Building (b)ridges beyond the Portrait

Mapping Memories of Kwasi Boachi – Exit Frame!

Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago

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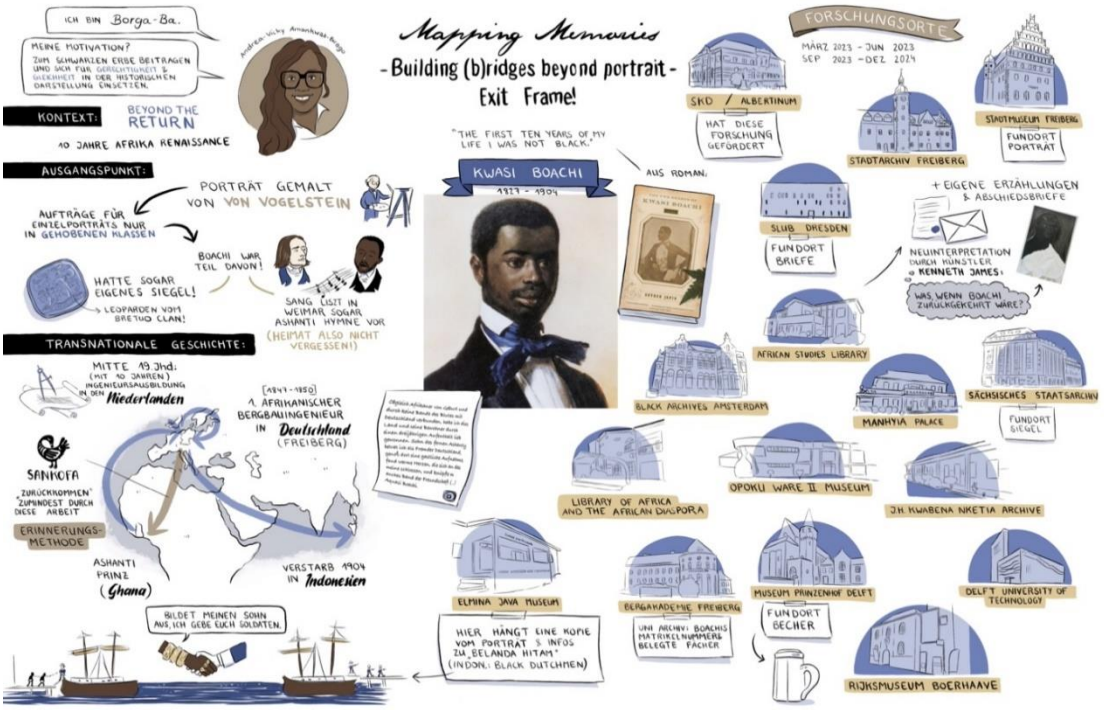

Fig. 1. Graphic Recording by Tuffix, 2024[2]

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[1] In this context, the term "Building Bridges" is used as a metaphor for transformative work and new models of art production and knowledge exchange.

[2] This graphic recording visualizes key sites, sources, and contexts in reconstructing the life of Asante prince Kwasi Boachi. On the right, it maps the archival landscape—municipal, state, palace, and museum collections—where Boachi's legacy is preserved through letters, personal objects like the Boachi cup, and heraldic materials such as his coat of arms. This web of sources reflects the complexity of researching Black lives in European history. On the left, Boachi's historical route from the Gold Coast to the Netherlands and Germany unfolds, framed by the political treaty between the Asante king and the Dutch crown. The Sankofa symbol evokes return—not literal, as Boachi never went back to Ghana—but as a metaphor for memory and diasporic continuity. At the center stands his 1849 portrait by Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein, symbolizing both European visual regimes and Boachi's dignity and agency.Also included is the cover of Arthur Japin's novel *The Two Hearts of Kwasi Boachi*, a fictionalized autobiography told through a white-authored lens. Despite its fictional frame, Japin's extensive research helped bring Boachi's story into wider public view. The depiction of the Asante-Dutch treaty on soldier recruitment—an agreement that shaped Boachi's fate—exemplifies how African lives have long been narrated through external gazes.The graphic recording gestures toward a counter-narrative: it references Boachi's own letters and features a re-interpretation of his portrait by Ghanaian artist Kenneth Aidoo, reclaiming his image through Black diasporic imagination and aesthetics.
The author, Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago (M.A.), conducted this research between March and June, and again from September to December 2023, traveling between Germany, Ghana, and the Netherlands. The visual was developed with illustrator Soufeina Hamed (goes by the artist name tuffix), based on an entry from the author's audio research diary.

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Abstract

Keywords: nobility, Africa, Asante Empire, Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein, Black archives, memory culture, Ghana, Kwasi Boachi, migration, transcontinental entanglements

The following essayistic synthesis takes two portraits of Ashanti Prince Kwasi Boachi (1827–1904) as an opportunity to explore the life and work of this Black nobleman. The focus is particularly on Boachi's contributions to memory culture, which are recognized here as part of a "royal narrative." From his privileged social position, he not only contributes to the representation of the Asante Kingdom within Europe in various ways but also presents his experiences and views, such as on the subject of the slave trade. Through his writings and activities, it becomes evident how the legacy of the Asante Kingdom is reflected upon and honored in a European context, thus creating a bridge between African and European memory cultures. In this way, Boachi can be considered a central figure in memory culture and the Black German Archive. By following Boachi's work, this study can also exemplify the possibility of transcontinental memory work, promoting approaches that view historical events from multiple perspectives and in terms of their interconnections and interactions across different regions of the world. This text is therefore aimed at both an art-historical and memory-culture-interested audience, including those actively engaged with issues of memory culture activism and identity politics.

This English version was translated by the author Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago. It includes new reflections and research; the original German text was first published on January, 8th 2025 on the SKD Voices platform, the second revised version January 30th, 2025 for download; Source: https://voices.skd.museum/voices-mag/building-bridges-beyond-the-portrait/#_ftn1

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1. The Portraits of Kwasi Boachi and Kwame Poku[3]

In 1849, the painter and portraitist Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein (1788–1868) created the portrait *Aquasi Boachi, Prince of Ashantiland.* It shows the twenty-year-old Asante prince Kwasi Boachi, who was sent to Europe from his homeland in present-day Ghana as a child by his father, King Kwaku Dua I, along with his cousin Kwame Poku. After living in the Netherlands, Boachi lived in Germany from 1848, where he, among other things, familiarized himself with European traditions and received professional training.

Today, the portrait can be found in the holdings of the Freiberg City and Mining Museum. It was loaned to the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections) in June 2023 for a period of seven years, during which it will be exhibited at the Albertinum. There is also another painting showing Boachi with his cousin Kwame Poku by the Dutch painter Jacobus Ludovicus Cornet created around 1837 that currently hangs in the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave in Leiden. Both paintings serve as the starting point for this text, which examines the depictions of African figures in 19th century European art. In the following, these two portraits are used as a key to understanding Boachi's personal development and the cultural dynamics of his time. By analyzing them in detail, it is possible to understand them beyond their illustrative character as visual archives that document the development of (Black) identity in the interplay between African and European influences.

Furthermore, not only European forms of representation are of relevance; rather, the images offer valuable insights into a transcontinental shared archive. They illustrate how royal ancestry and cultural prestige are presented and interpreted—both in the Asante homeland and in Europe.

[3] Chapter 1 and selected sections of Chapter 3, which focus on the art historical analysis of the portraits by Cornet, Vogelstein, and Pieneman as well as on the European historical and archival background, were co-authored with Antonella Bianca Meloni (M.A.), an art historian and, at the time of writing, research assistant in the Research Department of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (SKD). Drawing on her expertise in European portraiture and her curatorial experience in one of Germany's leading museum institutions, Meloni contributed substantially to the interpretation of these images within their 19th-century artistic and ideological frameworks. Her contributions reflect both a rigorous methodological approach and a critical curatorial lens informed by her practical work in museum research and provenance studies.

1.1 The Portrait of Kwasi Boachi: A Mirror of Personal and Political Identity in the 19th Century

The portrait *Aquasie Boachi, Prince of Ashantiland*[4] by Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein, dated 1849, stands as a remarkable testament to artistic representation and the social conditions of its era. It was created during Boachi's stay in the Kingdom of Saxony, in Dresden and Freiberg, between 1847 and 1850, where he encountered the Dresden court painter Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein.

The portrait depicts Boachi as a half-length figure in a three-quarter view, set against a backdrop of yellow, orange, and green hues. In the lower left corner, the painting is signed by Vogel, with the date and the note "alla prima."[5] It can therefore be assumed that the portrait was likely created in a single sitting, without any preparatory sketch. Boachi is fashionably dressed and presented as a dandy, wearing a tightly fitted black jacket over a white shirt and white vest, with a striking azure blue bow that boldly flares out to the left and right. His hair is kept short, as are his beard and mustache. His slightly parted lips and distant gaze convey a friendly expression. His appearance, dressed in European fashion, exudes self-confidence but also reflects Boachi's integration into the Western system. A preserved daguerreotype, housed in the Delft City Archive from the years 1847-1849, just before his arrival in the Kingdom of Saxony, shows him in similarly fashionable attire.

This representation of Boachi in European style is significant for two reasons. On one hand, Vogel's portrait stands out because, within the context of the German and Dutch artistic canon, it does not

[4] In German and Dutch art historical literature and archival records, the spelling "Aquasi Boachie" is most commonly used—this is also how Kwasi Boachi himself signed his name. In this synthetic essay, the author, Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago, follows the Asante Twi orthography "Kwasi," which was systematized in the 1870s by German missionaries such as Johann Gottlieb Christaller and David Asante during their linguistic work in the Gold Coast. Interestingly, in contemporary Ghanaian public discourse and media, the prince is often referred to as *Kwasi Boakye*, *Kwasi Boachie*, or simply *Boachi*, reflecting both transliteration shifts and local naming variations. Through extensive archival research, Amankwaa-Birago proposes that the Asante prince may have introduced Akan Twi terms such as "Cumasi" (German: Kumasi) and "Oheneba" (German: prince or royal son) into the German language context *prior* to the publication of Christaller's grammar in 1875. This insight positions Kwasi Boachi as an early and underrecognized cultural mediator who subtly contributed to the circulation of African knowledge systems within Europe—well before formal missionary linguistics gained institutional traction.

During her archival investigations, the author also encountered distorted versions of Boachi's name and that of his cousin, such as "Agnasi Boachie" and "Quami Poko." These variations—whether due to transliteration inconsistencies, typographical errors, or linguistic unfamiliarity—illustrate the challenges of reconstructing African genealogies in European archival settings. For Amankwaa-Birago, tracing these misspelled names became an essential methodological tool in recovering the fragmented presence of African actors in 19th-century European texts and images.

see J.G. Christaller: A Grammar of the Asante and Fante Language Called Tshi (Twi, Chee) Based on the Akuapem Dialect with Reference to Other (Akan and Fante) Dialects. Basel, 1875.

[5] The term "alla prima," from the Italian, describes a wet-on-wet painting method in which the final painting is created directly without layering the oil colors and without drying times.

conform to the typical depictions of other Black individuals of the time.[6] For centuries, Black individuals had been portrayed exclusively as servants, slaves, or marginal figures with ambiguous identities. In poses that were often bent, turned away, or only visible from behind, they served as mere staffage and symbols of European power. Rarely were the names of these depicted Black individuals recorded; instead, racist, depersonalizing stereotypes typically took their place. Boachi, himself navigating the space between Europe and Africa, between colonizers and the colonized, must have been acutely aware of his exceptional situation. He also moved within a society in which a "racial doctrine" had been developing since the late 18th century. For example, the memoirs of Carl Gustav Carus (1789–1869), a Dresden-based doctor and artist dedicated to racial research, who placed Africans at the lowest level of human development, include records showing that Boachi attended a soirée hosted by Carus in January 1848.

In the portrait, Boachi does not reveal any of the potential inner conflicts he may have had. Letters preserved in archives in Dresden, Leipzig, and Munich even reference a period of calm and self-discovery. And yet—as became clear—the painting can be seen as a visual narrative of Boachi's complex identity and life journey, which testifies to both his aristocratic heritage and his life far from home. It invites reflection on the role of portraiture in the construction of identity and power, and encourages further exploration of the subtle ways in which art mirrors political and social realities.

In this context, Kwasi Boachi's dandy style can be interpreted as a conscious engagement with his exceptional position: the conspicuous bow tie not only signals a certain degree of elegance and self-assurance but also imbues his outfit with extravagance and individuality—traits that directly challenge a racial ideology rooted in generalizations and degradation. Furthermore, in an era when fashion played a significant role in expressing social status and political consciousness, it can be inferred that Boachi employed his fashionable accessory as both an expression of Black identity and belonging, and as a strategic form of resistance against colonial oppression and racial discrimination. In doing so, he draws on the "Black Dandyism" popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, which was closely tied to the American anti-slavery movement: the deliberate use of fashion in this context served to challenge existing power structures, critique the oppressive stereotyping of Black people, and forge a counter-identity to the dominant white culture and its racist norms. At a time when African nobility was seldom portrayed in Europe, Boachi thus used his portrait to express his critical stance toward colonial power structures and to position himself in the intercultural debate. His depiction in European fashion

[6] See David Bindman, Henry Louis Gates Jr. (eds.): The Image of the Black in Western Art, From the American Revolution to World War I: Black Models and White Myths. Cambridge/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012, xi ff.

allowed him to make visible both his cultural identity and his opposition to the injustices of the slave trade.

This practice of using clothing as an expression of partisanship is particularly striking when compared to the symbolic language of traditional Asante aristocratic fashion. In Ashantiland, aristocrats often wore garments that conveyed royal status and attitude through specific spiritual symbols and modes of wear. Clothing was not only aesthetically significant but also a powerful expression of social hierarchy: it signified the power dynamics within Asante society and one's connection to the ancestors. The choice of fabric and the manner in which garments were worn communicated both individual and collective identities, as well as political positions. In light of Boachi's origins and the traditional practices of royal Asante culture to which he was accustomed, it seems likely that the sitter himself used clothing strategically in Vogel's portrait.

Another distinctive aspect of the portrait is its luminous background. In the lower left corner, there is a vaguely defined green-blue area. Behind the figure, the colors resemble a sunset, lacking any clear spatial definition. Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein painted hundreds of portraits throughout his life, immortalizing members of the Saxon court, as well as painters, scholars, and travelers. Ina Weinrautner, who has studied the collection of Vogel's portraits in the Kupferstich-Kabinett (Collection of Prints and Drawings)of the Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden (state art collections), highlights the numerous nationalities preserved within the Dresden collection. Approximately one-third of the more than six hundred drawings depict individuals from various countries. Vogel's portraits form a cosmopolitan collection of prominent figures from diverse nations, which, in addition to Boachi, include individuals from Mexico, the Ottoman Empire, and Java. Among them is none other than the Javanese prince and painter Raden Saleh.[7] Regarding the portrait of Boachi, this is interesting in two respects: on one hand, he was also portrayed by von Vogelstein; on the other, it is known that Boachi and Saleh were acquainted with each other. Both were involved in the circles of the Dresden patron family Serre, in whose houses were frequented by the artistic elite.[8] Among the guests were prominent figures such as the poet and author Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), the married composer

[7] Like Boachi, Raden Saleh (1811–1880) also came from a noble ruling family. Raden Saleh (1811–1880). Through his connections with the East India Company, he received a comprehensive education, first in Java and then in the Netherlands. At the beginning of the 1840s, he was in Dresden at the same time as Boachi. For further information on Saleh, please refer to the publication of the Lindenau Museum in Altenburg: Julia M. Nauhaus (Ed.): Raden Saleh (1811–1880): Ein javanischer Maler in Europa [published on the occasion of the exhibition of the same name at the Lindenau-Museum Altenburg from June 29th through September 22nd, 2013]. Altenburg/Thüringen: Lindenau Museum, 2013.

[8] Kwasi Boachi lived with Caroline Geudtner from the artist family of Hermann and Rudolph Geudtner on Petersstraße in Freiberg. See supplement of the Freiberger Anzeiger from 25 August 1882.

couple Robert (1810–1856) and Clara Schumann (1819–1896), the composer and conductor Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826), the composer Franz Liszt (1811–1886), the painter Ferdinand Oehme (1797–1855), and the poet Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875). The Asante Prince Kwasi Boachi was likely introduced to the Serre family by the Javanese Prince Raden Saleh; the two had already known each other from The Hague. Saleh had been commissioned by the Dutch government to create a triple portrait of Boachi, his cousin Kwame Poku, and the general Major Jan Verveer (1775–1838). The painting, completed in 1839, was brought to Elmina Castle by the Dutch, with plans to be sent from there to the Asante Court in Kumasi.[9] Its whereabouts today are unknown. Saleh and Boachi met again in Java in the later years of their lives.

The unique bond between the two men and the convergence of their biographies are artfully embodied in Vogel's oil portrait of Saleh. Much like Boachi's portrayal, this portrait encapsulates a significant moment of cultural and historical intersection. It not only represents Saleh's personal status and identity but also underscores the shared experiences of these two figures as they traversed the intricate dynamics of colonialism and intercultural exchange.[10] The Serre family had intentionally commissioned it as a counterpart to Boachi's portrait.[11] In 1848, the Serre family also had a garden pavilion constructed for Saleh in the Javanese-Orientalist style in Maxen, near Dresden. The portraits of Boachi and Saleh were displayed opposite one another in this so-called "Blue Mosque." This arrangement suggests that the Serre family either commissioned Boachi's portrait or at least acquired it from Vogel prior to the theft of both paintings from the garden pavilion in 1862. A letter from Friederike Serre to Hans Christian Andersen, in which she recounts the burglary and theft of the two portraits, has survived. Further research is necessary to trace how these works eventually came into the possession of the Freiberg City and Mining Museum and an Austrian private collection. The portrait of Saleh provides a striking counterpoint to the portrait of Boachi. Vogel similarly chose a luminous background for Saleh's depiction, featuring a sky in shades of light blue, yellow, and orange. When compared to his other oil portraits, the backgrounds of both works stand out. In Vogel's body of work, vibrant and bright colors are typically used for the clothing of (white) subjects, while the backgrounds tend to be restrained and muted, or alternatively, landscapes are employed as backdrops.

[9] Nauhaus 2013, p.34.
[10] A further portrait, a drawing showing Saleh, is located today in the aforementioned Vogel von Vogelstein collection of the Kupferstich-Kabinett at the Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen Dresden
[11] The portrait by Carl Vogel von Vogelstein was possibly painted as a memento, which was a common practice in the mid-19th century. During this time, it was customary to produce portraits to preserve the memory of loved ones or important figures.

