black bodies faced dilemmas incited by their hypersexualization and criminalization. These pseudoscientific assumptions were cathected onto Black bodies to justify the legitimacy of the inflexibility of racial difference. The paradoxical role science played, then, in solidifying racial and sexual differentiation is significant. As the historian Rudi Bleys argues, "The growing impact of science has often been seen as liberating, not least because it opened perspectives for a more secularized vision of the world. Yet it also implied far-reaching reification of sexual desire in fixed identities, just as it crystallized cultural difference in racial identities" (1995, 2).

Differentiating Black bodies from white bodies, Fowler's pseudoscientific phrenological formula legitimized the fiction that Black bodies were unfit for monogamous marriage, while normalizing modes of racial and sexual difference as immutable. Indeed, as Bleys (1995) suggests, the liberal posture of science was connected to its violation of non-Western bodies, and to be specific, bodies of African descent. A few decades later, toward the end of nineteenth century, the imperial ethnologist Sir Richard Burton drew on superficially articulated cultural difference based on pseudoscientific discourses to divide the world into "sotadic" and "non-sotadic" zones (Burton 1885). Drawing from his travels through Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, Burton arrived at the conclusion that the sotadic zone was comprised of geographies where sodomy was rampant, and the nonsotadic zone was where heterosexuality was practiced. Burton's thesis that topography shaped sexual desire significantly influenced Western conceptions of sexual desire and gender representations in the non-Western world. The sotadic zone, imagined as tropical, apparently accommodated "sexual inversion." In other words, same-sex behavior, specifically male-to-male sexual behavior, was believed to be rife in geographies found in the sotadic zone (Burton 1886; Bleys 1995). Although the entirety of Africa's tropical topography fell outside of the sotadic zone, the continent's assumed nonsotadic tendencies were racialized as hypersexual heterosexuality in Burton's racialized sexual schema (1886). Evidently, the construal of gender and sexual formations in Africa in the Euro-colonial imagination circumvented customary constructions of those very formations, which were undermined by the introduction of colonization and Christianity.

*Colonial and Customary Publics as Sites of Gender  
and Sexual Contestations*

I want to emphasize here that the various heterocolonial projects executed by Europeans were incomplete precisely because of the presence of “customary publics,”<sup>13</sup> which, on occasion, colluded or collided with hegemonic colonial publics (Ekeh 1975; Ray 2015; Tallie 2019). The Nigerian political scientist Peter Ekeh, in his essay entitled “Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement,” distinguishes between the “primordial and the civil publics” (1975, 92). Ekeh argues that there are two public realms in Africa and that they have different moral imperatives. “The primordial public is moral and operates on the same moral imperatives as the private realm . . . whereas the civic public is amoral and lacks the generalized moral imperatives operative in the private realm and in the primordial public” (1975, 92). In the primordial public, there are “sentiments, and activities, which nevertheless impinge on the public interest,” and the civic public is “historically associated with the colonial administration . . . which has become identified with popular politics in post-colonial Africa. It is based on civil structures: the military, the civil service, the police, etc.” (1975, 92). Ekeh’s distinction matters for how I historicize the ways in which gender and sexual difference unfolded as sites of contestation during colonial rule. What he terms primordial and civic publics, I maintain, inflected practices and articulations of gender and sexuality while inducing shifts in the moral compasses that governed these formations. Unlike Ekeh, however, I am interested in the distinction between “colonial” and “customary” publics. Drawing on Ekeh’s formulation, I argue that the colonial public was wedded to European sensibilities while the latter, that is, the customary public, found its home in indigenous African practices and ways of being and becoming.<sup>14</sup> Not only did these publics have sub-publics subsumed within them which variously competed for legitimacy depending on what was at stake, but they also unevenly interpenetrated each other in ways that produced serrated sociocultural, politico-economic, and spiritual qua religious geographies that complicated notions and practices of gender and sexuality. The tensions around gender and sexuality then and now are in large measure tied to the ontological alignments and misalignments yielding from the collusions and collisions between these publics and their ancillary publics.

