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**Original article**

# Decolonizing Classics in Africa: the work of Alexander Kwapong*

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**ABSTRACT**

Alexander Osei Adum Kwapong (1927–2014) was a notable classical scholar who studied at the renowned Achimota School of Ghana, and gained a PhD in Ancient History from King's College, Cambridge. He subsequently became the first African Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, and went on to a career in several institutions of higher education. As with some other African Classical scholars, the attitude towards the Classics represented in his writings repays examination, especially on the following issues: to what extent does he see his professional activity as 'decolonizing'? To what extent are the Classics within his work already unmoored from any significantly European identity? Drawing on his autobiography and several more or less formal texts about the Classics in Africa, I shall tease out the possible complexities of Kwapong's positions. Although 'decolonizing' does not necessarily mean the same in his writings as in our current preoccupations, his version of Classics as a discipline is geared towards promoting a usable history of Africa, a productive account of Africa's place in the world, and an open dialogue among cultures.

KEYWORDS: Kwapong, University of Ghana, decolonizing Classics, classical Africa, Libya, Carthage, Achimota, Nkrumah, David Balme, Periplus of Hanno

Alexander Osei Adum Kwapong (1927–2014) was a notable classical scholar who studied at the renowned Achimota School of Ghana, and gained a PhD in Ancient History from King's College, Cambridge. He subsequently became the first African Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, and went on to a career in several institutions of higher education, including the United Nations University and institutions in Canada. On 'retirement' he became Chair of the Council of State of Ghana under John Kufuor, whose presidency marked a democratic milestone in Ghana.[1] As with some other African Classical scholars, the attitude towards the Classics represented in his writings repays examination, especially on the following issues: to what extent does he see his professional activity as 'decolonizing'? To what extent are the Classics within his work already unmoored from any significantly European identity? Drawing on his autobiography and several more or less formal texts about the Classics in Africa, I shall tease out the possible complexities of Kwapong's positions. Although 'decolonizing' does not necessarily mean the same in his writings as in our current preoccupations, his version of Classics as a discipline is geared towards promoting a usable history of Africa, a productive account of Africa's place in the world, and an open dialogue among cultures.

Available sources at present are limited, and I have relied generally on the writings of Kwapong himself, so that the perspective in this paper is largely aligned to those texts. I am aware that this may seem

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[1] See Antoun et al. 2010.

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a methodological weakness in the enquiry. Kwapong's texts are generally relentlessly positive about the events and contexts of his professional and personal life, and this extends to his role as a prominent classicist in Africa. However, I suggest ways in which his texts may occasionally be read against the grain, while not detracting from the outstanding contributions which his career very clearly made. I hope by this investigation to add to our understanding of the history of our discipline, its practitioners, and its possible roles within postcolonial modernity.

## 1. EARLY EDUCATION

Kwapong was born in 1927 at Akropong, the capital town of the Akuapem people but also the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church in Ghana, and of its well-regarded educational establishments. His father worked as a clerk for the United African Company and rose to become the first African manager in the company (Kwapong 2016: 22). Very well read in the English classics, according to Kwapong himself (2016: 23), his father pursued educational qualifications by correspondence. Kwapong's paternal grandfather was the Banmuhene (traditional royalty) of the Akuapem people. On his mother's side he was descended from the first Ghanaian to be ordained a Presbyterian minister in Ghana.

Although such an inheritance might seem to indicate a division between traditional African and 'Western' Christian identities, Kwapong's memoirs show a childhood enriched by both sides of his family. The memoirs are more inclined to draw a contrast between the bustling 'modernity' of Koforidua (2016: 9) where he lived when very young, and the onerous tranquillity of Akropong, where he was sent when he became 'incorrigible' as a 6-year-old (2016: 12) in order to be brought up in the thoroughly Presbyterian household of his grandparents. Although the young Kwapong was excited to start primary school (2016: 9), he did start to feel 'somewhat oppressed' by the keen interest taken in his progress by all the highly educated adults of the household in Akropong (2016: 16). The adults were not only 'steeped' in the Bible but also able to catechize the child on classical Greek stories, which had already been translated into Twi (2016: 16).