It is entirely plausible that Vogel turned to the romanticized sky for Boachi and Saleh, considering both their nationalities and skin tones. As Black individuals and people of color, respectively, Boachi and Saleh presented a unique challenge for the artist: to create a contrast that would complement his subjects. A depiction of Boachi set against a dark or black background—such as those found in many of Vogel's other works—would have been an ineffective solution to distinguish him in the foreground, in much the same way a white person would stand out against a dark background.

The issue of lighting and contrast in the portrayal of Black people or people of color remains relevant in contemporary discourse. In recent years, it has been observed that in fashion photography, the use of certain lighting and filters often produces less favorable results when photographing Black models compared to white models, leading to significant criticism of these practices..[12] Vogel's choice of flattering backgrounds, which allow Boachi and Saleh to be presented in striking contrast and set apart, can thus be interpreted as intentionally favorable to the models. However, no Orientalist motif should be assumed. Aside from the coloration of the backgrounds, there are no noticeable differences when compared to his portrayals of European subjects, and Vogel's written legacy does not suggest any racist intent. On the contrary, Saleh is depicted with grace in a three-quarter portrait, wearing a dark green jacket with a stand-up collar, complemented by a violet scarf and a red hat.[13] His features are delicately rendered, and his distant gaze imparts an air of self-confidence. Vogel's portraits, therefore, create a space for discussion on multiple levels.

1.2 Description of the Double Portrait of Kwasi Boachi and Kwami Poku: Ambivalent Representation between Royal Legacy and European Racial Ideology

The second extant portrait of Boachi, attributed to the Dutch painter and draughtsman Jacobus Ludovicus Cornet (1815–1882), forms the focus of the following discussion. This double portrait, likely completed around 1837, depicts Boachi and his cousin Kwame Poku at approximately ten years of age. There is currently no conclusive evidence to suggest that the two boys sat for Cornet, and the circumstances surrounding the production of the painting therefore merit further scholarly investigation.

[12] Among many cases, the prominent example of the photographer Annie Leibovitz should be mentioned here, whose photographs of Black models in the last years have been widely discussed: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/23/annie-leibovitz-ketanji-brown-jackson-vogue-photos, last accessed 18 July 2024.

[13] It could be a Phrygian cap, a symbol commonly used in Europe at the time to identify oneself as a supporter of a republican and democratic freedom movement. As a comprehensive pictorial analysis of this work would go beyond the scope of the present work, we refer here to the Altenburg publication (Nauhaus 2013).

The composition places the boys—Kwasi and Kwame—before a landscape featuring a vast yellow-blue sky, palm trees, and a small village in the distance, possibly alluding to their homeland. Both children are dressed in kente cloths, the distinctive woven textiles historically associated with Akan royalty. The term *kente* derives from *kɛntɛn*, meaning "basket," a reference to the textile's intricate, interlaced patterns. Traditionally reserved for the royal court, kente served both sacred and social functions, symbolizing hierarchy, authority, and spiritual lineage within Asante culture.[14] Each king commissioned a unique design in collaboration with the master weavers of his time, underscoring the fabric's deep association with the royal court and its function as a marker of the highest social rank. The colors within the cloths carry distinct spiritual and symbolic meanings—for instance, yellow signifies holiness and high esteem; red represents strong political and spiritual affiliations; green conveys growth and vitality; black symbolizes ancestral presence and spiritual energy; and orange denotes royal magnificence and material wealth.[15]

It remains uncertain which of the two boys is Kwame and which is Kwasi. Both are depicted from the waist up—the boy on the left in a three-quarter profile, while the boy on the right is rendered in a nearly frontal view. A marked difference between the two portrayals is readily discernible. The garment worn by the boy on the left can be identified as the prestigious kente-cloth variety known as *poa*, traditionally reserved for members of the highest aristocracy. His resplendent appearance is further accentuated by intricate jewelry adorning his hands, arms, and neck. His right arm is crossed in front of his chest, grasping the heavy fold of fabric that drapes over his shoulder. The boy's pose, combined with his solemn gaze, serves to present him as a representative of the Ashanti royal house. The jewelry, which is typically reserved for adults, imparts to him the status of maturity, setting him apart as a potential future heir to the throne.[16]

The demeanor of the figure on the right contrasts sharply with the solemn portrayal of the boy on the left. Positioned slightly behind the left figure, he is partially obscured by him. The kente fabric depicted in the painting is identified as the distinctive variant "Ahwepan,"[17] underscores that each fabric worn by a member of the Asante royal house was uniquely crafted.[18] The pattern is kept simple, which is

[14] Although the production has increased and the fabric is now accessible to a broader public, it remains to this day a symbol for wealth, high status, and cultural finesse.
[15] On the meanings of kente-cloth and their colors, the mother of the author Amankwaa-Birago was orally interviewed. She is a trained teacher from Ghana and the daughter of a Kente vendor from the Ashanti Region, Isaac Frempong (1914–1979).
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] See Otumfuo Nana Osei Agyeman: Prempeh II: History of the Asante. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.

also reflected in the name: "pan" means "empty," indicating the unadorned, straightforward design of the fabric.."[19]

The unpretentious impression is reinforced by the way the garment has been casually draped over the neck. The hands and arms are not visible. The necklaces, which resemble those worn by the boy on the left, also suggest royal lineage. In contrast to his companion, the boy on the right is depicted smiling broadly and showing his teeth. It is noteworthy that Cornet rendered both boys wearing realistic representations of *kente* cloth, which raises the question of whether these fabrics and Asante jewelry were gifted to the Dutch or acquired through trade networks in the Netherlands.

The depiction of traditional Asante textiles in a European portrait thus speaks not only to the princes' individual migration histories and their physical presence in Europe but also to the broader circulation of knowledge, cultural forms, and material goods under conditions shaped by Dutch and other European colonial regimes.

It is also important to note that Cornet's work conveys a certain ambivalence—one shaped by the complex entanglements between the Netherlands as a colonial power and the Asante Kingdom, alongside other colonized African polities. At the time of the painting's creation, a system of "racial theory" had already taken hold in Europe, having been initiated as early as the 17th century by the French physician and traveler François Bernier (1620–1688). The sustained reception of this racialized framework into the mid-19th century is reflected in the figure of Jan van der Hoeven, the commissioner of the painting.

Van der Hoeven (1800–1868), a Dutch scientist and physician, engaged with contemporary race theories in much the same way as Carl Gustav Carus in Dresden. He compiled collections of anatomical drawings and photographs, particularly of human skulls from different regions of the world. A surviving sketch from his archive—executed by Cornet—shows Kwasi Boachi and Kwame Poku in simple line drawing. According to Hans Laurens de Jonge, van der Hoeven is believed to have used this profile sketch in his academic lectures on "racial classification," and eventually included it in his 1842 publication.[20] The ambivalence in the treatment of the individuals Boachi and Poku—evident in the fact that, on the one hand, a sketch of the two boys was used in the context of racial theory instruction, and on the other hand, a refined oil painting was commissioned for private use—is also mirrored within Cornet's double portrait itself through the contrasting portrayal of the two figures.

[19] Audio interview with Brenya and Megbona, 19 May 2024.

[20] The book in question is Bijdragen tot de natuurlijke geschiedenis van den ~~negerstam~~ from 1842. Accessible at https://wellcomecollection.org/works/e429ugbs/items?canvas=74, accessed on 20.07.2024. As a Black author, I would like to point out that we put original texts with discriminatory titles in the footnote. This does not mean that these texts have no value, but that they contain hurtful terms such as the N-word. The word is crossed out to reflect and criticize the problematic effects of such terms. This method is intended to encourage respectful engagement with the topic.

While the figure on the left adheres to the representational conventions of European portraiture, elements of racial stereotyping are discernible in the figure on the right. The almost frontal gaze, the loosely draped garment, and the exposed teeth stand in stark contrast to the serious and composed figure on the left, whose robe is carefully arranged and who performs a dignified, ruler-like gesture.

European art history provides numerous examples in which Black individuals are depicted smiling or laughing with exposed teeth. This can, on the one hand, be traced to the racist assumption that the supposedly fuller lips of Black people make it difficult to cover their teeth. On the other hand, this visual trope also draws on earlier racial theorists, such as François Bernier, who explicitly referred to the "ivory-colored" teeth of Black individuals in his 17th-century racial classifications.[21] As in Dutch genre painting of the 17th and 18th centuries, laughter was often associated with a lack of emotional control, or even interpreted as a sign of foolishness. In Cornet's double portrait, the impression of disorderliness is primarily reinforced through the clothing. The casually draped garment resting on the neck, the absence of structured folds, and the complete covering of the arms—as if with a blanket—stand in stark contrast to the dress etiquette of the Asante, for whom such a presentation would have been seen as a breach of decorum.

In this respect, the figure on the left—who is not stereotypically portrayed—acts as a deliberate counterpoint to the figure on the right, whose depiction aligns with established racial stereotypes of Black individuals in European visual culture. This contrast heightens the tension within the painting. Cornet was evidently familiar with the proper way *kente* cloth was to be folded and arranged, and he intentionally chose to portray the boy on the left in a three-quarter profile, following the conventions of European portraiture typically reserved for white subjects.

This deliberate contrast naturally prompts the question: why were two such divergent modes of representation chosen? After all, both boys were of royal Asante descent and had arrived in the Netherlands as princes. The order in the painting's title suggests that the figure on the left is Kwasi Boachi, and the one on the right is Kwame Poku. However, according to the matrilineal system of succession practiced by the Asante, Kwame Poku would in fact have preceded Boachi in the royal line. It is likely that in the Netherlands, where inheritance and authority were typically passed patrilineally, Boachi was assumed to be the legitimate heir to the throne. This assumption is corroborated by contemporary reports, in which Kwame Poku is rarely mentioned and seems to have received significantly less public attention.[22] A further question arises concerning the circumstances of the

[21] François Bernier: Nouvelle division de la Terre, par des différentes espèces ou Races d'hommes qui l'habitent," in: Journal des Sçavants pour l'année, MDCLXXXIV, 1684.

[22] Warm thanks are due to Tim Huisman, conservator and curator at the Rijksmuseum Boerhaave in Leiden. In exchange with the art historian of Dresden state art collection, Antonella Bianca Meloni (M.A.), Mr. Huisman

painting's commission. While it is known that Van der Hoeven did not use the finished portrait in his academic lectures or teachings, it remains unclear why he nonetheless referenced it in his 1842 publication *Beiträge zur natürlichen Geschichte des ~~Negervolkstammes~~* ("Contributions to the Natural History of the Negro Ethnic Group")."[23] There, Van der Hoeven refers to Cornet's published profile sketches and notes that he possesses an oil painting by the same artist, which shows the two boys in full face view. However, he explains that he chose not to reproduce the painting in the publication "so as not to increase the cost of my work too much":

"I also own an oil painting by the same hand that depicts these two boys *en face*, but I did not consider it necessary to make a copy so as not to increase the cost of my work too much."

."[24] With the reference to the fact that the sketches of the two princes were created "five years ago,"[25] With the reference to the fact that the sketches of the two princes had been made "five years ago," it becomes possible to date Cornet's painting to around 1837—the same year in which Boachi and Poku arrived in the Netherlands[26]. This raises an important research question concerning the precise historical context and commissioning circumstances of the painting's creation.

The composition also gains interpretive depth through its background. The two sitters are depicted not only in traditional Asante court dress, but also against a rural setting that clearly does not resemble a European landscape. Rather, the scene suggests an "African" environment: oversized palm trees and a small village-like settlement in the distance point to a location situated in the Asante homeland[27]. The background is largely characterized by a bright yellow and pale blue sky, which serves to highlight the figures in the foreground. This chromatic strategy recalls the luminous sky featured in Vogel's portrait of Boachi and may reflect Cornet's imaginative association with the southern terrain of the Asante Kingdom[28].

Although the sitters were still children at the time the painting was created, it is likely that they were already familiar with the meanings embedded in the textiles, color schemes, and other visual symbols

provided expert support on the pictorial history of the Leiden double portrait, as in-depth research in Leiden would have exceeded the scope of this study.

[23] Translation of the original title: Bijdragen tot de natuurlijke geschiedenis van den ~~negerstam~~ — Contributions to the Natural History of the Negro Race.

[24] Original: „Ik bezit van dezelfde hand ook eene olijverwschilderij, welke deze twee knapen en face voorstelt, doch waarvan ik, om de kosten
van mijn werk niet te zeer te verhoogen, geene copie meende te moeten geven.", van der Hoeven 1842, p.68.

[25] [29] Original: "voor vijf jaren," Ibid.

[26] Based on van der Hoeven's reference to sketches created "five years earlier" in Beiträge zur natürlichen Geschichte des ~~Neger~~volkstammes (1842).

[27] See T.C. McCaskie, State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante (Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. chapter 3.

[28] See Nana Arhin Brempong, Traditional African Education and Moral Development among the Akan of Ghana, Journal of African Cultural Studies, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2000): 197–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/713674326

presented. In Asante culture, children between the ages of one and seven (*abofra*) are typically introduced to key moral teachings and social principles. These lessons—often conveyed through metaphor, proverbs, and symbolic forms—are deeply embedded within the cultural identity and oral traditions of the broader Akan community.[29] As descendants of the Asante dynasty, the princes enjoyed a special, privileged introduction to cultural norms, royal responsibilities, and social expectations and customs. This also includes the sharing of ANANSE'SEM (folklore), which dates back to the 15th century. [30]

An important symbol in these narratives is the Adinkra symbol Sankɔfa, which conveys the value of learning from the past. Sankɔfa, often translated as *"go back and retrieve it,"* conveys the essential principle that understanding the present and shaping the future requires a conscious engagement with the past. In Akan culture, this concept is embedded in proverbs and oral traditions that highlight the importance of ancestral wisdom and the preservation of cultural memory. Visually, Sankɔfa is represented by a mythical bird turning its head backward to take an egg from its back. The egg symbolizes both the knowledge inherited from the past and the promise of future generations who stand to benefit from that legacy.[31]

A well-known Akan proverb states: "Se wo were fi na wo Sankɔfa a yenkyi," which translates to: *"It is not taboo to go back and retrieve what you have forgotten."* - Derived from the Akan language, *Sankɔfa*[32] literally means "to retrieve." Yet its significance reaches far beyond the act of recovery. It serves as a cultural imperative to engage with one's own history and heritage in order to foster self-

[29] Setth Oppng: History of Psychology in Ghana since 989AD, in: Psychological Thought ,10(1): 7–48, 2017. Here: p.26.
[30] Kweku Ananse is a well-known fictional character originating from the oral traditions of the Ashanti people in Ghana. The name Ananse means "spider" in the Akan language. Ananse stories, traditionally called Anansesem, narrate various aspects of human existence—ranging from moral lessons and the origins of places and animals to reflections on cultural values and everyday wisdom. These tales are believed to date back to the 16th century and have since spread across West Africa and the Caribbean, evolving from oral performances into written and illustrated formats.
[31] Adinkra are visual symbols representing complex concepts, philosophical reflections, and proverbial wisdom. They originated among the Gyaman people of present-day Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire and were historically reserved for use in royal contexts, especially funerary and ceremonial cloths. The oldest known Adinkra cloth, created in 1817, contains fifteen symbols, including nsroma (stars), dono ntoasuo (double dono drums), and geometric diamond shapes. These patterns were printed using hand-carved calabash stamps and natural dyes. The cloth is now held in the collection of the British Museum (since 1818). Today, Adinkra motifs are widely used in design, architecture, textiles, and education throughout the African diaspora, serving as powerful symbols of Akan philosophy and cultural heritage.
[32] The word Sankofa is derived from the Akan language of Ghana and is composed of three parts: San – "to return," Ko – "to go," and Fa – "to take." Together, they form a philosophical expression often translated as "go back and get it," emphasizing the importance of retrieving and learning from one's past in order to build a wiser future. The concept is often visually represented by the image of a bird turning its head backwards while holding an egg in its beak.

understanding and contribute meaningfully to the world. In this sense, *Sankɔfa* [33]advocates reflection on the past as a means of building a strong and resilient future. More than a concept, it functions as a methodology of memory, often expressed through performative acts.

Wearing traditional clothing may thus have embodied such a return for the two boys: the fabrics and their symbolic meanings not only communicated their noble lineage outwardly, but also served as internal reminders of the values and teachings instilled in their early childhood. In this way, cultural dress became a medium through which ancestral knowledge could guide their identity and life choices far from home.

1.3 Cultural Connections: Kwasi Boachi and Kwame Poku at the Dutch court

For the sake of completeness, another significant work should be mentioned that depicts the princes Kwasi Boachi and Kwame Poku within a formal courtly setting in the Netherlands. A painting by Nicolaas Pieneman (1809–1860), dated 1840, portrays the coronation oath of King Willem II of the Netherlands. Both boys are included among the spectators, subtly emphasizing the cultural ties between the European royal court and the Asante Kingdom.

Their presence in this ceremonial scene symbolizes the exchange between European and African cultures during the 19th century and reflects their dual identity and social standing within this festive and highly political context. The painting thus serves not only as a historical record of a national event, but also as a visual testimony to the complex and entangled relationships between Europe and Africa during the colonial period.

Boachi and Poku can be seen standing among the courtiers on the left-hand side of the composition. The work is currently held in the Dutch Royal Collection in The Hague and offers a valuable point of departure for further investigation into the intertwined biographies of both princes.

1.4 Capturing Moments of Change: The Portraits of Poku and Boachi as a Mirror of Asante Identity in Europe

With the existence of three portraits of Kwasi Boachi in European collections, we are provided with visual evidence that firmly inscribes his presence into European history. These works document his position as a historical actor within the entangled narratives of Dutch, German, and Asante (Ghanaian) history, and they illuminate the complexity of intercultural relations in the 19th century. Boachi emerges as an educated man, a cosmopolitan figure, a royal heir, and a courtly presence. At the same time, the ambivalences inherent in the creation of these portraits—as well as the visual traces of racial

[33] Owusu, Philip (2019). Adinkra Symbols as “Multivocal” Pedagogical/Socialization Tool. Contemporary Journal of African Studies, 6(1), pp. 46–58.

stereotyping in Cornet's depiction—invite a critical examination of the socio-political constraints that Boachi encountered. These visual representations serve not only as testimony to his status, but also as points of departure for interrogating the challenges, contradictions, and inner conflicts he may have faced within European society.

The following section offers a detailed biographical analysis of Kwasi Boachi, placing particular emphasis on these contextual entanglements and the broader frameworks of colonial politics, migration, and identity formation.