Against this backdrop, the racial projection of hypersexuality onto the Black body, arguably a by-product of the colonial public, beckoned colonial and missionary projects intent on saving African women and men from indigenous practices like polygamy (Tallie 2019; Ray 2015). In particular, the hypersexualization of the Black female, as the treatment of Saartjie Baartman reveals, articulates European fantasies about the Black woman’s body.<sup>15</sup> As the Black feminist Deborah McDowell argues, the Black female in Western cultural imaginaries has always “embodied both lack and excess (and excess as lack)” (2006, 298). McDowell further illuminates how, for example, the black female buttocks emerge as “the most synecdochical signature of the black female form” (2006, 306). But

the Black female body, at once racialized as expressing sexual insatiability, is also constructed as the victim of a native culture that enchained her to the presumed violence of polygamy and indigenous patriarchy. To center the paradoxical figure of the Black female body here is to unpack how colonial management, which drew on scientific racism and the elevation of Christian morality, established and magnified empire's reliance on the institutions of science, religion, and capitalism to enforce and naturalize monogamy. It is precisely this management that produced the vexatious publics, namely the colonial and customary publics, that animated African women's worlds.

The effort to save African women, integral to the civilizing and Christian missionary enterprises, involved white women. Trained in the vocation of importing logics and practices of propriety, these women were integral to the architectures of colonialism and imperialism (Willey 2006; Stoler 1995; Boddy 2007; Ray 2015). In *Civilizing Women: British Crusades in Colonial Sudan*, Janice Boddy (2007) provides historical detail on how indigenous women in the Sudan had to be coded as uncivilized in order for their colonization and civilization to be justified. Noting that native women were compelled to embrace whiteness and Euro-American Christian virtues of womanhood, Boddy highlights how the institutionalization of Victorian notions heightened native women's vulnerability while minimizing their agency during the colonial encounter. Enfolding Sudanese women into colonial management schemes prompted their forceful adoption of colonial selfhood (2007).

There is a clear path from the efforts to rescue African women from polygamy and other invidious indigenous practices in the aftermath of independence to current attempts to save homosexuals in Ghana by LGBT+ human rights organizations. While the former, I insist, anticipates the latter, it also historically occurs against the backdrop of a post-World War II moment in which the impending death of British colonialism coincides with other unanticipated forces to exacerbate the crises of the nuclear family. Moreover, the reverberations yielding from these rescue missions amplify how reactions against LGBT+ visibility politics in Ghana are more the result of the tensions engendered by the collisions between the colonial and customary publics in the contemporary moment.

UNANTICIPATED REVERBERATIONS:  
COUNTERCULTURAL MOVEMENTS IN POSTWAR  
EUROPE AND SHIFTING SOCIAL STRUCTURES  
IN POSTCOLONIAL LANDSCAPES

The ascent of Christian monogamy in postcolonial Ghana inevitably coincides with a diminishing Christianity, the rise in secularization, and a decline in nuclear family values in Europe. Imagined as the natural and moral basis for the creation of the family, monogamy was unabashedly constructed in postindependent nations as healthier and better suited for achieving modernity.<sup>16</sup>

The ideologies around monogamy, such as its civility, naturalness, and moral purity, sustained the notion that parents and children in monogamous, nuclear households were much fitter and more closely knit than in polygamous families. Evolutionary language justified the advantages that monogamy had over polygamous unions. Exempted from such problematic claims, for example, was what kind of opportunities the so-called patriarchally insidious institution of polygamy afforded its supposed victims. African women, for instance, formed intimate female bonds, as described by E. E. Evans-Pritchard among the Azande of precolonial Sudan.