The importance of education was marked out for the young Kwapong by a combination of his family traditions and the well-developed state of educational establishments in Ghana. An interesting controversy arose over whether he should go to the Presbyterian Training College, or brook the dangers of coeducation at Achimota School (less than twenty years old but already highly regarded). A great-uncle voted for the former, but Kwapong's father, despite his family background in traditional royalty, took the 'modernist' view (2016: 29). Kwapong thus entered Achimota aged 14, and his account of his time there is nothing but positive, compared to some run-ins he had with the authorities at his previous school, Akropong Salem (2016: 25–26). For our purposes, Achimota is interesting both as the scene of initial Classical learning, and as the place where Kwapong first encountered White people directly (2016: 40). Both Ghanaians and expatriates figure among the Classics teachers at Achimota, and Kwapong notes his great debt to Robert Kwami, who first instilled the love of Latin that was to prove 'lifelong' (2016: 38–39). Another remarkable classicist on the staff was Lawrence Ofusu-Appiah (2016: 39), who was teaching at Achimota as a young man before completing his tertiary education in the UK. Ofusu-Appiah ended up teaching at the University of Ghana, writing some notable translations from Ancient Greek into Twi, and directing the *Encyclopaedia Africana*.[2]

How Kwapong came to specialize in Latin is an interesting narrative, given the ways in which the educational trajectories of other African classicists are bound into national as well as personal development.[3] Kwapong was selected to take the School Certificate one year early, in an experiment designed to test, and indeed validate, the achievements of Achimota (2016: 44). The experiment was a resounding success, since Kwapong obtained a distinction in almost all his subjects and the top distinction mark in Latin (2016: 45). He then decided, like most of his classmates, to attempt a degree in medicine (2016: 45). But in a dramatic scene, his plans are altered for him. The headmaster

[2] Ofusu-Appiah 1960, 1967.
[3] See ch. 4 of Goff 2013.

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congratulates him on his success in the entrance examination for the next stage at Achimota (the Intermediate BA) but tells him that he can do better in Classics than in medicine; that he can quickly learn Greek, read Classics at Oxford or Cambridge, and then have a wide choice of careers 'in philosophy, languages, the humanities and social sciences in general and in professions like law in particular' (2016: 46). The headmaster gives him a Greek grammar to read on the train home, and he is promptly hooked. He realizes that although the medical career was attractive, it would be too much of a wrench to give up Latin (2016: 46).

Although Kwapong's autobiography does not give detail on this encounter, it is interesting to speculate about what the headmaster implied regarding the future of his talented student. Some observers of the Gold Coast (as it was then) might have concluded that medicine was an important way to serve a developing country, but the vista which the headmaster opens is of a non-vocational, liberal arts grounding in the Classics, which had long been idealized in Europe and elsewhere as preparing the individual for a variety of possible professional careers. The vision is not tied to any conception of the nation, or of service, but is geared to Kwapong's individual talents: 'with your all-round abilities and obvious special talent for languages' (2016: 46). However, there is a slightly different version of the scene in Kwapong's 2006 lecture on 'Classical civilization and national development'. This version does make the connection between Classical education, on the one hand, and public service and national development, on the other. As Kwapong put it: 'as one of the products of this specialization [Classics], I would later be in great demand for the coming development and modernization of the Gold Coast' (2006: 46). The Classics thus have a perhaps interesting position between the advancement of the individual and of the nation, and indeed, insofar as Kwapong's later career was one of service to Ghana, it was largely because he moved away from Classics as a discipline and operated on a wider level in the field of educational policy. Between the slightly divergent accounts of Kwapong's choice, we can read a question about the usefulness of Classics to the developing nation, and thus a discussion which continues still.[4]

Once Kwapong was launched on the Classical path, there was—by his own account—no stopping him. He passed the Intermediate BA examination at Achimota with distinctions in Latin and Greek, History, and English, and was offered both a place to teach Latin at Achimota and a three-year Achimota scholarship to study at King's College, Cambridge. The relevant chapter of the autobiography closes with the note that increased agitation for independence, following the arrest of the 'Big Six' members of the United Gold Coast Convention (including Nkrumah and Danquah among others) and consequent pro-independence rioting, 'formed the backdrop to my year of teaching at Achimota while preparing to go to Britain for my University education' (2016: 49). This is one of the very few moments when Kwapong's autobiography suggests the heated contemporary political atmosphere of the Gold Coast.[5]