2. Biography of Kwasi Boachi (1827–1904)

The portraits already offer us a multiperspectival view of the complex political and social networks that shaped Boachi's life. However, a nuanced biographical analysis must move beyond his three-year stay in Dresden (1847–1850) to include the political situation in his homeland—the Asante Empire—as well as the dynamics of Dutch colonial power and its influence across West Africa and the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia). Boachi's life trajectory illustrates the far-reaching consequences of colonial treaties on the lives of individuals and highlights the broader intercultural entanglements of the period. His story provides critical insights into early transnational mobility from what is now Ghana to continental Europe, and contributes to the reconstruction of a "Black archive" that uncovers neglected histories of African agency, displacement, and cultural negotiation.

2.1 Migration in the Context of Colonial Treaties:
The Education of Kwasi Boachi and Kwame Poku in the Netherlands as a Strategic Decision by the Asante Royal Court

Kwasi Boachi was born in 1827 as the son of King Kwaku Dua I (1797–1867), ruler of one of the most powerful kingdoms in West Africa. He spent his early years in the Ashanti Region, in what is now Ghana. The Asante Kingdom maintained a long-standing relationship with the Dutch trading post of Fort São Jorge da Mina—known today as Elmina Castle—situated on the former Gold Coast of Guinea.

Constructed by the Portuguese in 1482 and transferred to Dutch control in 1630, the fort is the oldest extant European fortification in present-day Ghana. By the 19th century, relations between the Asante royal family and the Dutch colonial authorities had already been forged through centuries of economic and political interaction—marked not least by the transatlantic slave trade and related commercial networks. Within this context, the decision by the Asante royal court to send Kwasi Boachi and his cousin Kwame Poku to the Netherlands for education can be seen as a strategic diplomatic gesture,

one that both acknowledged and attempted to influence the shifting balance of power between African polities and European colonial forces.[34]

During the early years of Kwasi Boachi's life, the First Anglo-Asante War (1823–1831) was underway in the Asante Empire. The expansionist ambitions of European colonial powers had far-reaching consequences for the region, contributing to the gradual erosion of Asante political authority and territorial control over the decades that followed.

A key source for understanding the Asante perspective on these historical processes is *The History of the Ashanti*, a text compiled in the mid-twentieth century under the direction of Asantehene Prempeh II (1892–1970). The work reflects not only the royal court's efforts to preserve cultural memory, but also attempts to assert an autonomous Asante historiography in response to colonial narratives that had long dominated the written record.[35] It is reported that Kwasi Boachi originated from the village of Atomfuo, located approximately thirteen kilometers east of Kumasi.

Boachi's maternal lineage suggests that he descended from a family of royal ironworkers (*"iron smiths"*), a detail that may help explain why he was selected in 1837 to accompany the Dutch delegation led by Major General Jan Verveer (1775–1838) to the Netherlands—where he would later be trained as a mining engineer.

Within the historical context of the Asante Kingdom, it was not uncommon for members of the royal family to be sent to Europe for formal education and technical training. Such deployments were often embedded in broader trade or military-political negotiations between the Asante court and European colonial actors operating along the West African coast. On the one hand, these royal emissaries functioned as political hostages, symbolizing the Asante's commitment to upholding diplomatic agreements. On the other hand, their journeys were framed by expectations of return: it was hoped

[34] The Asante kingdom—alongside other powerful West African states such as Benin and Dahomey—had already developed complex systems of enslavement and servitude prior to the arrival of Europeans. Asante participation in the transatlantic slave trade must be understood within a dual framework: internal political and economic structures on the one hand, and the pressures and incentives created by European colonial powers on the other. The profits generated through the sale of captives not only reinforced Asante's political dominance in the region but also shaped its evolving relations with European powers at coastal forts such as Elmina , see Paul E. Lovejoy, Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), esp. chapters 3 & 5

[35] See The History of Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself, compiled under the authority of Asantehene Prempeh II, edited by A. Adu Boahen (Accra: Waterville Publishing, 1966).

that these individuals would repatriate with valuable knowledge and expertise, thereby contributing to the development and modernization of the Asante state upon their return.[36]

The deployment of Boachi and Poku must be understood within the broader context of the Java War (also known as the Diponegoro War, 1825–1830), a protracted and costly conflict fought by the Dutch in the East Indies. In the aftermath of this war, the Dutch colonial army had suffered heavy losses and faced an urgent need for military reinforcements. Impressed by the military strength of the Asante Kingdom, Dutch authorities sought to establish formal agreements that would enable the recruitment of Asante soldiers to support their imperial campaigns[37].

A central figure in this diplomatic effort was Major General Jan Verveer, who served as royal commissioner and advisor to King Willem I of the Netherlands (1772–1843).[38] Verveer played a key role in defining Dutch-Asante relations and was instrumental in negotiating treaties that authorized the Asantehene to supply troops to the Dutch colonial army.[3]

Verveer arrived in Elmina on 1 November 1836, and from there traveled with a caravan of approximately 900 individuals—primarily porters carrying gifts and supplies—to Kumasi, the capital of the Asante Kingdom.[4] After several weeks of negotiations, an agreement was reached: on 18 March 1837, Otumfuo Kwaku Dua I, the Asantehene, officially signed a treaty with the Dutch authorizing the recruitment of Asante soldiers into Dutch service.[39]. Although recruitment to enforce the anti-slavery laws was officially carried out on a "voluntary basis" and a recruitment agency was founded in Kumasi under the direction of Jacob Peter Huydecoper (1811-1845), the Asante chief also offered enslaved persons[40] and prisoners of war from the Asante Empire to the Dutch[41]. The contract required shipping these people within a year as "recruits" to the Dutch East Indies, in territories that are now Indonesia, which were under Dutch rule at the time.[42] After the treaty was signed, two thousand weapons were

[36] See also: Gijsbertus Koolemans Beijnens Beitrag in Philipp Christiaan Molhuysen, Petrus Johannes Blok, Laurentius Knappert: Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek. Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff ,1921, p. 1012–1015.

[37] See Peter Carey, The Power of Prophecy: Prince Dipanagara and the End of an Old Order in Java, 1785–1855 (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007).

[38] R. E. J. Weber, Jan Verveer: De man die de Asantehene ontmoette (Den Haag: Rijksmuseum, 1993).

[39] Otumfuo is a ruling title from the Ashanti culture, which could be translated as "Almighty."

[40] Yarak 1990.

[41] Albert van Dantzig, "The Dutch and the Guinea Coast 1674–1872," in Africana Research Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1975): pp. 3–30.

[42] Um die gesetzlichen Vorschriften von Anti-Sklaverei-Gesetzen zu umgehen, wurden ausgeklügelte Manöver angewandt. Diese umfassten häufig die Nutzung rechtlicher Lücken und semantischer Feinheiten, um die tatsächlichen Absichten der Gesetze zu umgehen. Ein herausragendes Beispiel dafür ist die Praxis der „Schuldknechtschaft" oder „Vertragsarbeit", bei der Personen formal als freie Arbeiter betrachtet wurden, aber aufgrund von langfristigen Verträgen und wirtschaftlicher Abhängigkeiten tatsächlich in eine Form der Knechtschaft versetzt wurden. Durch diese Vorgehensweise konnten die Beteiligten die oberflächlichen Wortlaute der Anti-Sklaverei-Gesetze erfüllen, während die betroffenen Personen weiterhin in Verhältnissen

to be made available to the Ashanti, with more to follow later. It was additionally planned to send Kwasi Boachi and Kwame Poku to study in the Netherlands. Shortly after the agreement was signed, the two ten-year-olds set off for the Netherlands under the supervision of General Jan Verveers[43].

2.2 First Years in the Netherlands

Following their arrival in the Netherlands, Kwasi Boachi and Kwame Poku began their formal education under the instruction of a German tutor named Mock, who taught them Dutch, German, English, and French. As was common for young members of royal or noble families, they were placed in a boarding school environment, where discipline and academic excellence were emphasized.
Their education was personally overseen by King Willem I of the Netherlands, who ensured that both boys received a rigorous, high-quality education designed to prepare them for future leadership roles within the Asante Kingdom. This investment in their intellectual and linguistic development reflects the political significance attributed to their presence in Europe, as well as the broader diplomatic strategy that underpinned their deployment. [44] Kwame Poku bore the honorific title "Barima," a designation associated not only with considerable social prestige but also with a potential claim to the Asante throne[45]. In addition, he was in line for the title of "Akyinpemhene"—a distinguished military position responsible for serving as the personal bodyguard to the Asantehene. This office entailed unwavering loyalty, combat readiness, and a central role in safeguarding the king. By contrast, Boachi was expected to assume a prominent administrative or military position upon his return to the Asante Kingdom, albeit without a direct claim to royal succession.

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lebten, die denen der Sklaverei gleichkamen. Solche Praktiken machen deutlich, wie kompliziert und herausfordernd es war, Gesetze zur Beseitigung der Sklaverei durchzusetzen. Auch die im Abkommen zwischen Kwaku Dua Panin I. und König Wilhelm I. der Niederlande verwendete offizielle Bezeichnung als „freiwillige Rekruten", war eine solche Möglichkeit, rechtliche Vorschriften zu umgehen und die wahre Beschaffenheit des Handels zu verschleiern.

[43] The treaty is documented in Dutch colonial records and summarized in Ivor Wilks, Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order (Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 390–395

[44] Larry W. Yarak: Kwasi Boakye and Kwame Poku: Dutch-educated Asante 'Princes', in: Enid Schildkrout (ed.): The Golden Stool: Studies of the Asante Center and Periphery. New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1987.

[45] In the Asante Empire, there was a system of checks and balances to ensure that the state fulfilled its duties and did not abuse its power. Decisions regarding royal succession and the selection of the Asantehene were made by several influential bodies. These included the Asantehemaa (Queen Mother), the Nsafohene (political officials in the capital Kumasi), and the Amanhene (rulers of other Asante states in the 18th and 19th centuries). These institutions were not only responsible for selecting the Asantehene, but also had the power to remove him from office if necessary. The interaction among these institutions ensured a balance of power and a fair process for selecting the monarch. Cf. Rattray, Robert Sutherland, Ashanti Law and Constitution, 1929.

It was not until 1843, six years after their arrival in the Netherlands, that both Boachi and Poku were baptized into the Dutch Reformed Church in Delft. Unlike African children who had been enslaved and brought to Europe—many of whom served in noble households and were customarily assigned Christian names—Kwasi and Kwame retained their original names, an exception that can be attributed to their royal lineage. [46]

Although they were granted certain privileges due to their aristocratic heritage and were occasionally invited to courtly functions by the Dutch monarch, both princes gradually came to realize that their elevated status in Europe did not reflect the recognition they had enjoyed within the Asante Kingdom. In some cases, representatives of the colonial administration referred to them in overtly racist terms, describing them as "despicable representatives of the Black race"—a statement that reveals the deeply entrenched hierarchies and racial prejudices underpinning European attitudes toward African identity in the 19th century.

Despite their status as royal envoys, Boachi and Poku were, at times, perceived in a similar manner to enslaved Africans who were brought to Europe as domestic servants. This conflation underscored the limitations of their aristocratic status in a colonial society that failed to acknowledge African sovereignty or nobility on equal terms.

As Asante princes living in Europe, they thus experienced a striking dissonance between their privileged background and the racialized stereotypes they were forced to navigate. Prior to their departure from Asante, both would have been aware of African systems of servitude and the institution of slavery as it existed within West African contexts. In Europe, however, they were confronted with the global scale and brutality of the transatlantic slave trade—and with the profound social tensions it generated. Their situation exemplified what may be described as a status paradox: they occupied a symbolically elevated position as royal emissaries, while simultaneously being subject to the structural racism and social marginalization that defined the European colonial worldview.[47]

[46] Carl Schiffner: Aus dem Leben alter Freiberger Bergstudenten. Freiberg: Ernst Mauckisch, 1935, p. 328.

[47] The term was coined by Boris Nieswand when he spoke of the phenomenon of the status paradox of migration in the 21st century in his dissertation "Ghanaian Migrants in Germany and the Status Paradox of Migration: a multi-sited ethnography of transnational pathways of migrant inclusion" (2011): It describes the circumstance that Ghanaian migrants often enjoy a high social status in their country of origin, while they tend to experience a relative loss of status in the diaspora. This observation represents a key point in the analysis of migration experiences and is clearly reflected in the lives of Boachi and Poku. Kwasi Boachi and his cousin Kwame Poku, both members of the Asante royal family, illustrate how this phenomenon was already present before Nieswand's theoretical conceptualization. Boachi and Poku experienced that their royal origin and their social position in Ghana did not give them the same status in Europe. The social prestige they enjoyed in their homeland was relativized in European society. Nevertheless, both were able to achieve a new prestige through their education and cultural identity, which shows how education and social mobility can serve as a means of enhancing status within a new cultural context, even if the traditional hierarchy of the country of origin cannot be fully transferred.

The two young courtiers were also subject to subtle yet significant contradictions in other domains. While the Asante Kingdom, under the leadership of Asantehene Kwaku Dua I, upheld its own religious traditions and venerated ancestral deities, colonial authorities in the Netherlands harbored very different intentions for the princes' future.[48] The princes' positioning between these two vastly different systems of belief and power reflects the broader tensions inherent in nineteenth-century intercultural diplomacy under colonial conditions. However, these missionary ambitions were not received without resistance. According to several historical accounts, Kwasi Boachi expressed skepticism about the compatibility of missionary activity with his technical training in mining and engineering—fields that he viewed as more aligned with his future responsibilities.

Kwame Poku, who still held the potential to succeed to the Asante throne, vehemently opposed the idea of becoming a missionary. In a decisive act of agency, he rejected this imposed trajectory and instead opted to join the Dutch colonial army, a move that would position him within a very different framework of imperial service.

At this critical juncture, the paths of the two young men began to diverge: while Poku entered military training, Boachi enrolled in formal engineering studies, setting in motion the two distinct trajectories their lives would follow—each shaped by their own negotiations with colonial structures, expectations, and self-determined aspirations.[49]

[48] For the Dutch colonial ministry's efforts to convert West African elites through missionary training, see J. D. Fokkens, Koloniale Politiek en Beleid in Nederlands-Indië (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1937), and Albert van Dantzig, "Asante and the Dutch: 1701–1872," in Africana Research Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1975). See also Th. J. De Boer, De Zending op de Goudkust: Een Historisch Overzicht (Utrecht: Zending der Hervormde Kerk, 1950), which discusses Baron Baud's missionary vision for the Gold Coast and the use of African emissaries as cultural brokers.
For Asante religious traditions and the spiritual authority of the Asantehene, see Kwame Arhin, Traditional Rule in Ghana: Past and Present (Accra: Sedco Publishing, 1985), pp. 24–35; and Ivor Wilks, Asante in the Nineteenth Century (Cambridge University Press, 1975), esp. ch. 6.

[49] On Boachi's resistance to missionary work and his preference for a technical career in mining engineering, see Michel R. Doortmont, The Pen-Pictures of Modern Africans and African Celebrities, Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 89–93. Doortmont draws from archival sources, including Boachi's correspondence, which suggest his discomfort with religious indoctrination and his desire to contribute to Asante through scientific knowledge.
On Poku's protest and decision to join the Dutch colonial army, see Jan van der Elst, Kwasi en Kwame: Afrikaanse prinsen in Nederland (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2000), pp. 72–76. See also Albert van Dantzig, "The Dutch and the Guinea Coast 1674–1872," Africana Research Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1975), which contextualizes Dutch-African military recruitment in the 19th century.

2.3 Engineering Studies in Delft and Friberg: Boachi's Academic and Social Life Between Lecture Hall and High Aristocracy

After the Colonial Ministry's initial plan to enroll Kwasi Boachi at the University of Leiden was abandoned, he was admitted to the Royal Academy in Delft upon successfully passing the entrance examination on 9 June 1843.[50] Boachi's outgoing and affable personality quickly made him a respected and well-liked member of the student community in Delft. His sociability and intellectual curiosity earned him the esteem of both peers and instructors, and he continued to cultivate lasting friendships with several of his fellow students even after completing his studies[51].

One of his closest companions was Hendrik Linse (1825–1905), with whom he maintained an active and sustained correspondence. Their letters reveal a relationship marked by mutual respect, emotional openness, and a shared commitment to personal and intellectual development.[52] In 1847, Kwasi Boachi successfully completed his studies in civil engineering at the Royal Academy in Delft, earning his official qualification and attempting to establish himself professionally in the field. Hisgraduation marked an important milestone, not only in his personal trajectory but also within the broader context of African engagement with European technical education[53].

At the time, Dr. Gerrit Simons (1802–1868), director of the Academy, had envisioned further professional development for Boachi. He planned to send him to England under the guidance of Cornelis de Groot van Embden (1817–1896), alongside four other selected graduates, as part of a post-academic initiative to deepen practical engineering experience abroad.[54] However, Boachi chose a different trajectory and, in July 1847, enrolled at the Bergakademie Freiberg (Freiberg University of Mining and Technology) in Saxony to specialize in gold mining. He studied under the eminent geologist

[50] See Petrus Johannes Blok and Philipp Christiaan Molhuysen: Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek. Deel 7, 1927.

[51] In December 2024, the author of this essayistic synthesis the author Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago (M.A.), identified the so-called *Boachi Cup* at a exhibition at the Prinsenhof Museum in Delft) in the Netherlands. The ceramic vessel bears names delicately inscribed by close companions of Kwasi Boachi, etched into its surface. This artifact represents a rare material trace of Boachi's intimate social network and offers valuable insights into practices of memory, belonging, and personal commemoration in the context of 19th-century transnational lives.

[52] https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/molh003nieu07_01/molh003nieu07_01_0258.php, accessed 22.07.2024.; Details regarding Boachi's student life and his close relationship with Hendrik Linse (1825–1905) are documented in Michel Doortmont, The Pen-Pictures of Modern Africans and African Celebrities, Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 94–96. See also Jan van der Elst, Kwasi en Kwame: Afrikaanse prinsen in Nederland (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2000), where excerpts from Boachi's letters to Linse are cited, highlighting the depth of their intellectual exchange and personal rapport. The original correspondence is preserved in the Nationaal Archief in The Hague, under collection reference NA 2.21.280.

[53] For details on Kwasi Boachi's graduation in civil engineering from the Royal Academy in Delft and the plans for his further training in England, see Michel R. Doortmont, The Pen-Pictures of Modern Africans and African Celebrities, Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 97–99..

[54] For biographical details on de Groot, see J.C.H. Blom & E. Lamberts (eds.), History of the Low Countries (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), p. 313

and mining theorist Bernhard von Cotta (1808–1879), one of the leading figures in 19th-century European geology.