To be clear, this ideology was proliferated through outlets regulated by organizations such as Christian Aid (CA) and the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) against the backdrop of countercultural movements in Europe and the United States, mostly arising in the fifties and sixties and continuing well into the seventies.<sup>17</sup> When in the 1950s, countercultural movements opposing colonial rule and imperialism began to question the sociological, political, and ideological status quo of imperial European nations after the Second World War, the shifts propelled by these movements also influenced the logics of Christianity and ideas about marriage and family. With the demise of British imperialism imminent, formerly colonized peoples began to migrate to the metropole in large numbers from the Caribbean, Africa, and South Asia to seek education and economic opportunities.

Campaigns were waged by the civil rights movement in the United States, and countercultural formations such as the antiwar movement, women's rights, sexual rights, and anti-apartheid and anticolonial organizations triggered sociopolitical paroxysms around the world from the sixties through the seventies. In Britain, the countercultural movement spurred by the "British invasion," which fostered an antihegemonic popular cultural ideology animated by such bands as the Beatles, the Kinks, the Rolling Stones, and the Who, also strengthened the movement against mainstream status quos.<sup>18</sup> The cultural reverberations that these British bands produced were, indeed, transatlantic in character. Arriving on the shores of the United States in the mid-sixties, the Beatles were received with much enthusiasm.

During this period, racial politics in the United States became explosive, with the assassinations of key political figures and leaders of the civil rights movement such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. The rise of the Black Power movement, among other sociopolitical movements, along with the flowering of rock and roll and pop music (and much later, punk music) shifted the political tenor of the moment.<sup>19</sup> Adding to this were the Stonewall Riots and gay and lesbian uprisings in New York City and other US cities. This was also the moment during which Britain decriminalized homosexuality, leaving its former colonies stuck to colonial-era constitutions that criminalized homosexuality (Kaoma 2009). These legal strictures, then, became the basis for the naturalization of heterosexuality in postcolonial nations, which continued to espouse and implement laws left behind by colonial administrations.

Evidently, the countercultural currents animating the British Atlantic had ripple effects on former colonies and nations fighting for independence. The forties and fifties saw the beginnings of what Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon captures as “a dying colonialism” (1967). Occurring at a time characterized by post–World War II anxieties, these movements began to shift the mainstream sociocultural, moral, and religious landscapes which had long defined Euro-America. Inevitably, this was a fertile period for the New Left, an intellectual and activist movement which emerged in Britain (Oglesby 1969).

Interrogating mainstream white supremacist, colonialist, capitalist, fascist, and masculinist ideologies, the emerging intellectual currents nourished ideological alternatives that engendered antiracist, antifascist, antiwar, antimasculinist, anti-capitalist, and antinuclear positions.<sup>20</sup> More important, the imperatives of these emerging formations had sociological, religious, and moral implications, some of which included the disruption of Christianity and its ideas about monogamy and the nuclear family, which, in turn, challenged normative understandings of race, class, gender, and sexuality in postwar Britain. If the monogamous Christian family was on the verge of collapse in Europe, postindependent African nation-states ultimately emerged as sites where Christianity and the dying monogamous family could be rescued. The achievement of modernity became the alibi for the pursuit of these projects.<sup>21</sup>

In a manner reminiscent of Evangelical Christians’ desire to salvage heterosexuality in contemporary Africa, Christian humanitarian organizations like Christian Aid, at the turn of independence, collaborated with their local counterparts in Ghana, the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), to establish the Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life (CCFML). Together, these organizations pursued projects that strengthened Christian monogamy and nuclear family values in the aftermath of independence.

#### SITUATING CHRISTIAN AID: POSTINDEPENDENT AFRICA AND THE RISE OF CHRISTIAN HUMANITARIANISM

If the countercultural movements in Euro-America had both overt and covert linkages with anticolonial reverberations under way in Africa and Asia, then some of the impacts of these connections can be seen in the handful of African nations that achieved independence in the fifties. On the eve of Ghana’s liberation from colonial rule, for example, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, declared that “independence would be meaningless, unless connected to the total liberation of the African continent” (1965, 40). Achieving independence on March 6, 1957, Ghana steered the anticolonial qua decolonial bandwagon, which emphasized total liberation of the African continent from European imperialism. As the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to wrestle itself from the shackles of British colonial rule, Ghana emerged as the vanguard of independence for other African nations

south of the Sahara, whose anticolonial projects were animated by sociopolitical uprisings on both sides of the Atlantic.