## 2. PHD THESIS AND EARLY PUBLICATIONS

The autobiography is warm and enthusiastic about all the people and procedures of the education at King's College, and indeed reminds me of nothing so much as the *Iliad* in Rieu's introduction, where 'every manufactured object that [Homer] mentions is well and truly made [ … ] men are all noble, peerless, brave, wise [ … ] women are all lovely, or at least well-dressed and with hair beautifully done'.[6] Similarly, in the autobiography, the people are all hospitable and the lecturers all brilliant. Even an initiative which might have appeared prejudiced is recuperated as benign. King's College laid on a special first-year class to read difficult passages of Greek, such as the choruses of Aeschylus and the odes of Pindar, which Kwapong later found out was devised in order to bring him personally up to the level

[4] See among other contributions Lambert 2014, Falola 2016, esp. 91. Here the Classics are recognized as simply part of wider Humanities, whose role in the future of African nations Falola argues forcibly. See below for anti-colonial disparagement of the Classical tradition.

[5] We might also note that Achimota School was itself a politicized entity, criticized by colonial government and nationalists alike (cf. Jenkins 1994: 178); it would be strange if in that pre-independence period, the students and teachers had not been highly politically aware, but Kwapong's text affords very little detail about his year teaching at Achimota.

[6] Rieu 1976: xix.

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of the other public-school undergraduates, but was disguised as a class for all the entering classicists. Needless to say, all the other first-years had far more need for this extra tuition than did the product of Achimota (Kwapong 2016: 63). From the distance of many years, Kwapong's text does not invite the interpretation that the young student was offended by the implicit slight on his attainment, but it is perhaps telling that the detail is recorded and relayed at all.

Kwapong's account of his life in England, and his holiday travels in Europe, is impervious to any note of colonial or racial prejudice. On the contrary, people are represented as delighted to offer him and his friends extraordinary hospitality out of the blue, for instance in Italy and Ireland (2016: 74, 88), despite their identity as 'strapping young hitch-hikers, and black young men at that' (2016: 77). When any attention is drawn to his racial identity or skin colour, it is represented as friendly and unthreatening (2016: 76, 79). Meanwhile he consolidated his identity as the best classicist at King's for many years[7] and was duly awarded numerous prizes and a scholarship to commence doctoral research (2016: 78). The topic of ancient North Africa in Greco-Roman times necessitated a trip to Libya, during which Kwapong had to negotiate officials suspicious of his purposes, learn about African resistance to Italian colonizers under Mussolini, and take an unplanned boat trip from Cyrene to Crete (2016: 80–83). During this trip, a storm at sea was followed by the Greek authorities arresting everyone for smuggling, and 'the presence of an African student [ … ] on this suspect boat was an added complication' (2016: 83). Kwapong was freed before the captain of the boat, who turned out to be a notorious smuggler, and in a further instance of his charmed life, when he moved from Crete to Athens and entered the British School, his taxi was momentarily mistaken for the official car of the ambassador, and he was welcomed by a band playing at a garden fête (2016: 84). There are thus occasional undertones of colonial or racist tension, but they are represented as fleeting and insignificant in comparison with the inexorable progress of the protagonist.

Kwapong's journey from Libya to Greece may strike present readers as sadly ironic, given the contemporary movement of peoples from the Global South to Europe, but his PhD thesis focuses on the movement of Europeans into Africa. Titled 'Epilydes and autochthones: a survey of the relations between the immigrants and the Libyans of north Africa, 631–111 B.C.', the thesis is mainly focused on historical and archaeological details, but draws understated parallels between ancient and modern colonization at certain points. In the account of the Greek colonization of Cyrene, the thesis emphasizes the cooperation of the inhabitants: 'The friendly cooperation of the Libyans at the initial stages of the colony of Cyrene must have played an important part in its successful growth, beside the guidance and insistence of Delphi' (Kwapong 1959: 45). The name of the kings of Cyrene (Battus) may also suggest this friendly relationship, and does not necessarily indicate the subordination of the indigenous Libyans, as some have apparently argued:

> The friendliness of the Libyans who conducted [the Greeks] to the site of the city suggests that the pioneering stage of the colonisation must have gone well, with the help and cooperation of the Libyans. It has been maintained that the very title of the Libyan word, Battus, shows that he had Libyan as well as Greek subjects. This is a plausible conjecture, but it must be recognized as only a conjecture; friendly Libyan tribes who had given the immigrants land on which to settle would naturally refer to their king as 'Battus' in their own tongue without implying actual subjection to him, and their later conduct in the reign of Battus II would seem to emphasize the point. (1959: 46)

So the thesis takes pains to indicate that the colonization of Africa was not a foregone conclusion, but involved cordial hospitality on the part of the Libyans, and no necessary subjection to the invader.

After Battus I, the thesis explains, Arcesilaus continued to rule in a period of friendly relations between immigrants and Libyans, partly because there was no expansion of the colony. Subsequently, Battus II 'decided on a policy of expansion' and 'proceeded to the expropriation of large portions of the land of the neighbouring (περίοικοι) Libyans' (1959: 46). The thesis then draws its most focused parallel with subsequent centuries:

[7] Keynes 1981: 332.

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> The pattern of what followed this expansion of the colony has been repeated in later times elsewhere in Africa: a small body of immigrants from Europe come to settle and are welcomed by the local inhabitants, and so long as the numbers of the immigrants remain small, relations between them and the indigenous peoples remain cordial. A prosperous period of mutual development leads to a greater influx of immigrants, and with the resulting expropriation of the lands of the natives, the early phase of friendship degenerates into one of hostility and warfare. (1959: 47)

It is notable that the thesis espouses a view of cultural contact which can envision peaceful and prosperous co-development, even though it is also well aware that such a relationship can be precarious. The position of the Classics in Africa, within Kwapong's later writings, is not dissimilar, since it is recuperated within a humanist paradigm of productive cultural exchange. We may read here a delicate tightrope act on the part of the thesis which conciliates the academic establishment by means of guarded scholarly discourse while registering a history of active African negotiation with European incursions.

Once the first period of colonization is over, the thesis shows the Libyans continually resisting the Greeks by one means or another, seeking help from Egypt or from dissident Greek factions, until organized by the new constitution of Demonax which put 'Theraeans and perioikoi' together into one tribe. Kwapong argues that this arrangement recognized the intermarriage of Libyans (*perioikoi*) with the early Greek settlers from Thera, and afforded them a common citizenship. He further notes a king of Cyrene who was either Libyan or half-Libyan, as evidence of productive relationships between Libyans and Greek immigrants (1959: 50–51). The thesis thus works to put Africans at the centre of the story of Greek colonization in Africa, while also insisting on positive interpretations of that story.

The thesis's account of the founding and growth of Carthage, and its reinterpretation of the evidence for the city's relationships with indigenous peoples (1959: 71), is marked by a similar eye to much later developments. The indigenous people were happy to welcome the immigrants initially and levied a rent on the land which they occupied; the thesis points out that this must mean that the land was agreed to belong to the Libyans, and that the payment of rent eventually became irksome and a cause of contention (1959: 74–75). This rent is discontinued only when the city becomes more powerful than its erstwhile indigenous landlords and brings them into subjection as mercenary forces (1959: 77). The Libyans continued to rebel against the Carthaginians whenever they could:

> All these risings failed, it is true, but they revealed a serious and fundamental weakness of Carthage which ultimately led to her downfall when she was attacked simultaneously by a strong Mediterranean power and a well-organized indigenous kingdom in Africa as happened in the 3rd and 2nd centuries. (1959: 78)

In the First Punic War, for instance, the Numidians inflicted more damage on Carthage than did the Romans (1959: 80). Subsequent to that war, Carthage faced a further revolt from its African mercenaries. Kwapong writes somewhat anachronistically that 'a mutiny over arrears of pay' turned into 'a war for the national liberation of the Libyan subjects of Carthage' (1959: 80). Although Carthage won this war (241–238 BCE), 'bitter memories of war-time atrocities die hard, and the achievements of the rebel leaders who had held the mistress of the Western Mediterranean at bay for over three years could not have been lost on future Libyan leaders' (1959: 81). Subsequently, the thesis seeks to demonstrate how the Numidians, particularly under Masinissa, 'played a signal part in the outcome of the Punic Wars which has not always received due recognition' (1959: 106). The reinterpretation offered in the thesis thus puts Africans at the heart of ancient history, instrumental in the rise to total dominance of Rome, as well as shedding different light on modern African history. In passing, it also condemns the tradition of representing Africa as home to wild men with the heads of dogs, and other 'worthless fables' which became 'a favourite theme of the later writers' (1959: 152–54).