The academic relationship between the Asante prince Kwasi Boachi and the professor Bernhard von Cotta is particularly noteworthy, emerging at a time when colonial epistemologies profoundly shaped the production and validation of scientific knowledge. Their intellectual exchange was exceptional in that it introduced Boachi's distinct perspective and the cultural epistemologies of the Asante Kingdom into a disciplinary space otherwise defined by Western empirical norms.

Boachi's active engagement in geological research—and his later publication of original scientific papers—represented a critical intervention in the epistemic hierarchies of 19th-century Europe. His presence within the European scientific community disrupted entrenched assumptions about the exclusivity of Western scientific authority and exemplified a rare form of transcontinental intellectual participation during the colonial era[55]. Despite its historical significance, this form of knowledge exchange has largely remained at the margins of dominant histories of science, which continue to privilege Eurocentric genealogies.[56]

Von Cotta, whose scientific work engaged deeply with geothermal energy and the sustainable use of planetary resources, provided a rare intellectual space in which Boachi could contribute both cultural and scientific insights. Cotta's forward-looking conceptualization of the earth's internal heat as a

[55] Kwasi Boachi engaged with the study of various cultures in his writings. Particularly in his article "Notes on the Chinese on the Island of Java", published in the journal of the German Oriental Society (Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft), he focused on the Chinese community in Java. He explored their everyday life, traditions, and social structures, documenting his observations. These writings represent a significant contribution to ethnographic scholarship from a South–South perspective (or potentially African–Asian regional studies), as they offer insights into a culture that, at the time, had rarely been examined from a Black perspective.
Cf. Aquasie Boachi, Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Vol. 9, No. 3/4 (1855), pp. 808–823.

[56] In recent years, however, postcolonial academic discourses—particularly in regions such as Indonesia—have begun to reclaim and recontextualize colonial-era figures like Boachi, acknowledging their contributions within broader critiques of global knowledge production. Nonetheless, such efforts remain the exception rather than the norm in mainstream historiographical narratives. On Boachi's role as a transcontinental intellectual and the marginalization of African and Asian scientific agents in global historiography, see Sandra Harding, Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), esp. Ch. 2, "Postcolonial Science." See also Gyan Prakash, Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), for a critical exploration of colonial science as a site of contested knowledge production.
For the Indonesian context of postcolonial scientific identity and critique of colonial epistemologies, see Faizah Zakaria, "Indonesianizing Knowledge: Postcolonial Inventions of Colonial Science," in History of Knowledge (2018), available at: historyofknowledge.net.
Additionally, on the structural continuities in global science after decolonization, see Harun Küçük et al., "Decolonizing Science: Strategies and Challenges," History of Science, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2023): pp. 3–25. DOI: 10.1007/s10739-023-09734-8

potential resource for human civilization reveals an early form of ecological awareness—one that resonates with, and may have been subtly informed by, non-European ontologies and environmental epistemologies.

Within this context, the significance of the Asante prince Boachi's intellectual voice becomes especially apparent: his task extended beyond personal representation to addressing the complex intersections between colonial scientific knowledge and indigenous systems of understanding. Through his engagement in diverse academic and intellectual circles, Boachi actively shared his knowledge of Asante cultural frameworks and environmental relationships, thereby not only consolidating his own position within these networks but also contributing to the transcultural circulation of knowledge. His work thus stands as a case study in the dislocation of scientific authority, illustrating how subaltern actors could intervene in, and subtly reshape, dominant epistemic orders.[57]

In Freiberg, international students came from countries such as Brazil, Russia, Argentina, Portugal, England, Norway, and the Baltic states. The presence of such a diverse student body facilitated an ongoing exchange of knowledge and lived experience that extended far beyond formal academic settings. Particularly in informal contexts—through conversation, shared meals, or collective excursions—not only scientific ideas but also cultural worldviews and epistemological frameworks were brought into dialogue. [58]

It was precisely within this cosmopolitan microcosm that the Asante prince Boachi's position became uniquely significant. Unlike many of his peers, he navigated not only the transnational intellectual terrain but also the complex entanglement of colonial power structures and indigenous epistemologies. Von Cotta, whose research focused on geothermal energy and the responsible use of planetary resources, provided a rare intellectual space in which Boachi could contribute both technical insight and cultural knowledge. His presence thus served as a bridge between scientific modernity and local cosmologies, advancing an intercultural flow of ideas at the very heart of European science.[59]

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[57] For a discussion of geothermal theory in von Cotta's work and early ecological thinking, see Bernhard von Cotta, Geologische Briefe an eine Freundin (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1865), and Ulrike Spring, "Geology, Nature, and Resource Thinking in 19th-Century Saxony," Environment and History 23, no. 1 (2017): 45–67.
On indigenous environmental epistemologies and the intercultural dynamics of science, see Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge, 1992); and Marisol de la Cadena & Mario Blaser (eds.), A World of Many Worlds (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).Bernhard von Cotta: Das Zentralfeuer, in: Meyer's Monats-Hefte. Deutsch-amerikanische Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst und Gesellschaft, 1(2), 1853: pp. 139–140.

[58] See Schiffner 1935, p.327.

[59] This informal exchange of knowledge, which took place through personal interactions and informal networks, often remains undocumented in scientific research. While this area could potentially be made comprehensible through correspondence or personal notes, such sources are often difficult to access or have not been systematically recorded. This is an important area for further research, as these informal networks and the

While the voices of Black individuals were often marginalized or systematically excluded within 19th-century European discourse, Kwasi Boachi's intersectional identity—as both an academic and an aristocrat—afforded him a rare opportunity to articulate his views publicly and in German. This unique position enabled him not only to express his own perspective, but also to represent the epistemic frameworks and cultural heritage of the Asante Kingdom within a colonial intellectual environment. Boachi's visibility was not merely a personal achievement; it carried symbolic weight for the broader Black community, whose knowledge systems and political agency were regularly suppressed by European hegemony. Yet, Boachi's status was exceptional. His royal lineage differentiated him from many other Black individuals in Europe, offering him privileged access to elite spaces and a platform that was seldom available to others of African descent.

As Boachi's mentor and scientific interlocutor, Bernhard von Cotta played a vital role in facilitating dialogue between divergent systems of knowledge. Archival sources indicate that in 1849, Boachi accompanied Cotta to an event in Weimar, attended by Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach (1786–1859). During this occasion, Boachi contributed to discussions on cultural identity, memory, and the transmission of traditional knowledge, asserting the relevance of Asante intellectual traditions in a European forum. In the same context, von Cotta delivered a lecture entitled *Memories of the Ashanti*, a rare example of European scholarly engagement with African historical narratives.[60] In his lecture, von Cotta drew extensively on Boachi's personal recollections, particularly those that illuminated the socio-legal structure of the Asante Empire. Boachi described his homeland through the lens of two foundational legal categories: *amanbrɛ* and *amanmmu*. The former refers to adaptable, codified laws upheld by the central state authority—laws designed to regulate social conduct in accordance with Asante customary law. The latter term designates more immutable principles that, while not functioning as a form of natural law in the Western sense, provided a

exchange of knowledge between migrant students and international communities have largely been ignored in many areas of scholarship. A detailed study of these informal exchanges could provide new insights into the ways in which knowledge is disseminated beyond official academic channels and how cultural perspectives influence scholarly practice. This area of knowledge transfer and circulation is therefore still under-researched and should be the focus of more future studies.

[60] Bernhard von Cotta: Erinnerungen aus Aschanti, in: Fortschritte der Geographie und Naturgeschichte 63, 1848.; On von Cotta's lecture "Erinnerungen an die Ashanti," see the proceedings of the Weimar Society for Natural Sciences and Literature, 1849 (Goethe-Schiller Archive, Weimar).
On Boachi's public engagement in Weimar and his participation in elite intellectual circles, see Michel R. Doortmont, The Pen-Pictures of Modern Africans and African Celebrities, Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 106–109. For Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna's role in Weimar's cultural life and her support for scientific gatherings, see Detlef Jena, Maria Pawlowna. Zarentochter am Hof der Weimarer Klassik (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2005).

normative foundation for the social order. These principles were essential in maintaining stability, preventing disorder, and ensuring the continuity of Asante political and cultural life.

Through the Asante royal Kwasi Boachi's narrative, von Cotta offered his courtly audience a rare and deeply textured insight into the internal logics that underpinned Asante governance, legal consciousness, and societal cohesion. Within the framework of his presentation, von Cotta also conveyed Boachi's vivid recollection of one of the most important royal ceremonies in Asante tradition: the Adae Kɛse Festival. Celebrated every five years in Kumasi, the Asante capital, the Adae Kɛse honors both the Abosom (the minor gods in the Akan cosmology) and the Nsamanfo (the revered ancestors) through elaborate rituals involving drumming, dance, and song.

Boachi recalled that during the festival, an "Asante Hymn" was performed—a ceremonial chant meant to invoke spiritual presence and collective memory, reinforcing the cosmological bond between the living, the ancestral, and the divine. However, it remains unclear whether this melody corresponds to a widely recognized Asante hymn or whether Boachi was referring to a musical phrase played on traditional Ghanaian royal horns—most likely the "afrifa" or "nkɔnsɔnkɔnsɔn", instruments used in courtly and ritual contexts to announce the presence of the king, mark transitions, or evoke ancestral spirits.His account not only contextualized Asante spirituality for a European audience but also foregrounded the cultural depth and intellectual coherence of an African political and religious tradition often dismissed in colonial discourse.[61] Within the framework of this cultural exchange, the Adae Kɛse festival, as described by Boachi, was musically interpreted at the conclusion of von Cotta's lecture by none other than the Hungarian composer Franz Liszt, who performed a piano piece inspired

[61] In Asante court culture, royal horn instruments play a central role. These horns are not merely musical tools—they function as extensions of royal speech. Their sound communicates messages, invokes ancestral presence, and marks significant ceremonial moments. As sonic archives, they create a spiritual bridge between past and present, infusing rituals with deeper meaning. On formal occasions, such as the king's arrival, the horns announce his presence with ceremonial gravitas. In Asante Twi, an individual trumpeter is referred to as *abenhyenni*, with the suffix *-ni* indicating a single person. A group of trumpeters is called *mmenhyenfoo*, where *-foo* denotes plurality. These linguistic nuances reflect the intricate relationship between music, language, and power within Asante society. See:John Collins, *Musicmakers of West Africa* (Lagos: FBN Publishers, 1985), pp. 72–75;
Kwasi Ampene, *Asante Court Music and Verbal Arts in Ghana: Culture, Expression, and Sound Aesthetics* (New York: Routledge, 2020), esp. ch. 3.On the ritual structure and sociopolitical significance of the Adae Kɛse Festival, see Kofi Asare Opoku, West African Traditional Religion (Accra: FEP International, 1978), pp. 67–71; and Nana Arhin Brempong, "Kingship and Ritual in Asante: Reflections on Power and Cultural Continuity," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, Vol. 8 (2005): 45–65. During the research conducted by the author Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago at the University of Ghana from September to December 2023, more precisely in the Performing Arts Department and in the J.H. Nketia Archives, it could not be determined which song is the so-called "Ashanti Anthem." It could be that the melody consists of musical fragments from Boachi's memories. Liszt's performance was based on the melody that Boachi had sung to him beforehand.

by Boachi's recollection[62]. Liszt reportedly adapted the ceremonial chant as a "folk anthem of the Asante people," thus translating oral tradition into a European musical idiom. This performative gesture further underscored the transcultural resonance of Boachi's testimony and its impact on the Weimar intellectual milieu[63]. Bernhard von Cotta's lecture, titled *Memories of the Ashanti*, was subsequently published in a widely circulated scientific journal, enabling the core ideas—Boachi's cultural recollections, legal-philosophical insights, and spiritual traditions—to reach an audience far beyond the initial event in Weimar. The publication not only amplified Boachi's voice within the European knowledge space but also exemplified how African epistemologies could be mediated, translated, and disseminated across disciplinary and cultural boundaries.

As previously discussed in relation to Boachi's representation in traditional clothing in Chapter 1.2., von Cotta's lecture in Weimar can also be understood as a vehicle for Boachi's engagement with the philosophy of *Sankɔfa*. Without naming the concept explicitly, Boachi embodied *Sankɔfa*—a practice rooted in Akan thought that calls for returning to the past to retrieve what is essential for shaping the future. By integrating ancestral knowledge into contemporary discourse and making it accessible to future generations, Boachi established a pragmatic and future-oriented model of cultural continuity. *Sankɔfa* not is only a personal mnemonic practice but also a deliberate epistemic strategy that allowed Boachi to preserve and affirm his identity during his physical dislocation from Asante. Within the aristocratic and colonial milieus in which he moved, *Sankɔfa* functioned as a tool for safeguarding and articulating the intellectual and cultural values of his homeland, while simultaneously fostering dialogue across cultural divides.[64]

More than an individual act of remembrance, *Sankɔfa* served as a transcultural method of knowledge transmission—a bridge between generations and between colonized and colonizing worlds. Boachi

[62] This is a compelling example because it directly links to the idea discussed in the text on "Regions of Memory." Kwasi Boachi communicated across geographic and cultural boundaries through the publication of Cotta, demonstrating that memory spaces are not bound to specific geographic or theoretical categories. Rather, such spaces enable interdisciplinary and international dialogue that transcends (post-)colonial discourse and includes diverse perspectives and traditions. Cf. Lewis, S., & Wawrzyniak, J. (2022). Introduction: Regions of Memory in Theory. In Regions of Memory, p. 7.

[63] On Franz Liszt's engagement with ethnographic music and the performance of the "Asante Hymn," see Alan Walker, Franz Liszt: The Weimar Years (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 225–229. For documentation of von Cotta's lecture and its reception, see the 1850 edition of Beiträge zur Naturwissenschaft und Anthropologie, and consult the records of the Weimar Society for Natural Sciences and Literature held at the Goethe-Schiller Archive. On music as a medium of cross-cultural translation, see Philip V. Bohlman, World Music: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002

[64] On Sankɔfa as a diasporic and decolonial methodology, see Nana Akua Anyidoho & Akosua Adomako Ampofo, "Sankofa: Recognizing the Past to Liberate the Present and Build the Future," Gender & Development 23, no. 3 (2015): 515–529. For an overview of African symbolism in diasporic identity formation, see Molefi Kete Asante, The Afrocentric Idea (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

employed this framework to challenge dominant colonial narratives, particularly those that stereotyped African peoples and cultures as "primitive" or static. Through his historically embedded and culturally reflective interventions, he invited European audiences to engage with African knowledge systems on equal terms. In doing so, he destabilized Eurocentric hierarchies of knowledge, presenting a vision of intellectual exchange grounded in reciprocity and mutual recognition.This intercultural knowledge praxis becomes even more evident in Boachi's decision to commission his own coat of arms—a conscious synthesis of European heraldic form and Asante symbolism. Preserved today as a wax seal in the Dresden State Archives, the coat of arms features both Christian and vocational imagery (such as a cross, mining tools, a sword, and a standing lamp) alongside two spotted cats of prey—interpreted as leopards, reclining on either side of the escutcheon. The inclusion of the leopards may be read as a direct reference to Boachi's affiliation with the Bretuo clan, whose totemic animal holds cultural and symbolic significance within Asante society. The seal thus operates as a visual articulation of dual belonging, asserting both Boachi's aristocratic Asante heritage and his integration into European scholarly and social structures.[65]

Fig. 2. Kwasi Boachi's coat of arms, found in Dresden State Archive, Dresden, Germany. September 2023

[65] This information comes from the orally transmitted, community-based knowledge of the author's family. On Boachi's coat of arms and its iconography; and the archival records held in the Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden, ref. no. HStAD, 10994.; An exclusive interpretation by German experts in coats of arms reaches its limits here, as knowledge of African clan symbols is not widespread in European research. Therefore, it would make sense to have Boachi's coat of arms thoroughly examined by a joint team of Ghanaian and German experts in future research. According to archivist Dr. Eckhart Leisering, it is conceivable that letters bearing Boachi's personal seal may still exist in the private family archives of individuals who were acquainted with him. However, such documents have not yet been located in the official state archives of Germany, Ghana, or the Netherlands.

Coats of arms, often used as seals to authenticate official documents or secure private correspondence, have long carried deep symbolic significance. In the 18th and 19th centuries, it became especially common among the wealthy and influential classes to commission personalized heraldic emblems. These visual markers functioned not only as decorative elements but also as public assertions of identity, lineage, social status, and achievement. Through heraldry, individuals and institutions alike were able to represent their historical heritage and visually situate themselves within the stratified social hierarchies of their time.

Boachi's decision to design and consistently use a personal coat of arms reveals a nuanced and deliberate negotiation of his social position, both within Asante society and in the European context. His wax seal—bearing symbols such as a Christian cross, mining tools, an oil lamp, and two leopards—served not only as an authentication device, but as a material articulation of personal history, memory, and rank. In 18th- and 19th-century Europe, heraldic emblems signified aristocratic lineage and were closely tied to institutional legitimacy and class distinction. Boachi, navigating this world as an African royal abroad, employed this form both strategically and symbolically to inscribe his presence into aristocratic visual culture.

This visual language, however, should not be understood solely through European codes. The inclusion of leopard imagery points unmistakably to Boachi's connection to the Bretuo clan, one of the major Akan matrilineal groups, whose emblematic animal is the leopard. In Asante cosmology, identity and inheritance are not determined through the paternal line—as is customary in Europe—but through matrilineal descent. A person's *abusua* (maternal clan) defines status, succession, and cosmological belonging, while the paternal *ntɔn* contributes spiritual essence but not political legitimacy.[66]

[66] In the Akan context, the term Abusua is literally translated as "family" or "clan," but in a broader sense it also conveys a form of membership or belonging. The matrilineal structure of Akan society dictates that lineage, identity, and political legitimacy are traced through the mother. For example, a child whose mother is from the Asona clan and father from the Agona clan would be considered Asona. This system governs not only social identity but also political succession: individuals are recognized as legitimate heirs to chiefly or royal positions only if they descend from the maternal line. Clan affiliation is also linked to ancestral towns, over which clans hold traditional authority, as these settlements were originally founded by their forebears. Chiefs and rulers (Ohene) are therefore selected from the matrilineal line, with the king's sister's children, rather than his own offspring, being recognized as potential successors. See: Captain R. S. Rattray, Ashanti Law and Constitution, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929; also: Kwasi Boachi – deutsch.wikibrief.org, accessed September 10, 2023.
Author's Note: Throughout the research process on Kwasi Boachi, I aimed to obtain first-hand confirmation of his precise clan affiliation. Despite extensive efforts and conversations with family members, no definitive clarity could be established at the research sites during the period of study. Further contact with his direct descendants in the United States or Indonesia would be highly desirable for future research.