Incidentally, the sixties represented a watershed moment of anticolonial success, as over thirty African nations gained independence from their European colonizers (Cooper 2014; Ake 1996). This period also witnessed the emergence of Christian organizations which sought to rebuild a devastated Europe. In Britain, organizations such as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, popularly known as OXFAM, and Inter-Church Aid (ICA), which was later to be known as Christian Aid in the early sixties, were established to offer aid to victims of the Second World War and its reverberations throughout Europe. Christian Aid's outreach combined Christian teachings with family planning methods as a healthy way of rehabilitating vulnerable populations.

Thus, in its formation, Christian Aid declared its goal "to help European refugees who had lost everything."<sup>22</sup> Functioning much like Oxfam and Save the Children, Christian Aid was established in 1948. To some degree, Christian Aid can be characterized as "first generation" humanitarian organization, to use David Korten's typology (1990). Operating under the banner of Christian reconstruction in Europe, Christian Aid claimed "not to evangelize, but to alleviate suffering for ordinary people no matter what their faith."<sup>23</sup> As a member of the Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC), Christian Aid was one of few organizations operating under the British government in the postwar era to respond mainly to emergencies occurring during civil wars and in the aftermath of catastrophes and natural disasters—famines and earthquakes (Jones 2014). The organization began to focus on postcolonial nations in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East in the fifties. In Africa in particular, their projects, which included the establishment of kindergartens, educational programs addressing family planning methods and contraception, and significantly, the effort to institutionalize monogamy, formed part of its renewed vision to "combat poverty." With the appointment of Janet Lacey as Christian Aid's president in 1952, the organization's mission to address poverty in the developing world was ostensibly linked to questions that bordered on the idea of the family and marriage. It is unsurprising that the Christian Aid projects in Ghana throughout the sixties and seventies were executed with African marriage and family as the key locus of change.

As part of the organization's goal to end poverty, it also emphasized the need to support medical facilities that offered family planning and contraception services, as well as workshops for Christian youth. Between 1965 and 1975, Christian Aid and the CCG collaborated on projects that circulated ideas about the necessity of monogamy and the nuclear family for happy and healthy children. In the racist projects of the nineteenth century, monogamy was deemed unsuitable for Africans, but with the death of monogamy in postwar Europe, postcolonial nations like Ghana became fertile grounds for replanting the seeds of this institution. There, the adoption of the nuclear family qua monogamy was in line with



FIGURE 5. Poster advertising Christian Aid Week. Source: <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/aboutus/who/history/>.

fostering the progress of the nation. Having embraced the nuclear family model as the mark of modernity, the postcolonial nation-state participated in a project supported by Christian Aid to salvage Western Christian ideals in Africa.

*Proliferating and Consolidating Christian Monogamy  
and Family: The Role of the Committee on Christian Marriage  
and Family Life (CCMFL)*

The CCG's Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life (CCMFL) was established on February 26, 1965, as part of the council's vision to promote the virtues and values of Christian marriage among families in Ghana.<sup>24</sup> The CCMFL's subsidiary, the Volta Region Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life, was created to encourage Ghanaian Christians to both embrace Christian values and uphold monogamy, not only as a tenet of a healthy Christian life, but also as vital to the nation's development. Together with representatives from the Ministry of Health and other governmental organizations, including "homemakers, doctors, teachers, pastors, social workers, and administrators," the project encouraged Ghanaians to abandon polygamy and other aspects of indigenous culture that presumably hindered achieving a healthy marriage and family life.<sup>25</sup>

Without a doubt, the CCMFL projects reinserted Britain into the most intimate aspects of Ghanaians' lives in the postindependent moment, as donor support mostly came from Ghana's former colonial power. Moreover, at the time, the Volta Region Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life was the only such regional committee that foresaw the execution of Christian practices and virtues for marriage among youth and adults. The committee's stated goals included the following:

- To aid youth and adults in development of true Christian Attitude toward marriage in both its physical and spiritual aspects.
- To aid those individuals whose marriages are proving unsuccessful.
- To aid couples in matters of family planning and problems arising from sterility.<sup>26</sup>

It is apparent that the goals set by the CCMFL set aside former racialized constructions of monogamy, which was historically perceived to be doomed to fail among

hypersexualized Africans, for whom such practices were deemed unsuitable. Over time, the CCMFL added two additional objectives, aimed at assisting individuals to be “better adjusted members of their families” and “to prepare young people for well-adjusted, satisfying adult lives whether single or married.”<sup>27</sup> Part of the committee’s responsibilities included organizing the Christian Home Week every year, during which event the committee delivered its goals and objectives to attendees, several of whom were teachers and youth from member churches. This two-and-a-half-week program also involved meetings with pastors in districts around the country. As noted in the 1966 secretary’s report, one of the key objectives of these district meetings was to highlight teenage problems and crises confronting the nation.

The CCMFL leadership also feared that the country’s youth were at the mercy of the pangs wrought by the sociocultural transformations unfolding in the wake of Ghana’s independence. Hence, the organization developed projects targeting youth, the population that would enable the progress of Christian marriage and family life. In particular, students were to be introduced to the basic principles that undergirded Christian relationships, such as refraining from premarital sex and using contraception in the event of premarital sex, so as to prevent teenage pregnancies. The CCMFL invited participants to lead workshops in which youth were given specific suggestions in a guide to help them navigate those difficult situations in their own lives.<sup>28</sup> The guide also contained a list of events to be undertaken during Christian Home Week, at which leaders from the CCMFL played an important role by steering participants on what to do and what not to do in their local denominations and communities.

The youth-centered projects undertaken by CCMFL extended beyond its campaign to prevent premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy, to organizing programs that provided young people with the practical information they needed to navigate the rapidly modernizing landscape of Ghana. In these programs, too, youth were educated on sexual abstinence, approaches to Christian living, and having a healthy sexual relationship within marriage, all under the supervision of mentors appointed by the church. These programs were undoubtedly sites for the incubation of heteromonogamy as a practice that cultivated those “refined” habits necessary for modernity.

#### *Supporting CCMFL: The Role of Christian Aid*

The first director of CCMFL was Mrs. C. F. Paton. In charge of projects executed by the committee, Mrs. Paton regularly corresponded with leading officials of Christian Aid seeking financial support to sustain the Christian marriage and family life projects in the country. The CCMFL’s reliance on Christian Aid resulted from their lack of financial resources for the various projects they undertook. One of the earliest exchanges between Mrs. Paton and Miss Janet Lacey, the director of Christian Aid, is a letter dated May 20, 1965, in which a demand is made to Christian Aid to

withdraw an application initially sent by CCMFL to support medical work in the Volta Region. In the letter, Mrs. Paton requests instead that Christian Aid fund an “earlier project, listed in the 1965 Project Book of the World Council of Churches.” The project, writes Mrs. Paton, deals “with education in personal relationships and Christian Marriage, or to put in another way, the fight against promiscuity, gonorrhoea and the resultant sterility. It is one of the Home and Family Life projects approved for Africa and is already operating.”<sup>29</sup>

European education, combined with Christian teachings on marriage and personal relationships, is prescribed in the letter as the antidote to the promiscuity so deeply entrenched among Ghanaians in the postindependent moment. In a pre-HIV/AIDS era, the pathological rendering of Ghana as a place where unhealthy sexual practices and relationships exacerbate venereal diseases such as gonorrhoea is used to justify Christian Aid’s urgent intervention. Although Ghanaians, and particularly Ghanaian women, are imagined as the victims of diseases like gonorrhoea, what is not underscored is the fact that they are victims of age-old and persistent tropes constructing Africa as the continent of hypersexuality and disease.