Although the thesis is couched in impeccably precise and indeed dull academic language, it thus discloses subtly radical perspectives on its material. It is possible that the genre of academic writing, and the power dynamics of the institution, inhibited any more directly radical expression. Kwapong's

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early publications are also in this vein, if more energetic in style. A 1956 article on 'Africa Antiqua' considers the sources for the early history of the continent, and opens:

> It used to be fashionable until recently to dismiss Africa as a continent with no past, or, at best, as a continent with a past which is so fragmentary that it is unknowable, and hence to treat the history of Africa as only the history of European activities in Africa. (Kwapong 1956: 1)

The Classical authors like Herodotus are valuable because they offer a view of the history of the indigenous people of Africa and thus contradict prejudiced assumptions. 'Africa Antiqua' celebrates the *Periplus of Hanno*, a Phoenician document of a voyage around the coasts of the continent, known in Greek translation (1956: 5). The *Periplus* invites readers to appreciate the landscapes of Africa and also its peoples:

> thanks to this Punic account the veil of secrecy was lifted for a while, to give later generations an all-too-brief glimpse of big rivers and wooded mountains, of burning fires and the music of pipes and drums, and peoples who could inspire fear into these intrepid sailors. (1956: 5)

Of the *Periplus*, Kwapong also says 'the most that can be hoped for is that more people should get to know the actual words of Hanno' (1956: 4), and three years earlier he had in fact given a BBC radio talk on the *Periplus*, titled 'Hanno the Carthaginian and the Atlantic coast of Africa' (Kwapong 1953: 25). From the account in the article, we can imagine that it was a positive version both of the Carthaginian sailors and their African encounters. The later 1958 article 'Citizenship and democracy in fourth-century Cyrene' builds on the argument of the thesis about the *Diagramma* of Ptolemy, the document which organized the constitution of Cyrene when it was brought into Ptolemy's kingdom. Kwapong argues that the *Diagramma* extends citizenship to the sons of Greek men and Libyan mothers, recognizing the hybrid nature of the population and taking 'cognisance of the previous friendly Cyrenaean–Libyan relations'. This shows that the Greek cities of North Africa were not 'isolated units but fully integrated communities' (Kwapong 1958: 109), holding out possibilities which may well seem productive for later societies. Kwapong's writings thus offer a version of colonial history that takes its cue from the ancient African perspective, but which recognizes the possibility of harmony as well as of resistance.

## 3. THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, AND BEYOND

Kwapong's earliest writings thus work to retrieve African agency from readings of African history, so that the Classical texts are seen to be resources for African self-understanding and identity. As well as these publications, Kwapong was teaching in the Department of Classics at the University of Ghana, Legon, from the mid-50s. In 1965 he represented the department at a Colloquium on the Classics in Education, held in London by the American Council of Learned Societies. Within this colloquium we can read a more 'decolonizing' version of Classics in Africa, as Kwapong put his stamp on the proceedings. Quite early on in the discussion of the teaching of Ancient History, he pointed out that conventional accounts of the worth of the Classics would not wash in all contexts. According to Else:

> Mr. Kwapong pointed out that in Africa and many other parts of the world it is very difficult to justify the study of the history of ancient Greece and Rome with the traditional slogans frequently heard in Europe and America, especially those that defend classical history as the study of 'the origins of our own society' or 'the fountainhead of Western civilization', etc. He remarked that in Africa such slogans had little relevance and less appeal. These comments led to a discussion of the value of ancient history that was fruitful and stimulating, and still in eager progress when time forced the adjournment of the last committee session.[8]

[8] Else 1965: 9.