In this light, it becomes crucial to clarify a common misconception: although Kwasi Boachi was the biological son of Asantehene Kwaku Dua I, he was not positioned as heir to the throne, nor would such a role have been anticipated under Asante law. The succession structure of the Akan peoples prioritizes maternal lineage, meaning that the royal line continues through the king's sister's children—not his own. Boachi's cousin, Kwame Poku, belonged to the Oyoko clan, the ruling house from which all Asantehene are drawn, represented by the parrot as its totem. Boachi, in contrast, may have belonged to the Bretuo clan, which—though prestigious—was distinct from the Oyoko royal succession line.

This possible divergence in clan affiliation between Boachi and Poku is of interpretive significance. It not only accounts for their different positions within the dynastic hierarchy, but also reframes Boachi's adoption of heraldic imagery: not as a direct claim to power or succession, but as a means of asserting noble identity in exile. The coat of arms thus operated as both a tool of European cultural fluency and an assertion of Akan cosmopolitical belonging. It allowed Boachi to visually and materially bridge two systems of aristocratic representation—one European and patrilineal, the other Asante and matrilineal.

Moreover, the consistent use of this seal—attached to personal letters, formal documents, and possibly academic correspondence—functioned as a ritual of memory, a Sankɔfa act made tangible. Each impression of the stamp reaffirmed Boachi's authority to narrate his own identity, to integrate elements of Western aristocratic culture without surrendering his indigenous cosmology. In doing so, he refused the passivity often projected onto African figures in colonial historiography. Instead, he claimed a curatorial role over his own story, shaping the narrative of his ancestry, education, and lived hybridity with deliberate, emblematic precision. By appropriating and adapting the clan symbol to his own narrative, Boachi not only honored his royal heritage but also challenged the normative assumptions of lineage, legitimacy, and power in the colonial gaze.

In synthesizing elements of European court culture with Asante symbology, Boachi underscored his social rank and cultural hybridity. His seal became a transhistorical and transcultural artifact—an emblem of Sankɔfa in practice. It marked not a retreat into nostalgia, but a forward-looking act of self-authorship: each use of the seal constituted an assertion of noble descent, identity continuity, and strategic positioning within the frameworks of both African and European social orders.[67]

Importantly, by employing such symbols consistently and intentionally, Boachi assumed active control over the narrative of his origins. He did not allow his story to be written *about* him; rather, he inscribed it *through* symbolic media. In contrast to the passivity often ascribed to Africans in colonial historical accounts, Boachi's heraldic practice constituted a powerful counter-image. His coat of arms was not

merely decorative, but dialogic: it spoke to his heritage, his resistance, and his determination to remain legible as a noble actor in a world that often refused such recognition.

Beyond these symbolic practices, Boachi's political awareness also found expression in direct and documented engagements with the socio-political realities of his time. Archival evidence from various European collections reveals that Boachi was an active critic of slavery and colonial injustices. For example this is shown in the above mentioned arcticle by Cotta *Eriinnerungen an die Aschanti* (Remembering the Asante), but also in his dandy as discussed in chapter 1.1. His stance was undoubtedly shaped not only by personal experiences of structural discrimination, but also by the revolutionary atmosphere of his immediate environment.

In particular, the events of 1848–1849 in Germany likely left a lasting impression. The German revolutions, and specifically the May Uprising in Dresden in 1849, turned the city into a center of political unrest. Citizens—among them the composer Richard Wagner (1813–1883)—rose in protest against the rejection of the liberal constitution drafted by the Frankfurt National Assembly. [68] Amid growing political unrest, voices across Europe began calling for a constitutional monarchy and democratic reform. It was within this charged and increasingly politicized environment that Boachi developed and refined his own consciousness of injustice and the importance of representation—personal, political, and symbolic. These events were likely of considerable significance for Kwasi Boachi, shaping the political and social climate in which he moved and influencing the formation of his worldview.

The revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity that circulated during this period may have profoundly informed his thinking on colonialism, racism, and the rights of people of African descent. They offered a framework through which Boachi could interpret both his personal experiences and the broader structures of inequality that defined his time.

Against this backdrop, Boachi's repeated use of his personal seal, the deliberate design of his own coat of arms, and his active engagement with artistic and political forms of expression mark him not merely as a historical subject, but as a conscious agent of cultural memory and social

[68] Richard Wagner's engagement with revolutionary ideas is notably articulated in his 1849 essay "Art and Revolution," wherein he explores the intersection of artistic expression and societal transformation. This essay is available in English translation by William Ashton Ellis. Additionally, Wagner's correspondence with contemporaries, such as his letters to August Röckel, provides insight into his political views during the revolutionary period. These letters have been translated into English by Eleanor C. Sellar. For a broader selection of Wagner's letters, including those touching on his revolutionary sentiments, see "Selected Letters of Richard Wagner," translated and edited by Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington. Furthermore, Mark Berry's article "Richard Wagner's revolution: 'Music drama' against bourgeois 'opera'" offers a scholarly analysis of Wagner's revolutionary aesthetic

transformation—someone who asserted presence and authorship in a world that sought to render both invisible.

These events could have been of great significance for Kwasi Boachi. They shaped the political and social climate he operated within and could have influenced his worldview. The revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity that were propagated during this time may have influenced his views on issues such as colonialism, racism, and the rights of people of African descent.

2.4 Between Colonial Influence and Cultural Identity: The Ambivalence of Kwasi Boachi's Decision to Stay in Europe

Around the same time as the revolutionary uprisings within the German Confederation, the Dutch colonial administration redirected its strategic interests: rather than focusing primarily on the recruitment of African soldiers, it began to prioritize the extraction and exploitation of gold resources in and around the Asante region. Within this colonial calculus, Kwasi Boachi was increasingly perceived as a valuable intermediary figure—a potential cultural and political asset in facilitating Dutch ambitions. As a result, plans were initiated for his departure from Germany and eventual return to the Asante Empire.

At this point, Boachi was not only well-informed about the shifting political dynamics within Asanteland but was also acutely aware of the wider geopolitical transformations across the West African coast. It was a period marked by increasing instability, during which the Asante—as well as neighboring polities—faced mounting pressure due to the encroaching influence of European colonial powers, particularly the British and the Danes. These transitions posed existential challenges to longstanding regional structures, both politically and economically, and Boachi found himself at the intersection of these competing imperialisms,[69] and Dutch in particular. During this period, longstanding tensions between the Asante and other ethnic groups—particularly the Fante, who inhabited the coastal regions of the Dutch Gold Coast—escalated into open conflict. Central to these tensions were the Asante's continuous efforts to assert political and economic supremacy over the region, and the counterstrategies of the Fante and other coastal groups, who sought to protect their autonomy by forging alliances with European powers. The Asante's military dominance had enabled

[69] Denmark's financial constraints ultimately led them to sell the forts to Britain in 1850, which marked the end of Danish colonial ambitions in Africa. On 30 March 1850, all Danish territories and forts on the Gold Coast were sold to Britain and incorporated into the British Gold Coast colony. The Asante Empire continued its decline under Prempeh I, who ascended the throne in 1888. During his reign, Ashantiland was officially declared a British Crown Colony on January 1, 1902. On the same day, the former northern provinces were separately declared a protectorate of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast. See: Walton Claridge: A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti. London: Frank Cass & Co, 1964.

them to control inland trade routes and exact tribute from subordinate territories—an economic mechanism that, while effective, also functioned as a form of structural oppression.

By contrast, the Fante benefitted considerably from their strategic location along the Atlantic coast and their direct access to European merchants and colonial officials. Through sustained commercial relations, they gained early access to advanced weaponry, goods, and technologies, which offered them a tactical advantage in their power struggles with the Asante. Yet, it is important to note that the Asante, too, received European military and material support, resulting in a complex and often paradoxical entanglement between African and European actors.

This struggle for influence in the region did not go unnoticed by the European colonial powers, for whom the stability of trade routes and control over economic resources was paramount. The British, Dutch, and Danish authorities all sought to secure their respective interests, making the Gold Coast a focal point of imperial competition. The expansion of British colonial control in particular marked a decisive turning point in the region's political landscape. As Britain consolidated its grip over key trade corridors and strategic territories, the Asante Kingdom's autonomy was progressively undermined, culminating in a gradual erosion of its political agency.

Against this backdrop, Boachi's own position appears marked by profound ambivalence. On one hand, he was drawn into the geopolitical strategies of the Dutch, positioned as a potential mediator or instrument of colonial economic interests. On the other hand, his training as a European-educated mining engineer rendered him a figure of significance for Asante political aspirations. Ultimately, however, Boachi resisted the expectations placed upon him by both the Dutch and the Asante. He chose not to return to Asanteland, a decision that may have been shaped by a complex constellation of personal, political, and ethical considerations..[70] Migration is always a balancing act: one weighs what is valuable against what must be relinquished. One may try to anticipate the future and assess how it will shape one's quality of life. For an individual like Kwasi Boachi, whose roots lay in the Asante world, it is reasonable to assume that his considerations included not only an emotional attachment to the land of his early childhood, but also an awareness of the familial duties and social expectations traditionally placed upon him by his community.

[70] The following comments are based primarily on letters and other historical documents from European sources. Thus, previous research has primarily focused on correspondence with individuals socialized in Europe who were either friends or colleagues of Boachi. There is not much information about how Kwasi Boachi lived as a black man in a predominantly white society and how his contacts with people in Africa might have influenced his thoughts about a possible return. It is unclear whether he maintained contact with his family in the Ashanti region, what his relationships with other African students in Europe were like, and what role his encounters with enslaved people in European ducal households and enslaved people from Suriname or the

United States played. It has also not been sufficiently researched whether anti-colonial literature changed his perspectives. This is clearly still a research desideratum.

At the same time, after years of immersion in European contexts—having arrived as a child of just ten—it is likely that the idea of returning to a now estranged homeland weighed heavily on him. One critical factor in this internal struggle may have been his disillusionment with the brutality of the transatlantic slave trade. The knowledge that the Asante themselves were complicit in this trade, as previously revealed in a report by his mentor, Professor Bernhard von Cotta, likely intensified the moral contradictions within his sense of self, suggesting a deep and unresolved conflict between cultural loyalty and ethical distance.

Ultimately, Boachi's decision to remain in Europe appears to have been motivated by a desire for stability and self-determination. In Europe, he had cultivated supportive relationships, including friends who advocated for him before the Dutch colonial ministry. He had access to educational opportunities and was able to attain a social position that would likely have been unattainable within the colonial hierarchy of the Gold Coast.

Had he returned to his homeland, Boachi would have re-entered a landscape marked by political instability and personal precarity. In Europe, by contrast, he was afforded the possibility of a fresh start—even if that meant sacrificing aspects of his agency or autonomy, he did not necessarily forfeit the social privileges associated with his Asante nobility.

Nevertheless, it is equally clear that Boachi was deeply conscious of the tension between his acknowledged expertise and the pervasive racism and structural discrimination that marked his everyday life in Europe. This tension—between recognition and rejection, between constrained options and imperfect alternatives—shaped his life in profound ways. It finds poignant expression in a personal letter to G.S. de Veer, where Boachi offered the following statement regarding his final decision not to return to Asanteland:

"I'd rather die here in Europe than slowly perish in sorrow and misery on the coast of Guinea"[71]

2.5 Kwame Poku: An Ambivalent Return Between Colonial Influence and Cultural Isolation

The Asante prince Kwame Poku is frequently mentioned only in passing in German, English, and Dutch literature, and typically in relation to the more extensively documented life of Kwasi Boachi. The last known visual representation of Poku is a portrait painted by Nicolaas Pieneman in 1840, depicting him at the coronation of King Willem II of the Netherlands. This painting, which shows him as a young man, stands as the final visual trace of his presence in the historical record.

[71] Letter from Kwasi Boachi to G. S. de Veer, 25.01.1850 (translated from Dutch), in: ARA, Minierien de Kolonien.

In stark contrast to Boachi, no known letters, diaries, or newspaper reports by or about Poku have been preserved in the archives of today's Ghana, the Netherlands, or Germany. This absence of primary sources makes it extremely difficult to reconstruct his biography or to gain insight into his political views, social connections, personal activities, or everyday circumstances. The archival silence surrounding Kwame Poku highlights not only the asymmetries of memory but also the fragility of Black historical presence within European imperial documentation systems.[72]

What is known with certainty is that Kwame Poku enlisted in the Dutch colonial army in 1844. He did so with the expectation—formally promised to him—that he would be promoted to the rank of senior officer within three months. However, archival records confirm that this promotion never materialized, and that Poku remained a junior officer throughout his service.

Little is known about the details of his further education, personal network, or everyday life during this period, as few documents have survived. What is clear is that, following his military training in the Netherlands, Poku returned home in 1850, travelling via the coastal fort at Elmina. This return occurred at a moment when Kwasi Boachi was still in Germany, pursuing his university education and engaging in social and academic circles.

Upon his return to Kumasi in the Asante Empire Kwame Poku found himself in an environment that was, in many ways, estranged from the one he had left as a child. Years of European military discipline, socialization, and ideological framing had reshaped his worldview—creating a psychological and cultural dissonance that likely shaped his reintegration, or lack thereof, into Asante society. [73]

The Asante prince Poku's return to Asanteland in 1850 was not merely a personal choice but one ordered by his uncle, Asantehene Kwaku Dua I. His recall occurred during a period of heightened

[72] The limited documentation on Kwame Poku is a revealing example of the challenges associated with researching the history of returnees from colonial contexts. Despite his potentially significant role in the Gold Coast's political and social development, there are few written sources about his life, such as a portrait, but no surviving letters or newspaper articles. This scarcity of documentation is not uncommon, particularly when it comes to individuals from colonized societies, whose histories have often been incompletely documented or distorted by colonial power structures. A central factor in this documentation gap is the colonial dynamic that led to many aspects of returnee history not being adequately recorded. While Western and colonial archives often kept detailed records of individuals from colonized countries, comprehensive documentation about the returnees themselves was often lacking. This disparity highlights the need to use alternative sources such as oral histories, cultural artifacts, and other historical documents to obtain a more complete picture of individuals like Kwame Poku and their influence on the history of the Gold Coast. In addition to these challenges, the royal archive of the Asante kingdom plays a crucial role in this context. There could be information about Kwame Poku here that is deliberately not made available to the general public. Historical documents and records kept in the private family archives of the Asante kingdom could offer important insights into Poku's life and his potential contributions to political and social development. The deliberate silence and selective archiving of such information reflects a conscious decision to keep certain aspects of history private or to make them accessible only to a limited group of people.

[73] Schiffner 1935, p. 328.

political instability within the Asante Empire, brought about by intensifying British colonial expansion and significant shifts in internal governance—most notably, the implementation of a constitutional ordinance. These pressures marked a transition from traditional forms of centralized authority toward more externally influenced political structures, which would eventually reshape the Asante state in profound ways.

Poku's reintegration into a rapidly transforming sociopolitical landscape must be considered within the broader dynamics of imperial influence and local realignment. Although formally called to serve his kingdom, his extended absence, European military training, and the evolving structures of authority may have shaped a return experience marked by negotiation and reorientation—suggesting a position that required him to navigate multiple expectations, rather than a straightforward restoration of status.[74] This brought a new administrative structure, but left little room for the indigenous population to exert influence.[75] Although Poku returned during a period of relative peace within the Asante Empire, his homecoming placed him at the center of political unrest and increasing resistance to colonial encroachment. At the time, Elmina remained one of the most populous and economically significant cities on the Gold Coast, functioning as both a trade hub and a contested geopolitical site. As a prospective successor to the throne, Poku faced not only internal power dynamics and shifting alliances, but also the escalating threat of foreign influence and imperial ambition.

He now found himself in the ambiguous and isolated position of having to respond to newly emerging political realities as an active strategist and representative of royal authority, while simultaneously attempting to safeguard the traditions and sovereignty of his people—a people he had long been distanced from, yet to whom he remained ancestrally and politically bound. Crucially, he had to do so in direct confrontation with European powers he had come to know intimately during his years abroad.

Poku's return also coincided with a broader wave of Black transatlantic migrations. This period on the Gold Coast was marked by the arrival of formerly enslaved individuals, as well as the return of free Africans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Black Britons—a movement fueled by the ideals and networks of the "Back to Africa Movement", which gained momentum between the late 18th and mid-19th centuries. Similarly, Afro-Brazilians, including former enslaved soldiers who had fought in the colonial conflicts of the Dutch East Indies (modern-day Indonesia), began returning to West Africa in the early 19th century. These returns created a complex web of cultural exchange, contestation, and diasporic identity, all of which further shaped the political landscape into which Poku re-entered.[76] These movements were shaped by the profound desire to (re)claim a homeland and identity in Africa after centuries of

[74] See Rattray, 1929
[75] Ibid.
[76] See Kwame Essien: Brazilian-African Diaspora in Ghana: The Tabom, Slavery, Dissonance of Memory, Identity, and Locating Home. Michigan: State University Press, 2016.

displacement, exploitation, and trauma caused by the transatlantic slave trade. For many returnees, the journey was both symbolic and strategic—an attempt to reconnect with ancestral roots while seeking new forms of belonging in a post-enslavement world.

Upon their arrival, these individuals became instrumental in forging interpersonal networks across geographic, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. [77] They served as agents of exchange, catalyzing the transfer of knowledge, skills, ideologies, and cultural expressions. Over time, these networks contributed significantly to the emergence of political consciousness, socio-economic transformation, and, eventually, to the success of various anti-colonial and freedom movements across West Africa and beyond.[78]

Unfortunately, the extent to which Kwame Poku engaged with other returnee communities on the Gold Coast remains unknown. No surviving sources document his interactions with formerly enslaved individuals, Afro-Brazilian repatriates, or members of the broader Back to Africa movement. Yet, it is plausible to assume that Poku, like many returnees, was compelled to navigate the conflicting projections of colonial romanticism—those idealized images of Africa cultivated in Europe, and those imported notions of "civilization" or progress held by returnees themselves. This tension would have forced him to confront not only the material and political realities of colonial domination, but also the psychological and emotional burdens of displacement, estrangement, and return.

For Poku, as for many other diasporic Africans, these dual perspectives may have served as a source of both strength and resistance. His transcultural experiences—bridging military service in the Netherlands and return to an embattled Asante polity—might have empowered him to envision new strategies for justice, dignity, and restitution, not only for Asanteland but for the African continent more broadly.