Besides the demand for funds to assist with combating promiscuity, gonorrhoea, and their resultant sterility, Mrs. Paton requested assistance to construct medical centers in Accra. These medical centers, if completed, would provide family planning services for prospective and married Christian couples. Stressing the need to address such issues as infertility in her letter to Miss Lacey, Mrs. Paton points out that “we quite realize that infertility cannot make the dramatic appeal which freedom from hunger projects can, but on the personal and social levels sterility is an urgent matter and one in which a Christian medical unit can help best to treat the anxiety symptoms associated with it.”<sup>30</sup> In a separate section of the same letter, she writes: “Their work in the Volta Region follows roughly the same lines as that in the rest of Ghana: conferences for teachers and Teacher training students on a Christian altitude [*sic*] to sex and how to impart this; trying to promote pastoral care of married couples; a medical advice center at Ho for married couples . . . this will offer help on infertility and contraception.”<sup>31</sup>

Essentially, the requests for funding were not only to enhance the quality of life for married couples but also to provide resources for teachers to transfer knowledge about Christian monogamy to students in schools as well to educate them on the significance of family planning.

The conferences organized by CCMFL provided opportunities to train participants to help them educate true Christian families on the virtues and responsibilities of family planning and contraception. Mrs. Paton’s request for funding to pursue projects that centered on Christian marriage was a defining feature connecting the CCMFL to Christian Aid. On another occasion, the secretary of the Volta Region Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life, Mrs. Vivian Hazel, a Ghanaian woman who represented the interests of CCG, served as the CCMFL’s liaison with Christian Aid, appealing for funds and grants

to support projects in Ghana. The grants provided by Christian Aid helped to organize workshops that encouraged Ghanaians to embrace monogamous lifestyles and adopt birth control practices. By entrenching monogamy as the index for modernity, these projects fortified the idea that Ghana was primarily heterosexual.

ON THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN MONOGAMY  
FOR A “HEALTHY AND HAPPIER” NATION  
AND SEXUAL CITIZENSHIP

In a conference address to delegates at the Conference for Teachers on Christian Marriage and Family Life in the Volta Region, the Reverend Samuel Buatsi exhorts participants to be wary of the vagaries of traditional elements of Ghanaian culture such as polygamy and emphasizes how it stalls progress.<sup>32</sup> Advocating instead for Christian marriage, he distinguishes it from polygamy, maintaining that it is sanctioned by a divine authority. Turning specifically to youth, he cautions that “most members of the younger generation have begun to find themselves . . . at the crossroads of the old and the new.”<sup>33</sup> The reverend calls on youth at the event to understand that preparing themselves for Christian marriage, that “life-long, exclusive union and fellowship of one man with one woman,” will allow them to deal with the rapid shifts in Ghana.<sup>34</sup>

*Circulating Heteromonogamy and the Nuclear Family:  
Let Us Plan for Happy Healthy Children!*

The widely distributed illustrated pamphlet *Let Us Plan for Happy Healthy Children!* was published in 1966 by the CCMFL. Focusing on the significance of Christian marriage for post-independent Ghana, the illustrated pamphlet contained step-by-step instructions for building a happy family. A manual for heterosexual marriage, the pamphlet anticipates the anti-LGBT+ themes of the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPHSRFV). The pamphlet asserts that monogamous homes are healthy and happy because they embrace effective family planning strategies and eventually lead to the planned birth of children. In a letter dated September 21, 1966, to Miss Janet Lacey, Mrs. Vivian Hazel enclosed a copy of minutes from their meetings and the report from the Synod of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, pamphlets published in English and several local Ghanaian languages on the medical advice center, and information on the need for happy healthy families.<sup>35</sup>

The front page of *Let Us Plan for Happy Healthy Children!* features a hand-drawn picture of a husband, his wife, and their four children standing next to a bungalow. The image on the front cover ostensibly conveys a modern Ghanaian family. The characters in the picture appear in what can be read as traditional Ghanaian attire, and the children are distinguished by their neatly trimmed hair. Indubitably, the pamphlet is set on imagining a nation built on monogamy, in which nuclear

family households embrace methods of familial care that are healthy for both family members and the nation. The model of the Christian family was believed to be the palpating heart of the nation, propelling it into modernity and ensuring that families kept up with national progress. In this picture, polygamy was ultimately antithetical to Ghana's modernity.