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In his account of teaching Classics at the University of Ghana, Kwapong shows further how the understanding and representation of Classics must be modified. Although Western education in West Africa was initially very focused on Classics, political independence brought different emphases: 'the need to redress the balance in favour of science and technology, to "decolonise" and "Africanise" the school curriculum, has led to considerable recession in classical studies in the secondary schools and the University' (Kwapong 1965: 51). The response of the Ghanaian classicists has been flexible and creative:

> Faced with this recession, we in the Classics Department of the University of Ghana have had to rethink and modify our previous Olympian standards, and have now introduced a more flexible and integrated degree programme of Joint-Honours (Latin and/or Greek, in combination with modern languages, English, linguistics, history, philosophy, etc.). We have also started a beginners' Greek course, and substituted retranslation for prose composition in the first year of the B.A. General Degree course. (1965: 51)

The 'Africanization' of the curriculum and the prominence of science and technology reshape the place of Classics, but shed light on its importance from a different perspective:

> In general, our aim has been to throw our net much wider and to place greater emphasis on the content of the Classics as a civilisation rather than as an elegant foreign tradition. Thus our main effort is now directed to stressing the philosophical, historical, literary and linguistic perspectives and the cultural insights that the Classics do provide, and to emphasise its seminal importance for much of 20th century civilization. [ … ] We do insist, however, on the relevance to modern life of all the humanities African or European, 'Western' or 'Eastern'. If the Classics are truly concerned with a vital fragment of human history, then it is essential that we in Africa have direct experience of them in the most meaningful way, and not come to them only by derivative or second-hand experience. (1965: 51)

This position is articulated on other occasions in Kwapong's work. His writings insist that it is appropriate that Africans possess the Classics for themselves, including the languages, insofar as the Classics represent the Humanities, but at the same time African educators must rework the Classical material so that it can better address the modern world. To this end, he adds in 1965, the department in Ghana had started to teach a 'popular special subject— Africa in the Classical World' (1965: 51). In this way the discipline is not only relevant to modern life, but part of modern life as well. Crucially, it is part of modern life in Africa, because it is not a 'foreign tradition'.

Apart from the option of studying Africa in the Classical World, the programme that Kwapong describes is recognizable as an account of Classical education in many present-day universities across the world; although the languages remain important, the chief educational offering is the overall culture of ancient Greece and Rome. The Africanization that Kwapong describes is one version of the reinterpretation of the ancient world which has unfolded in many contexts since the middle of the twentieth century; it is one of the several ways in which the discipline has retained its hold on contemporary culture. Further than this Kwapong's texts rarely go. When he embarked on 'decolonization' in the University of Ghana, as a senior figure among the Ghanaian academics there, the enterprise consisted of ensuring that African staff members were recruited and promoted, rather than focusing on the curriculum, so that the balance of the staffing could eventually tip away from European expatriates. This form of decolonization was politically necessary, not only to bolster the University's standing with the people of Ghana, but also to protect it from sceptical scrutiny by the Nkrumah government (Kwapong 2016: 120–24).

Such sceptical scrutiny was, of course, inherent in the position of the new university within the developing culture and society of newly independent Ghana. Mamdani has recently drawn attention to the competing models of the 'African university' in the 1960s, contrasting the 'universalist'

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tradition with the 'nationalist', and posing an uneasy relationship between the 'committed intellectual' and the 'universal scholar'.[9] Nkrumah himself, Classically trained, took on the Greek philosophical tradition in his book *Consciencism*, and by historicizing it, sought to qualify any claim to universality. Simultaneously he clarified that a version of the Classical tradition was exactly what Africans needed to guard against, if not reject outright:

> The colonized African student, whose roots in his own society are systematically starved of sustenance, is introduced to Greek and Roman history, the cradle history of modern Europe, and he is encouraged to treat this portion of the story of man together with the subsequent history of Europe as the only worthwhile portion. This history is anointed with a universalist flavouring which titillates the palate of certain African intellectuals so agreeably that they become alienated from their own immediate society.[10]

Similarly, Fanon characterized the colonized subject as needing to 'turn into dust' the 'Greco-Latin pedestal' 'deep down in his brain'.[11] Anti-colonial activist scholars thus drew a line between the Classical tradition and the independent African which other commentators, like Kwapong, had to find ways of crossing, or at least of blurring.