However, in the absence of written documentation, it remains uncertain whether Poku was ever promoted to a higher military or political office within the Asante Empire following his return. What endures is a fragmented legacy—rich in historical and symbolic potential, yet circumscribed by archival silence. One can only speculate about the role he might have played in fostering cultural and intellectual exchanges between Africa and Europe, or in articulating a vision of postcolonial identity grounded in memory, displacement, and transformation.

By contrast, ethnographic and historical sources—especially oral narratives originating from Kumasi—suggest a different reading of Poku's legacy. These accounts tend to indicate that, during his time in

[77] Hermann W. von Hesse and Larry W. Yarak: A Tale of Two "Returnee" Communities in the Gold Coast and Ghana: Accra's Tabon and Elmina's Ex-Soldiers, 1830s to the Present; in: The International Journal of African Historical Studies, 2018, pp. 197–217.

[78] See David Jenkins: Black Zion: The Return of Afro-Americans and West Indians to Africa. London: Wildwood House, 1975.

the Netherlands, Poku may have become detached from Asante traditions, distancing himself from the social and cultural values he had once embodied. Such oral testimonies raise important questions about the psychological and cultural consequences of prolonged immersion in a foreign colonial context, and whether Poku's years abroad ultimately contributed to a rupture in his communal identification.[79] Poku's altered cultural habitus and linguistic estrangement, acquired during his extended stay in the Netherlands, likely rendered his reintegration into Asante society significantly more difficult. These transformations may have deepened his sense of dislocation and amplified his social and political marginalization upon return. What had once been a familiar cultural landscape may now have appeared distant or inaccessible—further complicating his ability to reclaim a meaningful role within his community.

This growing isolation and inner conflict ultimately culminated in tragedy: on 22 February 1850, Kwame Poku is believed to have taken his own life in Elmina, shortly after his return to the Gold Coast. Yet this aspect of his biography remains shrouded in uncertainty, as historical records are sparse and accounts of his final days vary. The circumstances surrounding his death—as with much of his life—remain unresolved, reflecting the broader silences and fragmentations that characterize colonial-era histories of African returnees.[80]

2.6 Kwasi Boachi: Discrimination as a Formative Companion on the Journey to the Dutch Indies (present-day Indonesia)

Unfortunately, we do not know how Kwasi Boachi reacted to the death of his cousin and closest companion. Nor is it clear whether this tragic event influenced his own decision never to return to Ghana. What is certain, however, is that upon his arrival in the Netherlands in 1850, Boachi encountered significant racial barriers that thwarted his career prospects, despite his considerable qualifications and training.

A key figure in this obstruction was Jan Jacob Rochussen (1797–1871), Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. Rochussen explicitly opposed Boachi's appointment to the civil service, invoking a racist rationale that has since become infamous: he warned against undermining what he called the "aristocracy of the skin." His position made it clear that Boachi's noble Asante lineage and European education were insufficient to counteract the systemic racial hierarchies of Dutch colonial society.[81] A particularly revealing detail can be found in Boachi's educational and professional certificates, where

[79] See Yarak 1987, pp. 131–145.
[80] Ibid.
[81] C. Fasseur: De weg naar het paradijs en andere Indische geschiedenissen. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1995, p.143.

the term "extraordinary" was repeatedly and conspicuously emphasized. On the surface, this might suggest praise or exceptional talent. However, within the colonial administrative context, such language often carried coded meanings: in Boachi's case, it signaled that he was not to be trusted with independent responsibility, and that his work would require the ongoing supervision of a white European superior.

This kind of racialized bureaucratic language—couched in seemingly neutral or even laudatory terms—functioned as a tool of systemic exclusion[82]. It subtly reinforced the belief that Africans, regardless of their education or social background, remained inherently unfit for leadership within European institutional structures.[83] Boachi lodged formal complaints regarding the racial discrimination he faced from superiors within the Dutch colonial ministry. In response, he was reassigned to Java, where he was ordered to accompany Cornelis Kees de Groot on a geological-mining survey of the Indonesian island of Bawean.

Cornelis de Groot, who would later become the first Director of Mining in the Dutch East Indies (1850–1866), played a significant role in developing tin mining operations on Belitung and coal extraction projects in Southeast Kalimantan. Originally trained as a hydraulic engineer, de Groot arrived in the Dutch East Indies in July 1850 with the title of second-class mining engineer. Despite his modest rank and limited experience in geology, he was appointed head of the expedition team—a position that, by virtue of both technical training and field experience, could have justifiably been held by Kwasi Boachi. Nevertheless, Boachi was passed over. His superior qualifications and extensive European education were insufficient to override the racialized logic of the colonial administration, which prioritized white European authority irrespective of merit.

De Groot's first expedition, conducted from February to April 1851, aimed to investigate rumored coal deposits on Bawean, located in the Java Sea. While the coal was ultimately deemed economically unviable, the mission yielded a significant outcome: the production of one of the earliest geological maps of Bawean Island, marking a step in the expanding infrastructure of colonial scientific cartography. [84]

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[82] Strikingly, in Germany for example these rhetorical patterns echo in modern professional practices, where terms such as "enthusiastic," "eager to learn," or "exceptional" in employment evaluations can still act as euphemisms for perceived deficiencies, particularly when applied to candidates from racialized or marginalized backgrounds. In this way, the colonial logics of qualification and supervision continue to shape the language of appraisal—then as now, subtly marking the boundaries of who is deemed worthy of autonomy, authority, or advancement.

[83] Adam Jones, in: Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (eds.): Dictionary of African Biography, Volumes 1–6. Oxford: University Press, 2012, p. 268.

[84] See https://vangorselslist.com/pdf/Pioneers_samples_vol_2_feb2022_van_gorsel.pdf, accessed on 10.05.2023.

At this time, Boachi experienced discrimination not only from his superiors, but also from Javanese.[85] He complained multiple times to the Dutch colonial minister. On 30 December 1853, the Asante prince Kwasi Boachi was appointed engineer of the third class, but again with the addition "extraordinary." Eventually, his complaints about De Groot were heard and he was finally permitted to work independently in the coming year from April until October. In 1854, he carried out a study on the occurrence of coal in the bay of Meeuwen in the Bantam regency and a similar study in the south of the Priangan regency in 1855. For the rest of the year, he was De Groot's office manager. In 1855/56, Kwasi Boachi's scientific research was published:

- Boachi, Akwasi (1855): Study of the coals found along the beach of Meeuwenbaai, Bantam residence. Journal of Physics of the Dutch Indies, IX, p. 49;
- Boachi, Kwasie (1856): Investigation of the designation of the coal in the area of the Bay of Tjilaloek (Preanger regency). Physical Magazine of the Dutch East Indies, XI, p. 461;
- Boachi, Kwasie (1856): Notes on the Chinese on the island of Java. Contribution to Linguistics, Geography and Ethnology, Volume 4, No. 2, pp. 303–307.

Boachi's work on the coal deposits in Indonesia and his observations of the Chinese community in Java were not only scientific contributions but also a testament to how he broke through the social barriers of his time. The Asante Prince was one of the few black academics of his time who was able to publish his research results in recognized European journals, thereby overcoming expectations and limitations based on his skin color and origin. Nevertheless, he continued to experience discrimination. When he complained to Governor-General Duymaer van Twist (1809-1887) about the addition of "extraordinary" to his title in 1856, the latter explained that a change was not possible, but recommended that he complain in the Netherlands. During a visit to Dr. Gerrit Simons, Boachi learned that the addition of "extraordinary" had been personally introduced by de Groot.[86] This realization led him to consider resigning from the civil service, since his career as a mining engineer (more precisely, he only worked as an engineering assistant) would inevitably require him to constantly interact with de Groot.[87] In March 1856, he turned to the colonial minister Pieter Mijer

[85] See Maarten Kuitenbrouwer: Dutch Scholarship in the Age of Empire and Beyond: KITLV - the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, in: Rosemarijn Hoefte, Henk Schulte Nordholt (eds.): Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde, Vol 289, 2014, accessed under https://web.archive.org/web/20180721070745id_/https://pure.knaw.nl/ws/files/1414020/Poeze_Dutch_Scholarship.pdf on 11.12.2023.
[86] See Blok, Molhuysen 1927.
[87] Ibid.

(1812–1881) with a request for compensation for unfulfilled promises of career advancement (1856). Although the minister refused, Boachi managed to persuade King William III of the Netherlands (1817–1890) to provide compensation. It was decided by mutual agreement that Boachi would be honorably discharged from his position as a mining engineer in the Dutch East Indies. After intensive negotiations, it was decided in 1857 to grant The Asante Prince Kwasi Boachi a monthly pension of 500 guilders.[88] He left the Netherlands in October 1857. Many years later, he articulated his profound sense of disappointment and the persistent experience of humiliation in a letter to the editor, in which he wrote:

"Had I been an influential or important person (...) but I am merely an insignificant individual, a forgotten citizen in some remote corner of Java—and what is more, a negro in a country where the white ruler looks down upon Black people with contempt." [89]

This statement powerfully encapsulates Boachi's marginalization and the racialized exclusion he faced, despite his elite background and European education. It offers critical insight into the lived experience of a Black royal subject navigating colonial hierarchies from within.

Kwasi Boachi's formal complaints regarding the racism he encountered between 1850 and 1871 are significant in multiple respects and offer critical insights into the social dynamics of the period. It is likely that Indonesians engaging with the Dutch colonial administration were similarly affected by systemic discrimination. Yet the Asante prince's position was exceptional: as a person of African descent and of noble lineage, he possessed both the education and social standing to challenge injustices in an official capacity and to draw attention to the unequal treatment he experienced.

This capacity to articulate resistance and demand accountability can be partly attributed to his aristocratic background, but equally to his outstanding education, which conferred upon him a measure of privilege and symbolic capital. Nevertheless, the institutional response to his complaints—his reassignment rather than a direct engagement with the issues he raised—reveals the structural limitations of such privilege. Asante Prince Kwasi Boachi carried not only the eloquence and intellectual clarity to articulate his position, but also the weight of a royal narrative—one that spoke to histories of dignity, diplomacy, and cultural continuity. Yet, despite his status and education, he operated within a colonial structure that severely limited his agency. The power to effect structural redress—for himself or for others marked by displacement and marginalization—remained

[88] Ibid.
[89] Published in: De Locomotief: Samarangsch handels-en advertentieblad 24(7), 1871.

out of reach. His voice, while audible, was constrained by the asymmetries of the imperial order in which royal identity could be acknowledged symbolically, but not translated into political leverage.

Boachi's case thus stands as a rare historical example of how an African Black individual could navigate, contest, and ultimately remain confined within the rigid power structures of a European society shaped by colonial hierarchies and racialized systems of exclusion. [90]His experiences underscore the complex and often contradictory relationship between privilege and power within colonial regimes. They also illustrate the severely limited scope available to individuals of African descent to act against systemic disadvantage, even when they occupied positions of relative status or education. Following his release, the Asante prince was granted a 710-hectare leasehold in Madiun, which enabled him to manage a coffee plantation independently in addition to receiving a state-provided maintenance allowance. However, it is important to note that coffee cultivation at the time was strictly regulated by the colonial administration. Boachi subsequently settled in nearby Sukaraja, where he established a household and began a family.[91] [92]However, as an entrepreneur, Boachi encountered a series of challenges; his agricultural enterprise experienced financial losses and was ultimately forced to cease operations. In response, he applied for a new concession and was subsequently granted a leasehold for land in Sokasari, located within the assistant residency of

[90] Another example is Abdul Rahman (1762–1829), a prince from the Fula kingdom of Fouta Djallon in Guinea, who experienced the drastic effects of the transatlantic slave trade. After being captured at the young age of 26 and shipped to America against his and his family's will, he was forced to live in a system of enslavement that drastically limited his social and economic position for over thirty years before he could return home. Despite his high origin and education in Africa, Abdul Rahman faced extreme racial and colonial barriers in the United States. His attempts to gain his freedom through the intervention of supporters such as Dr. John Coates Cox and the US consulates illustrate the limited options available to him.
These efforts show how deeply rooted and structural the disadvantages were for Black people of all social classes, which could hardly be overcome even with institutional support. See Terry Alford: Prince among slaves. The true story of an African prince sold into slavery in the American South. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

[91] There are few records of Kwasi Boachi's private life during his time in Indonesia. Most of the information we have concerns his professional activities and can primarily be found in digitized form in the state archives of the Netherlands. Cf. Kuitenbrouwer 2014, p. 47 ff.

[92] Although Kwasi Boachi's transition from engineer to plantation owner might superficially be interpreted as a form of "social decline," this shift in fact reflects a deeper continuity with the economic structures and value systems of the Asante Empire. Historically, the Asante economy was based on a triad of gold trade, agricultural production, and the slave trade—economic pillars that sustained both its wealth and political power.
Within this framework, plantation ownership was not considered a step down, but rather a respectable and often prestigious position within the upper-middle class of Asante society. Boachi's role as a plantation owner thus aligned with his aristocratic background and was consistent with elite economic activity in his culture of origin.
Moreover, in the 19th-century colonial context of the Dutch East Indies, plantation ownership could be highly lucrative—particularly for those with access to extensive landholdings and administrative support. Far from representing a retreat from ambition, Boachi's move into plantation management can be seen as a pragmatic and status-affirming adaptation to both local economic realities and his own transimperial position.

Buitenzorg. Archival and bibliographic records from the period following his service as an engineer are comparatively sparse. The materials consulted thus far yield only limited information about this later phase of his life.

Nonetheless, several newspapers reported on Boachi's fate during his final years in Java. As a form of compensation, he received a modest lifelong pension from the Dutch government. Throughout his time in Indonesia, Boachi maintained correspondence with friends in both in the kingdom Saxony (today's Germany) and the Netherlands, to whom he occasionally sent gifts such as cigars and coffee—tokens that may be interpreted as gestures of remembrance, diplomacy, or continuity across distance and displacement.[93] It is also noteworthy that the Royal Kwasi Boachi's correspondence places particular emphasis on his relationships with white Germans, particularly those from the upper classes. This detail underscores both his familiarity with European social norms and his successful integration into elite societal circles. These sustained connections suggest that Boachi navigated his social environment with a degree of confidence and cultural fluency that was highly unusual for a Black African in colonial contexts. However, it remains unclear whether he maintained relationships with other people of African descent or with individuals from the African or Afro-diasporic communities present in Germany or the Netherlands at the time—individuals whose presence is historically documented but often marginalized in dominant narratives.

In a 1870 article published in the widely read German magazine *Die Gartenlaube*, Boachi reflects directly on his identity, offering insights into the ways in which he perceived himself within the nexus of cultural affiliation and geographic displacement. In his own words, he articulates the extent to which he continues to identify as Asante, while simultaneously expressing a sense of belonging in Germany:

"Although Africans are not connected to Germany by birth or blood, I have grown fond of this country and its inhabitants during a three-year stay. As a son of distant Ashanty, I entered Germany as a stranger, enjoyed a hospitable welcome there, found warm hearts that opened to mine, and tied many a bond of friendship (...) With the warmest wish that Germany may emerge victoriously from this dispute, in order to complete its unity undisturbed, I sign, etc. etc.
— Aquasi Boachi"."[94]

[93] Arnold 2008, p. 27.
[94] Die Gartenlaube. Leipzig: Ernst Keil, 1870, p. 811.

In 1871, Boachi rejoined the Association of Civil Engineers and assumed the role of regional correspondent for the Dutch East Indies. Between 1871 and 1893, only a handful of letters or records referencing him appear in the archives or newspapers of Germany and the Netherlands. [95] His name does not resurface in any extant documents until 1893, when he was appointed an honorary member of the Association of Civil Engineers—a notable, if largely symbolic, recognition of his longstanding professional career[96].

The following year, in 1894, his state pension was raised to six hundred guilders per month upon the recommendation of Governor General Herman van der Wijck (1815–1889). During this period, Boachi also experimented with rice cultivation, although this venture, like his earlier business efforts, proved unprofitable and was discontinued by 1898.

Nevertheless, Boachi remained the proprietor of a coffee plantation for more than five decades. Over the course of this long engagement, he became actively involved in the local community and demonstrated particular concern for the welfare of former African soldiers who had served in the Dutch colonial army. His sustained commitment to their well-being positioned him as a central figure in the emergence of a Black diasporic community in Indonesia.

Research by Sophie Arnold further suggests that Boachi's reputation extended beyond his immediate surroundings. He was not only recognized locally as an advocate against racial discrimination, but also acknowledged internationally. In some accounts, his name appears alongside prominent global figures such as Booker T. Washington (1856–1915), indicating the broader resonance of his life and work[97] and references in contemporary African American studies in the USA underscore his influence

[95] A particularly promising area of research is the examination of family archives and private collections of Boachi's friends. It is plausible that these archives contain valuable documents, such as correspondence, that could provide further insights into Boachi's relationships with his German acquaintances and his stay in Germany. One specific lead for such sources is a newspaper article published in the supplement of the Freiberger Anzeiger on August 25, 1882. This article contains a letter from Kwasi Boachi, which makes it clear how well connected he was in Germany. Such documents are of particular interest as they offer personal and direct insights into Boachi's social networks and his integration into German society. Therefore, a systematic exploration of these family and personal archives is essential to a comprehensive reconstruction of Boachi's relationship with Germany and his German surroundings. The analysis of such sources could not only deepen our understanding of Boachi's personal network, but also make a valuable contribution to research into the transnational dynamics of the time. Moreover, additional research could bring to light further materials that further illuminate the connection between Boachi and Germany. This would not only contribute to the existing knowledge of Boachi's influence and integration, but also to the role of Germany in transcultural migration in the 19th century. The targeted study of such sources could thus open up significant new perspectives on the interconnections between Ghana and Germany through Boachi.

[96] Allison Blakely: Blacks in the Dutch world. The evolution of racial imagery in a modern society. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993.

[97] Arnold 2008.

and his commitment to equality and the fight against oppression.[98] Boachi spent the final months of his life at the hospital in Buitenzorg, where he was treated for a prolonged illness. He passed away in Java in 1904.

2.7 The Asante prince Kwasi Boachi: A Life of Transformation and Commitment

The biography of the Asante royal Kwasi Boachi presented here bears witness to a remarkably multifaceted and resilient individual. The numerous stages of his life—from his royal upbringing in Asante land and the abrupt dislocation during his youth, to his integration into a radically foreign cultural world, his education and academic formation in the Netherlands and Germany, his participation in aristocratic and courtly circles as a young adult, and finally his resettlement in Indonesia—shaped both his worldview and his actions in profound ways.