The pamphlet includes a set of questions concerning family planning, a necessary condition for the proper love, care, and security of children, as well as for a warm and happy home. In this environment, too, children would be equipped with "character and training for life."<sup>36</sup>

The pamphlet also outlines the consequences of bad family planning, such as having too many mouths to feed, too many school uniforms to buy, too many extra rooms to build, and so on. In other words, large families were perceived as draining the family financially and thus producing stress on individual members. The consequences of such arrangements were likely to afflict the children, whose prospects for becoming responsible citizens would be compromised. Monogamy and the nuclear family were set against this dire portrait of polygamous family practices, which were not only financially ruinous but also "backward."

The information and overarching argument implied by the title *Let Us Plan for Healthy Happy Children!* run parallel to the argument in Reverend Buatsi's apology for monogamy, "that it made for happier families." Through *Let Us Plan for Happy Healthier Children!*, the CCMFL motivated Ghanaians to visit medical centers around the country that had been set up for the purpose of providing advice to married couples. These were called Medical Advice Centers. Doctors and nurses who specialized in the field of family planning staffed these facilities, providing information on Christian ways of self-care and pamphlets outlining the basis of healthy lifestyles.<sup>37</sup> The endorsement of these centers by the Christian Council of Ghana gave them credibility, all the while inspiring women to seek the services that they provided. There was also a section that gave the times and locations of the centers to motivate prospective couples to receive free medical assistance and counseling services on the usefulness of contraception. Family planning strategies were constructed as central to the survival of the nuclear family. The adoption of contraception, for example, modernized the nuclear family, making it more admirable. The acceptance of contraception by Christian families here was also supported by Protestant churches. And the Anglican Church, unlike the Catholic Church, had no qualms about contraception and family planning.

The CCMFL, therefore, faced very few obstacles in its pursuit of services that centered on family planning and adoption. Mrs. Hazel documents the progress and success of some of these projects in a letter to Christian Aid also dated September 21, 1966: "On behalf of the Volta Region Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life, the Chairman and I wish to thank the British Christian Aid, most sincerely for supplying all the grant that was requested for our project. The work in the Volta Region is well under way. The need and interest is so great that that our

problem is to know what projects should be given priority.<sup>38</sup> In the letter's closing, she adds: "I will be sending you my annual report and other material later, to give you an idea of what the committee is trying to accomplish. It is hoped that it will prove worthy of your support, and that you will deem it wise to continue your assistance in this project [for the] first few years in existence."<sup>39</sup>

In the letter, it is evident that the CCMFL continued to ask for assistance from Christian Aid in order to sustain its projects on building healthy Christian families. Mrs. Paton's correspondences with Miss Lacey, during which she asked for support for a project on the importance of the Christian family, is in a long line of exchanges between CCG and Christian Aid. In the intervening years, Mrs. Hazel, who took over from Mrs. Paton as the director and liaison, continued to keep in touch with Miss Lacey and Mr. Dudbridge, the secretary of Christian Aid. The CCMFL notified Christian Aid on any challenges or changes to the projects pursued on the ground in Ghana. Since the CCMFL had to submit annual reports on CA-funded projects in Ghana, the ties between the two organizations continued to grow, especially during the period when the project on Christian marriage and family life was undertaken. It is therefore not surprising that the Christian Council of Ghana today remains one of the most ardent members of the coalition that seeks to preserve the "proper family" values in the campaign against the liberalization of LGBT+ visibility in Ghana.