Kwapong's early career may thus be represented in terms of a negotiation between professional commitment to the discipline of Classics and a more politicized attentiveness to its wider national context, where he could not always be sure of a secure welcome. Throughout his autobiography we can read scenes of him moving diplomatically between the demands of a modern independent African identity—energetic and forward-looking—and those of the profile of a traditional classicist—scholarly, authoritative, and somewhat austere.[12] When we recall that the first Vice-Chancellor of the University was David Balme, a noted Classical scholar, and that the University was in its early years distinguished by Latin graces at meals and by other 'Oxbridge' trappings,[13] we can see that the emergence of Kwapong as the first African Vice-Chancellor was a logical development; it represents a move to 'Africanize' the university while sustaining the 'universalizing' commitment. One scene of successful negotiation by Kwapong surrounded the logo of the university. Having been a traditional Latin motto before independence, the logo had now to be redesigned to speak to a Ghanaian audience. Akan symbolism was employed, the fern of 'uprightness' and the rams' horns of 'creativity', to be laced with a Latin motto. Charged with the duty of generating the motto in the early 1960s, Kwapong came up with *Integri procedamus*, 'Let Us Progress with Integrity'. There is an intriguing moment when the Minister for Higher Education expressed mixed feelings about the new logo, since 'integrity' might point to the independence and autonomy of the university, which currently was a thorn in the side of the Nkrumah administration. Justice Annie Jiagge won the day for the University with her magisterial question 'Mr Chairman, *what is wrong with integrity*?' (Kwapong 2016: 140).

Eventually Kwapong rose beyond his department to become Pro-Vice-Chancellor and finally Vice-Chancellor of the University, and his career ceased to focus on the discipline of Classics. Even so, we can still read the importance of Classics within his overall perspective in some of his later publications, where he clearly aligns it with the social and cultural goals of modern Africa. For example, in 1969 he gave a lecture at the University of Lagos, titled 'The role of Classical Studies in Africa today'. In this lecture, he noted how Europeans were amazed and, he says, condescending, when they learned he was himself a classicist: why teach dead languages in Africa, they said, when you need to do science and technology? Surely Latin and Greek are only relics of an alien colonization. Moreover, there was the argument that even in Europe Classics had lost its stranglehold on education, not only because it was so badly taught but also because it was made to support the nonsensical claims to superiority of a privileged elite. Kwapong's lecture accepts all this and shows in detail how it is true. But he then puts Classics in a different context. He suggests that the major division in the world is between rich

[9] Mamdani 2018: 29.
[10] Nkrumah [1964] 2009: 5.
[11] Fanon 1967: 36.
[12] See also the encounter sketched in O'Brien 2001: 16.
[13] See Kwapong 2016: 99, 121–22 on these invented traditions, and their timely disappearance.

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and poor, with the gap growing wider, especially because of the way that the post-industrial, technological economy works. Because of this global situation, African universities must spearhead national development, and to do this they must work with all human capacities, not just the technological and scientific. Classics is important within this effort because it offers a way into many other humanistic disciplines and, as Kwapong puts it, if it does not have all the answers, it certainly has many of the crucial questions.

The lecture goes on to make specific suggestions for new pedagogy, insisting that textbooks and methods of teaching must be overhauled, there must be an emphasis on Classical culture beyond the languages, and there must be cross-fertilization between Classics and contemporary subjects. These kinds of emphases, Kwapong concludes, will make African classicists into citizens of Africa and simultaneously citizens of the world. The Classics here are thus both local to Africa, as in Kwapong's PhD thesis, and shared as global Humanities, which is the path that the discipline has characteristically taken since the 1960s in order to preserve and develop itself.