While such capacities might be expected of someone of royal lineage, what becomes especially tangible in Kwasi Boachi's case is the nuanced way in which he navigated the tensions between heteronomy and self-assertion, cultivated transcontinental networks, and maintained a persistent drive to succeed—despite structural limitations, social isolation, and experiences of racial discrimination.As a nobleman who was compelled by circumstance to assume the role of an agricultural entrepreneur, he exemplified a remarkable degree of flexibility and adaptability across varying cultural and social contexts.[99] At first glance, the Asante royal's intellectual curiosity—symbolized most vividly by his extensive private library—may appear unusual. Yet, considering his position as an Asante prince, a keen interest in global affairs is perhaps less surprising. It reflects not only a personal pursuit of knowledge but also a broader royal engagement with the world beyond the empire's borders. At a time when access to education remained largely the privilege of the European elite, his possession of such a collection constitutes a remarkable exception. It attests not only to his unwavering commitment to learning and self-education, but also to his determination to transcend the epistemic boundaries imposed by colonial structures. The library thus stands as more than a marker of personal accomplishment; it functioned as an instrument of intellectual resistance.

Throughout his life, the Asante prince Kwasi Boachi was not only an active shaper of his own destiny, but also of the environments in which he operated. Whether as a steward of memory and a critic of

[98] See P. Caljé: De jongens van weleer, in: E. Henssen (ed.): Het Corps als Koninkrijk: 150 Jaar Delftsch Studenten Corps. Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1998.

[99] This ability to adapt to circumstances and succeed in different professions is an experience shared by many migrants today. They often have to leave their original professions or social positions behind and find their way in new, often challenging environments. This adaptability and willingness to succeed in different fields are essential characteristics that help migrants to gain a foothold and integrate in new societies.

social injustices, as a devoted family man, or as a co-creator of Black communal life in Indonesia—Kwasi Boachi's life and personality offer a multitude of points of resonance and enduring inspiration for dynamic, transnational memory work.[100]

3. Mapping Memories: On the Possibilities of Transcontinental Memory Work [101]

Working on the life and legacy of the Asante Prince Kwasi Boachi has been a journey of discovery. Beginning with the portrait housed in the Albertinum in Dresden, my research soon extended to Ghana and the Netherlands—to the very locations where Boachi once lived, studied, and shaped his trajectory. Over the course of just six months, I visited more than fourteen archives and museums across Ghana, the Netherlands, and Germany, engaging in dialogue with a wide range of scholars, practitioners, and other actors both within and beyond the boundaries of the academic sphere.
This research also integrated community-based knowledge from Ghanaian society as well as from the Ghanaian diaspora in the Netherlands and Germany. In addition, I made use of user-generated content shared through social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. These diverse and intersecting sources significantly deepened my understanding of the Asante prince Boachi's life and underscored his enduring relevance to Black memory culture.
What began as an interdisciplinary investigation gradually evolved into a transacademic and transnational endeavor. In this concluding section, I aim to draw on these findings to illuminate the potential of transcontinental memory work and to encourage further inquiry into the layered, interconnected histories of African diasporic experiences.

3.1 Mapping Memories: A Personal Plea for the Black Archive as a Living Memory of African Histories and a Space for Identity-building in Germany

I first encountered the name of the Asante prince Kwasi Boachi during my youth, through the influential volume *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out* (*Farbe Bekennen*), edited by May Ayim, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz. For many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPoC) in Germany and beyond, this book represents a seminal work of memory activism and

[100] Arnold 2008.
[101] Thank you to Tuffix for giving me the opportunity to share excerpts, images, and recordings from my audio research diary, which I kept between March 2023 and February 2024. The graphic recording was created from these
materials. It not only visually communicates where I was and what I discovered at each location, but also conveys the notion of a targeted intervention.

identity formation. Its pages introduced me not only to Afro-German histories and struggles but also to African's migration history.

This early encounter left a lasting impression on me. Boachi's presence in *Showing Our Colors* was not just anecdotal; it served as a powerful symbol of the long-standing but often overlooked presence of Black people in German history. His story—briefly mentioned yet resonant—planted the seed for what would become a much deeper personal and scholarly engagement. In retrospect, it was my first conscious realization that Black German and diasporic identities are anchored in centuries-long historical entanglements, not merely postcolonial or contemporary phenomena.[102] I had previously thought that my parents were among the first people from Ghana in Germany, I now learned about Black figures in the book who had lived and had an impact on generations in Germany before them. Through reading this book, I became aware of how superficially the history of Africans in Germany was handled. One receives little to no education about these histories in school curricula, and when "African migration stories" do enter public discourse, they are often presented in a reductive and monolithic fashion. Such narratives tend to collapse vastly different temporal, geographical, and cultural experiences into a singular, homogenized storyline. The specificities of individual biographies—such as those shaped by class, gender, region, or ethnic background—are frequently overlooked. These flattening obscures the rich diversity of African diasporic experiences and erases the complex entanglements between European imperial projects and African lives, which differ significantly across time and space. It is particularly true of texts dealing with the historical presence of enslaved people of African origin in Europe: here, only very general references are made to "Africans[103]." This leads to *specific* histories of groups (such as Ghanaians), and their unique and clan-related knowledge, being largely overlooked in pre-national Germany. The histories and biographies of African migrant individuals are therefore almost exclusively considered in large, generalizing categories. This not only neglects the nuances and specific experiences of different individuals and groups, but also contributes to rendering their histories and social contributions invisible. In German archives and art history, for example, the representation of Black people has long been shaped by racist and colonial prejudices. This has often led to individuals being reduced to

[102] The term "Booga" is a well-known category in the Ghanaian migration context for Ghanaians. In Ghanaian communities on the African continent, it refers to Ghanaian migrants in Germany, especially to "Hamburgers," and was developed by relatives of Ghanaian migrants who are on the continent. "Ba" means child. They are so-called "migrant children," where both parents are of Ghanaian origin, who were born or grew up in Germany in the 1970s/1980s and were predeominantly socialized there.
[103] Cf. Martin, Peter: Edle Mohren, Schwarze Teufel – Afrikaner im Bewusstsein der Deutschen, 1993; Cf. Schumacher, Yves: Sklaven und Hofmohren: Afrikaner in Europa zwischen dem 15. und 19. Jahrhundert, 2021, et al.

marginalized, exotic objects, as was explained in more detail in the earlier discussion of the double portrait of BoachI and Poku.[104] This distorted narrative has a profound impact on the perception and recognition of Black identities and stories. [105]

These are not stories that many migrants from Ghana today are familiar with—and they are not to blame for that. Most of them never had the time or the resources to build their own archives. Their energies were consumed by survival, by supporting families across borders, by making new lives in unfamiliar places. It is not forgetfulness, but the weight of responsibility, that has made remembering so difficult. It is only recently that a language has developed that systematically gathers and adequately records the specific experiences and discrimination of Black people in Germany (and elsewhere). To this end, the creation and establishment of Black archives and other initiatives that aim to document, preserve, and make accessible the history and culture of Black people is crucial.[106] In doing so, they act—in keeping with the spirit of Sankɔfa—as a living memory that not only collects historical documents, photographs, and materials, but also creates spaces in which the diverse experiences and heritage of the Black community are recognized, explored, and celebrated. Such archives collect and preserve materials that document the histories and experiences of marginalized and underrepresented groups, particularly those that are associated with colonialism, slavery, and their effects. In an academic context, the Black archive serves as an essential source for research that deals with the deconstruction of established historical narratives and promotes a more comprehensive understanding of the past.

It offers spaces in which Black histories and contributions to society can be made visible and celebrated. The archives thus contribute to the correction of the historical narrative in that they bring the presence and influence of Black people to the fore and enable a more nuanced understanding of the past. Their significance therefore extends far beyond the mere collection of artifacts. They serve as cultural and pedagogic tools for preserving individual and collective memory and strengthen the

[104] A further example of such a degradation in art history is the confusion of individuals such as Anton Wilhelm Amo with other historical figures like Lois Benoit Zamor (1762–1820), Jacobus Capitain (1717–1747), or Gannibal Petrovic (1696–1781). It is important to identify and correct such errors to establish the correct identity of the persons and to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the art history. For more information on this topic, see: C. A. Meissner und J. C. Brigham: Thirty years of investigating the own-race bias in memory for faces: a meta-analytic review, in: Psychology, Public Policy, & Law, 7(1), 2001, pp. 3–35.

[105] See Tina Campt: Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

[106] In recent years, a remarkable development has taken place in Europe and Africa, manifested in the increase of institutions run by Black library directors and researchers to expand the Black archive. This development is a sign of the growing self-determination, visibility, and research expansion of Afro-European, American, Afro-diasporic, and Black people. The operation of libraries and archives by Black people in Europe and Africa represents an act of self-representation and cultural resistance.

identity and feeling of belonging within the Black community. The significance of these archives also lies in their capacity to fill gaps in public memory and education, in that they emphasize stories and contributions of people who are often overlooked in the dominant historical narratives. Preserving and sharing these alternative histories not only enriches cultural memory, but also challenges structures of inequality and privilege, contributing to the creation of more inclusive cities and spaces, in which the diverse background and migration histories of its inhabitants are recognized and valued. The importance of these institutions cannot be overstated, as they not only preserve knowledge about the past, but also contribute to the education of present and future generations. They enable Black people to research and understand their own history, which in turn strengthens self-awareness and contributes to a positive self-image. In this sense, Black archives are active participants in the process of history-making and identity-building, and therefore necessary institutions of a vibrant culture of remembrance.

Transcontinental memory research recognizes that Black history is written and read multi-locally. It therefore advocates the networking of local archives and initiatives to make content accessible to as wide an audience as possible. The story of Kwasi Boachi, discussed and documented in this text, should flow into these archives and their work, enriching and completing them. It should also help Ghanaian migrants in Germany to better understand and reflect on their own history and identity. My work on Boachi, in any case, has shown me that we children of the "small Black majority,"[107] do indeed have "home stories"—not from Ghana, not from Germany, but from the "third space," the diaspora.

3.2 Exit Frame! The Complexity of Kwasi Boachi's Identity: On Multiple Affiliations, Intersectionality, and the Necessity of a Nuanced Perspective

By collecting material from a wide range of sources and from very different places and times, a transcontinental work of remembrance invariably raises the question of how the stories of diverse historical figures like Kwasi Boachi can be most adequately presented, analyzed, and incorporated into the archive. Boachi's migration history is related to the so-called "old" diaspora.[108] This includes

[107] This is a reference to Gianni Jovanovic's 2023 book We, Children of the Small Majority. The author draws on the idea of the "small majority" to underscore the importance and value of identity and history for descendants of the diaspora, such as Ghanaian transmigrants in Europe. Jovanovic uses the term "small majority" to emphasize that even smaller groups are valuable and worthy of attention and that they should not accept the way society devalues them. The author's research offers these descendants a platform to reconstruct their own history and reflect on their identity in the context of a long and often complex migratory history. This is particularly important for people who often experience rejection and discrimination because they do not conform to the dominant social image. Jovanovic emphasizes that there are many people who are considered minorities, when in fact they are millions of individuals with their own lived realities.

[108] The so-called "new diaspora" describes the migration phenomenon of Ghanaian migrants who migrated to the Netherlands between the 1960s-1980s, following the country's independence. As Yarak (1990) describes,

people who immigrated to colonial states such as the present-day countries of England, France, the Netherlands, and Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some came as enslaved people or serfs,[109] who worked as servants or musicians for the European elite. Others, like Boachi, Poku, and other Asante princes, came for their educations for diplomatic reasons or to be trained as Christian missionaries—and were supposed to return to their homeland.[110] This short overview alone shows just how diverse these groups of the "old diaspora" is and how it defies simple classification. Likewise, attempts to define clear national affiliations remain blurred. ven a brief glance reveals the remarkable diversity within what has been termed the "old diaspora," a grouping that resists clear-cut classification and defies easy national categorization. Attempts to define unequivocal national affiliations often remain imprecise and unstable. Unlike Mandenga Diek (Madengué Dika), a student from Cameroon and great-grandfather of the well-known Berlin-based activist Abenaa Adomako,[1] who received his naturalization certificate in Hamburg on 23 November 1896 and later worked as a merchant in Danzig, the residence permit issued to Boachi on 24 July 1847—which was recently

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the "phenomenon of migration" must be understood through the shifting political and economic dynamics of postcolonial West Africa. He refers to a broader *migration phenomenon* that includes the earlier wave of *Been-To's*—Ghanaians who migrated to Europe, North America, or Canada from the 1950s to the 1970s, primarily for higher education or professional training. Many *Been-To's* retained their Ghanaian citizenship or, in some cases, held British passports due to Ghana's colonial legacy, allowing them to maintain strong political and emotional ties to Ghana while operating within transnational elite networks.
In contrast, the *Booga* generation—who began migrating in larger numbers from the late 1970s onwards—was often driven by political unrest, economic precarity, and the fallout of structural adjustment programs. Unlike the *Been-To's*, *Booga* migrants frequently worked in blue-collar jobs across European labor markets, regardless of prior educational or professional experience. Some adopted German citizenship over time, not necessarily as an act of assimilation, but as a practical means to secure legal stability and support transnational family responsibilities. Their lives became structured around cyclical mobility—moving back and forth between Ghana and Germany to sustain families in both locations, often without the time or institutional support to create archives of their own stories.See Steve Tonah: Ghanaians Abroad and Their Ties Home: Cultural and Religious Dimensions of Transnational Migration. Bielefeld: COMCAD, 2007.

[109] It is becoming increasingly apparent in research on the trade in enslaved people in Europe that the German kingdoms and small states were not only passively economically involved in the slave trade, but actively so. The traces extend as far as Saxony. Retrospectively, the trade in enslaved people from the Caribbean and Africa was an interdisciplinary transnational project. Slave traders, plantation owners, overseers, sailors, soldiers and travel physicians were active on slave ships. For this purpose, commercial enterprises and branches of the European neighbours and fellow traders were needed. In the non-European colonies and trading centres, there are references to the slave trade, which extended to German territories and cities. The Germans supplied plantations with capital, ships, clothing and equipment, exchanged goods for people on the African coast and consumed colonial goods produced by slave labor. The economic consequences of this participation were so significant in some areas of the Old Empire that the population there doubled within fifty years. More on this in Rebekka von Mallinckrodt: Slavery and Law in the Old Empire. An overview article on the legal history of slavery in the Old Empire (in preparation, as of 2023).

[110] See Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov: Schwarze Europäer im Alten Reich: Handel, Migration. Hof und Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2013.

discovered in Saxon archives —makes it clear that he was neither a German citizen nor a legal subject of the Kingdom of Saxony.

Nonetheless, Boachi felt a deep personal affinity with Germany. To classify him retrospectively within an early group of "Afro-Germans" or the so-called "Booga" generation would, however, be of limited analytical value. His legal status, migratory trajectory, and shifting forms of affiliation complicate any fixed or essentialized notion of identity. Rather than belonging to a stable category, Boachi's presence must be read within the broader, fluid, and often fragmented histories of African diasporic life in 19th-century Europe.[111]

The Asante prince Kwasi Boachi primarily spoke of himself as "Black," "African," and "Ashanti."[112] During his time in Europe, his cultural identity was at the centre of his experience due to the diplomatic background of his stay. This not only influenced his perspectives and actions, but also distinguished him from other Black people in Germany who many have had different cultural backgrounds. Ultimately, however, he spent most of his life in Indonesia, where he started a family and pursued multiple professional roles—as a mining student, engineering assistant, office manager, correspondent of the Dutch East Indian Company, scholar/ethnographer,[113] grower, and plantation owner, as well as his various social roles—as a club member, mentor to people from the Indo-European and Indo-African communities, agent of memory, acquaintance, neighbour, friend, husband, father, grandfather—all

[111] The book Showing Our Colors recounts that Africans have been living in Germany for many generations. The Adomako family, who are featured in the book, has been settled in Germany for five generations. The influential book Farbe bekennen ("Showing Our Colors") testifies to the long-standing presence of Africans in Germany, tracing lives and legacies that span multiple generations. The Diek family, for example, featured prominently in the book, has been rooted in Germany for five generations. Their story exemplifies the enduring presence and ongoing struggles of Black Germans for recognition, representation, and justice.[1]
This historical continuity challenges dominant narratives that portray the presence of people of African descent in Germany as recent or marginal. It underscores the significance of memory, oral history, and intergenerational knowledge transmission within Afro-German communities, while also illuminating the political activism that has long accompanied these histories. Like Boachi, who lived and worked in Germany during the 19th century, the members of the Diek family and others within the Black German community have been active agents of memory and resistance across centuries.
See May Ayim, Katharina Oguntoye and Dagmar Schultz (eds.): S. Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte. Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 2020. Siehe auch https://migrations-geschichten.de/die-geschichte-der-familie-diek-die-sich-seit-fuenf-generationen-fuer-die-rechte-schwarzer-deutscher-einsetzt/, abgerufen am 02.06.2024 und https://www.berlin.de/ba-tempelhof-schoeneberg/aktuelles/pressemitteilungen/2023/pressemitteilung.1283919.php, accessed on 10.03.2023 and https://www.dw.com/en/black-and-german-the-afrodeutsch-story/a-64272967, accessed on 10.03.2023.
[112] It also happened that he used the term ~~"Negro"~~ to describe himself. However, this mostly occurred in the context of newspaper articles in which he referred to the racism he experienced in the Netherlands and Indonesia. Otherwise, he mainly referred to himself as Ashanti and African. It is important to note that even then, the use of the term was apparently mostly considered derogatory and offensive.

which determined his identity and life path. All this impressively illustrates the complexity and fluidity of his social affinities.

Given the intricate trajectory of Kwasi Boachi's migration history—spanning three continents and four countries (Ghana, the Netherlands, Germany, and Indonesia)—and shaped by multiple, overlapping affiliations, it becomes evident that any meaningful engagement with his life and legacy must move beyond generalizations, stereotypes, or other reductive modes of scholarly inquiry.

Transcontinental memory research, in this regard, is fundamentally about breaking out of established interpretive frameworks—especially those defined by narrow national, Eurocentric, or colonial logics in which historical figures like Boachi have long been confined. Instead, it calls for the development of a more expansive and nuanced perspective—one that accounts for layered and sometimes conflicting forms of belonging, while remaining attentive to the political, cultural, and social dynamics that shaped these individuals' lived realities across diverse geographies.

Because Black migration histories are invariably entangled with experiences of discrimination and structural marginalization, transcontinental memory research also aligns itself with a critical gaze—one that not only reconstructs, but interrogates, the terms under which such histories have been told, remembered, or excluded.[114]

Importantly, this approach is grounded in a critical awareness of the deep entanglements between Black migration histories and the structural mechanisms of oppression—including racism, imperialism, and institutional exclusion. As such, transcontinental memory research is not only transnational in its geographic scope, but fundamentally intersectional in its methodology and ethical orientation.