#### PALIMPSESTIC PROJECTS: FROM HETEROMONOGAMY TO HETERONATIONALISM

Arguably, the leavings of these projects constitute the palimpsests that inform the background against which LGBT+ politics occur today. Hence, I suggest that sweeping criticisms describing African Christianity and Africans as homophobic need to be more critical of and attentive to these histories and how they reincorporate themselves into sasso lives. Sasso also rewrite these histories in ways that complicate the construction of African homophobia and the reduction of African sexualities to heterosexuality. Moreover, we need to show how emerging LGBT+ human rights movements in Ghana are both affected and shaped by these complex histories.

I return to Foster's provocative point in the epigraph that introduces this chapter. First, it compels a rereading of the archive in ways that undermine the problematic construction that Ghana is a heterosexual nation. Second, it illuminates how "culture" and "tradition" are often deployed to condemn the pursuit of LGBT+ rights. The invocation of "tradition" in the debates on homosexuality in postcolonial Ghana is unlike the deployment of "tradition" in debates on temporality, whereby tradition is often pitted against "modernity." I argue that there is a simultaneous conflation of tradition, culture, and time in these arguments. Paradoxically, heterosexuality is not easily or neatly temporalized or recognized as

merely existing in the past, because such an interpretation would offer proof that a variety of genders and sexualities have always existed in what is now known as postcolonial Ghana. The conflation works for a heteronormative nation-state bent on having the appearance of being modern in civilizational, colonial, and racialized terms. To this point, I quote Jacqui Alexander at length here; she suggests that this conflation is conveniently

either intentionally invoked, disavowed, or muted as part of the repertoire of strategies deployed by different interests within or related to the state. Put differently, tradition and modernity have been used to designate specific temporalities, but they are themselves practices that are constituted through social relations that are interested in their purchase, and thus in that process move them into ideological proximity to, or distance from, one another. Since they do not operate simply as linear distinctions neatly demarcating a transition from one historical moment to another, or as categories that are merely fixed and inert, the question is not so much whether they matter but *how* they have been made to matter in matters sexual, what meanings have been affixed to them, who deploys them, and to what ends. When do “traditional” (hetero) sexual discourses get valorized within “modern” neo-imperial formations, and why? How do they come to be positioned as critical to the project of modernity? Does heterosexualization occupy a civilizing nexus in the neocolonial state’s imperative of distancing itself from tradition in order to be counted as modern, that is, “civilized,” and accorded the benefits of modernity? (2005, 193)

If anything, the ongoing onslaught of homophobia against the LGBT+ community, to which *sasso* are integral, happening in Ghana as I write this book invites us to not only return to the historical foundries in which were forged the ideologies and practices maintaining that homosexuality is un-African, but to also contend with the wreckage that heterosexuality’s marriage to Christianity and racist/colonial notions of modernity continues to leave in *sasso* lives in particular and the LGBT+ community in general. The public outrage at LGBT+ activism in Ghana not only confirms Foster’s point that Ghanaians are hypocritical but also articulates the selective if not convenient amnesia that becomes manifest when issues on homosexuality become the topic of the moment. Why not against corruption or violence against women or issues of poverty? Why are tradition, culture, and modernity not invoked on these issues, which affect a great majority of Ghanaians? Moreover, an often-missed point in the debates is how they reinscribe the tensions arising from the colonial/postcolonial versus customary/postcustomary publics.<sup>40</sup> What if we were to situate these debates in the histories of the contentions between the publics that continue to forge the frames of the heterocolonial nation-state—the colonial and customary publics? I, therefore, read Foster’s criticism of Ghanaians not merely as a statement that is made in passing but as an intellectual diagnosis arising out of his observations of the increased visibility of the liberalization of same-sex politics and concomitant homophobia, and how this politics misses some vital historical points. Having links to several LGBT+ NGOs that interface with *sasso*

constituencies on a regular basis and being a self-identified ardent Christian, Foster reveals the hypocrisy that belies the archive, and by this, I mean the fact that the archive can be problematically read to justify the heterosexualizing tendencies of the nation-state. The heterosexual anxieties around LGBT+ human rights politics epitomize the reverberations of heterocolonialism.