Kwapong subsequently left the university and worked in international education and development in Japan and Canada, before returning home to Ghana. In the 1990s we can read further statements on the general importance of history and Humanities to Africa, consistent with Kwapong's version of the relevance of Classics to Africa. Kwapong's keynote speech 'The crisis of development: education and identity' is very clear that history is part of a nation's patrimony and essential to its ability to be 'self-reliant' and 'unified' (1992: 35). Research into 'African historical experience, and Africa's place in the scheme of human history' (1992: 37) is necessary not only to counter the myth, fostered by racial prejudice and ignorance, that Africa has no history, but also to take full cognizance of the slave trade and the colonial experience. To live without history is 'to be a waif, or to use the roots of others' and is thus inimical to African self-expression, cultural authenticity, and modernization (1992: 39–40). In 'Culture, development, and democracy: the role of intellectuals in Africa' the opening pages invoke Pliny's dictum of *ex Africa semper aliquid noui* ('out of Africa, always something new') and relate it to the release of Nelson Mandela and the 'second liberation struggle' for democracy (Kwapong 1994: 147). Proper study of African history is again necessary for Africans' self-understanding and unity, and will counter the disregard of African culture such as characterized the Berlin Conference of 1884. By dividing Africa up among European colonial powers, taking no account of existing lines of force, the Conference deliberately exacerbated differences between regions and people. The ensuing cultural alienation has impeded meaningful modernization (1994: 152). Although Kwapong is not explicitly referring to Classics in these texts, it is clear that the 'classical' histories of Africa are part of the 'patrimony' (1992: 38) that is so important.

Back in Ghana, Kwapong expected to retire, but in fact became Chair of the Council of State under President John Agyekum Kufuor. Towards the end of this phase, he was invited to speak on 'Classical civilization and national development' for the Faculty of Arts Colloquium at the University of Ghana. This text offers further reflections on Kwapong's construction of Classics in Africa. He recalls an early interest in the relations between Greeks and non-Greeks, and quotes Aristotle's advice to Alexander, contrasting it with Alexander's vision of unity:

> 'Remember to treat the Greeks like a leader (hegemonikos) and the Barbarians—foreigners—like a master (despotikos)'! Alexander, happily for history, rejected this jaundiced advice and chose instead to promote his policy for the unity of mankind. (Kwapong 2006: 48)

As in his earlier writings, the Classical texts can shed light on the colonial experience, but certainly not from only one viewpoint. Aristotle divided the world into Greeks and Barbarians, advising very different treatment for each, but Alexander insisted on a more unified vision of the world. Classics can thus be recuperated for alternatives to the history of colonialism. Pursuing the role of Classical civilization in the life of the nation, Kwapong goes on to cite David Balme as a prominent classicist and simultaneously an academic leader with a wider vision. Kwapong describes Balme's plan for the University of Ghana as 'at once relevant to our nation's development needs, but, at the same time, firmly anchored

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in the universal values of world civilization'. In this connection the question of the Classics in Africa comes to the fore again. Kwapong quotes Balme describing the subjects that universities study:[14]

> The subjects which they study and constantly develop are the common ground of civilized people; some of them contribute directly to the progress of civilization, others indirectly. It is not on the basis of national culture that they claim to be studied, but as the basis of world civilization. [ … ] The question 'Why teach Greek to Africans?' rests on a misunderstanding of the unity of modern civilization. Indeed, it is an insult both to ancient Greece and modern Africa and the proper answer to it is 'Why teach it to Englishmen? Why to Greeks?' (Kwapong 2006: 49–50)

Kwapong finishes his reflections on Classics in Africa by quoting himself, from the Colloquium, on the ways in which Classical pedagogy may be modified in order to serve the African context, by stressing the overall 'relevance to modern life of all the humanities' (2006: 51). Kwapong states cheerfully that 'That is what I said in 1965, and these views remain substantially valid for today' (2006: 52). Speaking from his position of cultural and national authority on a discipline that he has helped to Africanize, he has himself become a classic.[15]

Kwapong's version of Classics can thus be construed as conservative, aligned as it is with traditional excellence, but in his own case he put his individual achievement very firmly in the service first of his country and then of educational development on an international scale. His writings do not construct explicit anti-colonial or even anti-racist arguments from the Classical corpus, but implicitly tie the Classical tradition to progressive goals by showing its global reach and its unifying potential. His perspective is thus an abidingly fruitful one for those who wish to move the discipline beyond any toxic default to Eurocentrism.

[14] Kwapong quotes Balme from J. B. Leaning in *University of Ghana: Tributes to David Mowbray Balme* (1989), which I have been unable to consult.

[15] His importance to the discipline in Ghana has recently been acknowledged in a paper by Michael K. Okyere Asante (2020).

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