In this context, intersectionality provides a vital analytical framework. Originally conceptualized to examine the interplay of multiple systems of power and discrimination—such as race, gender, and class—it allows for a more nuanced interpretation of Kwasi Boachi's biography. Rather than reading his trajectory solely through the lens of race, intersectionality reveals how overlapping dimensions—including ethnicity, socio-economic background, gender, geographic dislocation, and access to education—shaped both the opportunities available to him and the structural constraints he faced. It

[114] Transcontinental memory culture refers to the awareness of and engagement with historical events that have significance beyond national borders and often affect different continents. This form of memory culture recognizes
that the history and cultural memory of people and communities are shaped by events that took place on a global level, such as, for example, colonialism, the slave trade, world wars, or migration. It emphasizes the necessity to consider history from a multi-perspectival view that considers the interconnections and interactions between different regions of the world. The goal is to promote a comprehensive understanding of the past and to contribute to reconciliation and dialogue between cultures.

also elucidates the often-ambiguous positions he was made to occupy within the colonial and academic orders of his time.

The study of historical figures like Boachi must therefore grapple with the dual realities of agency and vulnerability. It must consider not only their symbolic import as diasporic icons, but also the material, emotional, and social complexities of their lived experiences. Through this lens, transcontinental memory work contributes to a more pluralistic and reparative historiography—one that resists flattening narratives and strives to recover the full dimensionality of Black historical actors.

These intersectional entanglements are critical to understanding multi-layered identities and non-linear historical trajectories. Only through such an approach does the depth of Boachi's experience come fully into view: his sense of ethnic belonging cannot be understood in isolation from the racialized exclusions he endured due to his skin color and colonial origin, nor from the ambivalent status he held within the academic and scientific elite. His cultural pride, intellectual excellence, and structural marginalization existed simultaneously—in tension, in dialogue, and shaped by a complex web of social categories and global hierarchies. [115]

3.3. African Agency and the Incompleteness of African Heritage: The Principle of Sankɔfa in Transcontinental Memory Work

In conclusion, transcontinental memory[116] work rests fundamentally on the recognition of African agency. "Agency," in this context, refers to the capacity of Africans—not as subjects acted upon but as active agents in their own historical, cultural, social, and political trajectories. This perspective disrupts dominant narratives that have historically positioned Africa as a passive object of external intervention and instead foregrounds the creative, intellectual, and political roles that Africans continue to play—on the continent and across the diaspora.

Equally important is the recognition of the intellectual agency of Black scholars and cultural workers, who not only research the past but actively engage their own histories and heritage as sources of

[116] Transcontinental memory culture refers to the awareness of and engagement with historical events that carry significance beyond national borders and often span multiple continents. This form of memory culture recognizes that the histories and collective memories of individuals and communities are shaped by global events such as colonialism, slavery, world wars, or migration. It emphasizes the need to view history from a multiperspectival angle—one that considers the interconnections and interactions between different regions of the world. Its goal is to promote a more comprehensive understanding of the past and to contribute to reconciliation and intercultural dialogue.
Cf. Chiara De Cesari and Ann Rigney (eds.): Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales. Volume 19 in the series Media and Cultural Memory, 2014.

strength, meaning, and resistance. By reclaiming African heritage and weaving it into academic and creative work, Black scholars actively challenge dominant power structures and insert new epistemologies into existing discourse[117].

This agency is vividly embodied in the biography of Kwasi Boachi, whose life offers a testament to the power of self-determination in the face of structural racism and cultural displacement. Boachi was not a passive figure in colonial history; he navigated complex political pressures, made strategic decisions about his identity and location, and emerged as both a critic of colonial injustice and a custodian of Akan cultural traditions. His life illustrates that African heritage, far from being a closed chapter of the past, is a living archive of possibility, from which knowledge and strength can be drawn.

Throughout the course of this transcontinental research, I have encountered various sites and moments in which Boachi's life and memory have been reactivated as part of active memory practices—acts of Sankɔfa in motion. Two such contexts stand out for their symbolic and contemporary resonance: (1) his invocation during Ghana's commemorations of the 400th anniversary of the transatlantic slave trade, and (2) the artistic reimaginings by Dutch-Ghanaian artist Kenneth Aidoo.

In 2019, the Ministry of Tourism of Ghana launched the "Year of Return", a groundbreaking global campaign commemorating 400 years since the first documented arrival of enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia (1619). This initiative sought to celebrate the resilience of African peoples and to invite members of the African diaspora "home", particularly to Ghana. The campaign included a wide array of cultural, economic, academic, and artistic events—from tours of historic sites and performances of music and theater, to academic lectures, readings, and investment forums. The central message was not only one of remembrance, but of renewed connection: an invitation to return, reinvest, and reimagine a shared future rooted in African heritage.

Tens of thousands of people of African descent from across the globe responded to this call, with many traveling to Ghana—and some choosing to resettle permanently. In this context, figures like Kwasi Boachi have gained renewed relevance. His story, marked by displacement, cultural hybridity, and historical silencing, now becomes a powerful reference point in contemporary efforts to reclaim African histories and repair diasporic identities.

[117] I align myself with the perspective of Prof. Dr. Ruramisai Charumbira, who emphasized in her essay "On Transformative Inclusivity in the Memory Studies Association (MSA)" (Charumbira, R., Dec. 2021) the importance not only of promoting diversity, but also of establishing transformative inclusivity, which goes beyond mere variety. She calls for the creation of more equitable knowledge systems that actively involve marginalized groups. Charumbira points out that academic institutions are often permeated by historical power structures and advocates for their transformation in order to achieve deeper structural change. Transformative inclusivity thus represents a step toward more just and inclusive knowledge production. Cf. Charumbira, R. (Dec. 2021), "On Transformative Inclusivity in the Memory Studies Association (MSA)," MSA December Newsletter: https://www.memorystudiesassociation.org/thoughts-on-transformative-inclusivity-in-the-msa/

Boachi thus becomes more than a historical figure; he becomes a symbol of African endurance and complexity, and, through projects like Aidoo's, a prism for examining reconciliation, return, and the continued significance of African heritage. These practices—be they archival, artistic, or embodied—are deeply informed by the Sankɔfa principle: the idea that moving forward requires looking back and that the past is not a burden, but a resource for future empowerment.

This first successful campaign was followed by the call for a decade of African Renaissance in the years 2020–2030 with the "Beyond the Return" campaign. The activities from the "Year of Return" were continued in this context. In 2024, the 120th anniversary of Kwasi Boachi's death provided an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate his remarkable story as part of the festivities.[118] I presented my first research findings on Kwasi Boachi within the framework of the program for Black Atlantic Residents 2024 at LOATAD (Library of Africa and the African Diaspora) in Accra. In doing so, I sought to convey the context of the diaspora story and its relevance for today's "Beyond the Return" campaign.

The second example of an active practice of remembrance, based on Boachi, is the work of the artist Kenneth Aidoo[119]. Aidoo is part of the Ghanaian diaspora in the Netherlands. In his art, he addresses the experiences and challenges faced by people of African descent in Dutch society, thereby raising awareness of historical and contemporary injustices. His works also emphasize the historical responsibility of the former colonial rulers and the need for reconciliation—a commitment that is bearing fruit: During the research trip to the Netherlands as part of this work, the artist and the author of this text witnessed a historic moment—on 1 July 2023, the Dutch King Willem-Alexander apologized for the role of the Netherlands in colonialism and the associated crimes of slavery.[120]

[118] The 100th anniversary of the return of Otumfuo Prempeh I from exile and the 25th anniversary of the coronation of Otumfuo Osei Tutu II were also celebrated here. This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the first scientific dissertation by a person of color: Anton Wilhelm Amo (c. 1700–c. 1759), who also came from an Akan community and published his dissertation entitled: De humanae mentis apatheia (On the Apathy of the Human Mind). See Otumfuo 2022.

[119] The work of Kenneth Aidoo brings memories of colonial past and slavery into the Dutch present, challenging society to face its historical responsibilities. Aidoo's work thus becomes part of a global memory process that keeps colonial injustices alive across countries and generations. Erll's concept of "Travelling Memory" is a beautiful theory to contextual Aidoo's work. It understands memory as a dynamic, transnational process that is continually shaped in different cultural and political contexts. Cf.: Erll, Astrid. "Travelling Memory." Parallax, vol. 17, no. 4, 2011, pp. 4–18.

[120] This historic apology took place in Oosterpark in Amsterdam. 1 July is a significant date as it is the anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the Dutch colonies, known as Keti Koti. This gesture shows a deep awareness and recognition of the historical crimes committed in the name of a Dutch state and royalty. The apology is not only symbolic, but also an important step towards reconciliation and the healing of wounds caused by slavery and colonialism. See television report on the apology of the Dutch king https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AX2hBUHYroY, 10.05.2024.

Building (b)ridges beyond the Portrait – Mapping Memories of Kwasi Boachi – Exit Frame!"
by Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago ©

Kenneth Aidoo has created two contemporary portraits of Kwasi Boachi that draw explicitly from earlier representations while reinterpreting them through an Afro-diasporic lens. One work depicts a youthful Boachi, clearly referencing the well-known portrait by Carl Christian Vogel von Vogelstein, while the second portrays an older Boachi, based on a surviving photograph from later in his life.

In the first painting, as in Vogel's original, Boachi appears in a three-quarter view, depicted from the chest upward. Unlike the European styling of the 19th-century portrait, however, Aidoo paints Boachi in rich black tones against a dark background and uses installative fabric elements to construct his clothing directly onto the canvas. Here, Boachi is dressed in a white ntoma, the traditional Akan cloth, which symbolizes purity, renewal, and festive occasions. The choice of white, Aidoo notes, is deliberate—it conveys joy and represents a celebration of return.

This visual strategy marks a conscious departure from colonial iconography. Aidoo avoids any depiction of European garments and instead grounds Boachi's identity firmly within Asante symbolic tradition. Rather than focusing on Boachi's role in Dutch-Asante trade relations or his position in debates surrounding the transatlantic slave trade, the painting presents a gesture of reconciliation. In doing so, Aidoo centers Boachi's cultural roots[121] and reframes his life narrative through the lens of Ghanaian continuity.

In the second painting, Aidoo continues this thematic intervention, portraying Boachi as an older man, this time wearing a high-visibility safety vest—the kind worn by construction workers—layered over a traditional-looking fabric. This juxtaposition of manual labor symbolism with cultural dress evokes a profession Boachi never pursued but to which he might have been relegated in the racialized colonial hierarchy.

By presenting scenarios that do not necessarily reflect historical reality, Aidoo's paintings invite viewers to engage in speculative reflection on themes of identity, belonging, diaspora[122], and social justice. These works disrupt linear narratives and open up imaginative possibilities about who Boachi

[121] Bartle, Phil. "The Universe Has Three Souls: Notes on Translating Akan Culture." Journal of Religion in Africa, vol. 14, no. 2, 1982, pp. 85–114. Brill Academic Publishers.

[122] Kenneth Aidoo works within the tradition of the so-called "second generation" of the Ghanaian Diaspora: descendants of the Booga movement who migrated in the late 1970s, and of the Been-To's who came to Europe starting in the 1960s. These generations engage in memory work following postcolonial migration experiences. The "second generation" increasingly focuses on preserving history and cultural heritage in order to build transnational connections. Through his art, Aidoo fosters "reconciliation with the past," drawing attention to historical and current injustices and encouraging reflection. Cf. Kwarteng, Kirstie: Sorry for My Left: The Transnational Practices and Identity Formation of Second Generation Ghanaians, London 2023, p. 4; Armah, Esther: Emotional Justice: A Roadmap for Racial Healing, 2023, p. 17.

was—and who he might have become. Through this method, Aidoo not only memorializes Boachi, but also restores agency to a life historically fragmented by colonial discourse.[123]

Kenneth Aidoo's artistic interventions are accompanied by reflective social media posts, through which he narrates aspects of The Asante prince hKwasi Boachi's life—including his experiences as a mining engineer in the Netherlands and Indonesia, the structural racism that hindered his professional advancement, and his eventual decision to start a family in Indonesia. Across these posts, Aidoo consistently articulates a recurring wish: that Boachi, after all the adversity he endured, might have had the opportunity to return to Ghana.

By sharing these reflections in accessible digital spaces, Aidoo not only deepens the emotional dimension of his work, but also opens a transnational conversation about diaspora identity, longing, and historical injustice. His posts serve as a form of digital Sankɔfa, using contemporary media to connect personal memory work with collective historical healing, while making Boachi's story visible to a broader public beyond traditional academic or museum settings.[124] In an interview with the author in January 2024, the artist reflected on the theme of return, stating:

"I wished that [Boachi], after experiencing racism and setbacks in the Netherlands and also in Indonesia, had come to realize that returning to Ghana could be an option."

In his reinterpretations, the artist seeks to prompt reflection on what Boachi's life might have looked like had he chosen to return to Ghana. By positioning Boachi as a symbolic figure, the artist creates space for dialogue around themes of reconciliation, homecoming, and the possibility of return. As a historical figure, Boachi continues to embody the experiences of displacement, resilience, and longing shared by many within the African diaspora and their communities.

By recontextualizing Boachi's preserved portraits within a contemporary artistic framework, the project not only makes his story more tangible and relatable, but also revives the memory of Boachi as a real historical person. It simultaneously draws attention to others entangled in this transcontinental narrative, such as Kwame Poku. Through this creative engagement, Boachi's life and

[123] The work of the artist Aidoo is influenced by Saidiya Hartman's concept of "critical fabulation," which privileges fiction and speculation when it comes to (re)writing marginalized histories. See Saidiya Hartman: "Venus in Two Acts", in: Small Axe 12(2), 2008, pp. 1–14, hier: p. 11f.

[124] In an interview in December 2023 with Kenneth Aidoo, the artist emphasized how exciting it would be to at least bring the story of Boachi back to Ghana—knowing that many people still wonder why Boachi never returned. See https://www.linkedin.com/posts/kenneth-aidoo-8b049b27_after-graduating-on-the-technical-university-activity-7127988170415124481-Vpns, accessed on 12.01.2024.

legacy are reactivated in the present, inviting deeper contemplation of historical continuities and the enduring imprint of colonial histories on contemporary identities.

In the context of Ghana's commemorations following the "Year of Return", Boachi—like other historical figures—has emerged as a symbol of African endurance and a source of diasporic inspiration. Through Aidoo's art, he becomes a prism through which reconciliation and the transformative possibilities of return may be imagined and debated.

Both the artistic reinterpretation and the archival engagement are animated by the principle of Sankɔfa: in revisiting the stories and material traces held within the Black Archive, a reparative relationship with the past is cultivated—one that seeks not only to recover what was lost, but to build a stronger, more resilient future.

"Sankɔfa is a necessary journey into the past of our indigenous culture so that we can march into the future with confidence and with a sense of commitment of our cultural heritage."[125]

Such memory work, understood in the spirit of Sankɔfa, enables individuals and communities to better understand and shape both themselves and the world around them. It serves to strengthen the well-being, resilience, and historical consciousness of Black communities, and provides a framework through which identity can be situated within a continuum of African and diasporic heritage. As such, it plays a foundational role in addressing the urgent questions and struggles faced by contemporary African diaspora communities.

Transcontinental memory work, therefore, is never confined to the retrieval of archival traces or the reconstruction of historical narratives alone. It is equally concerned with the interpretations, uses, and embodiments of African heritage in the present. At its core lies an understanding of heritage as an ongoing, dynamic, and inherently unfinished process—a central tenet of the Sankɔfa principle, which calls us to return and retrieve what is valuable from the past in order to move forward with wisdom.

It is only by embracing the incomplete, ever-evolving nature of African heritage that transcontinental memory work can truly honor an African-centered historiography—one shaped not by external imposition, but by African agency, cultural sovereignty, and the power of self-authored narratives.

[125] Quotation from N.K. Dzobo in the book by the well-known Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye: Tradition and Modernity. Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience. Oxford: University Press, 1997.

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In many ways, this work follows in their footsteps, continuing a legacy of resilience, curiosity, and cross-cultural engagement.

Nyame Yehowa Adom ara kwa.

5. Appendix

5.1 Transcripts

Transcript of Asante Prince Kwasi Boachi's Letter
October 25, 1849 —Translated into German by Dr. Sarah Lentz (University of Bremen), translated in to English by Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago M.A., discovered November 13, 2023 in the Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig (Leipzig Museum of City History)

Dearest Wertheimer,
Thank you so much for your kind words and warm wishes.
It truly saddens me to think that I may soon have to part from so many dear friends—perhaps for a long time. I cannot say anything for sure yet; my departure may still be delayed, or I might only be sent to Holland. I'm currently waiting for a letter that will decide how things go.
Thank you also for your generosity in wanting to accept one of my lithographs. I've taken the liberty of giving one to our mutual friend Hess [Fr. Alb. Ferd. Hess, from Borne in Saxony, enrolled at the Mining Academy in 1847], and he'll forward it to you soon. Let it serve as a small keepsake—so that whenever you look at it, you'll think of me with warmth.
I'd be truly grateful if you could send me your silhouette before I leave. It's quick and easy to have a dozen made in Leipzig. Since I don't yet know when exactly I'll be going, I kindly ask you—if possible—to give one to Hess, who can pass it on to me. Please also be so kind as to remind Wagner [Adolph Wagner, enrolled 1843, from Körzweiler] and Tümpling [likely from the noble Tümpling family, apparently residing in Freiberg] to send theirs as well. Hess has also asked for your silhouette.
As for all our dreams and plans—who knows what will become of them? But let us keep hoping, and wishing for the best. [...] Maybe one day we'll celebrate another wedding on the Rhine, and our joy at seeing each other again will be all the greater.
And now, farewell. Please don't forget me. I truly and sincerely wish you all the very best. And when, in the future, you think back to your circle of friends and the good times of student life, remember the one who, always and everywhere—even across the sea—will remember you with true and loyal friendship, as
your faithful and sincere friend,
Aquasie Boachi
Freiberg, October 25, 1849, 6 p.m.

Warm regards to Wagner and Tümpling, and many heartfelt greetings from afar—from all the Freibergers.

Appendix: Residence Card
Pet 96 — Residence Identification Card
For the Prince, Mr. Aquasie Boachi, from Ashanti in Africa,
Valid for the duration of lectures at the Mining Academy, Freiberg.
This card is to be returned within 24 hours after the end of this period to the local police station, at the risk of a fine of one thaler or another penalty, to be enforced by the landlord or relevant authorities.
Issued: Freiberg, July 24, 1847