

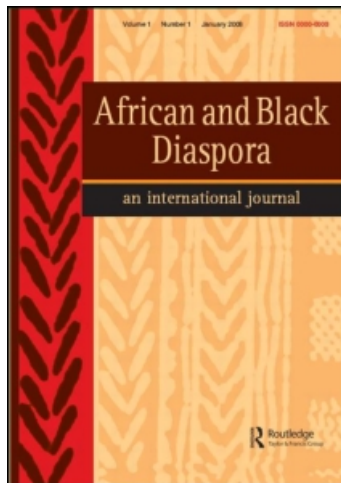
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‘Spirits of migration’ meet the ‘migration of spirits’ among the Akan Diaspora in Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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The aim of this research was to find out what the most popular films among the Akan in southeast Amsterdam (The Netherlands) are and how these films are used by this West African diaspora in the formation of a new religious identity after their migration to Europe. The outcome of this research is that the most popular films among the Akan are those with Pentecostal-Charismatic proselytizing messages. The Akan use these films to create an ‘imagined diasporic community’ to remain culturally connected to West Africa. The second most popular films are those of an Akan indigenous religious nature. However, because the name of these films does not fit with the newly acquired European Christian identity of the Akan people in the diaspora, they have slightly changed the name of these movies to ‘cultural films’ in order to overcome the contradiction between over three centuries of ‘Akan spirits of migration’ to Europe with the recent ‘migration of spirits’ via Ghanaian films.

Keywords: Akan Diaspora; Ghana; Ghallywood; Amsterdam; West African films

Introduction

The Akan diasporic community in southeast Amsterdam (the Bijlmer district) frequently views Ghanaian movies. The aim of this study is to investigate which of these movies are most popular and why the Akan prefer to view particular kinds of movies than others. An explanation for this phenomenon is found in the economic-religious nature of the Akan diaspora. The long history of this diaspora of Christian traders has its effect on the function of the Akan ethnic movies for this community. The article shows that the Ghanaian movies that are most popular are those that support the Christian belief of the Akan diaspora of whom the majority are Pentecostal-Charismatic¹ churchgoers. Furthermore, this study reveals that the Akan diasporic community in Amsterdam has changed the label of their second most well liked movies, which in Ghana are named ‘traditional religious’, to ‘cultural’ films. The Akan diaspora has used this strategy to make their choice of the movies that fulfill an economic pragmatic need for familiarity with Akan visual images fit with their new international European Christian identity. Because of the historical double consciousness of the Akan diaspora their economic and religious ‘spirits of migration’ are of a conflicting nature. The mentioned adjustment of the movies’ label harmonizes the current ‘migration of spirits’ from Ghana to The Netherlands via a new medium (the Ghanaian movies) with over three hundred years of Atlantic history of Akan ‘spirits of migration’.

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The academic study of the West African contemporary film industry and the reception of its movies is a relatively new phenomenon. A very recent literature review by Jonathan Haynes (2010) shows that especially the reception of 'Ghallywood'² movies or films from Ghana is an understudied field. The aim of this research is to fill this gap by looking at this field and specifically at the reception of these movies among the Akan, which is the most influential West African cultural group³ in southeast Amsterdam (the Bijlmer) (Blakely 2009). The Akan is the umbrella name for a number of linguistically and culturally connected Niger-Congo groups in southern Ghana, the Ivory Coast, and the northern part of Togo (Ogot 1999; Braffi 2002). They number more than 8 million (8,562,748) and make up to 49.1 percent of the Ghanaian population (Ghana statistical service census 2000). Around 10,000 Akan of Ghanaian descent and an unknown but significantly smaller number of West Africans from Togo and the Ivory Coast inhabit the Bijlmer.⁴ The research questions in this study are, what are the most popular Ghallywood movies (religious films from Ghana) of the Akan in the Amsterdam Bijlmer district and why are these movies so popular in the context of the transition in the religious identity of African diasporic communities in Europe.

The structure of this article is as follows. First, the methodology used to carry out this research will be explained. Then, a short overview will be provided of the economic, historical, cultural and religious nature of the Ghanaian diaspora. This outline that contextualizes the Akan as a Christian trade diaspora is meant to enhance insight into the favourite choice of the Akan Ghallywood movies of Ghanaians in Amsterdam. Furthermore, to understand the popularity of some Akan Ghallywood movies over others, it is a *sine qua non* to categorize the type of Ghallywood movies and to provide insight into their religious function. One common characteristic of all Ghanaian movies is that they are moral parables and contain messages of a religious nature. Some of them, however, have conscious religious messages whereas in others its religious messages are merely the result of the fact that 'Africans are notoriously religious' (Mbiti 1969). The Kenyan philosopher Mbiti used this expression to communicate that religion in his view is the foundation of all other aspects of African life of an economic, socio-cultural or political nature. To understand the religious messages of the movies that are most popular, a synopsis and analysis will be provided of one of each of those types of films. Finally, the above-mentioned insights will be used to gain an in depth understanding of the reception of the most popular Ghallywood movies among overall Ghanaians in southeast Amsterdam. In conclusion, this paper explains how the favourite choices of Akan Ghallywood movies fits with the dominant new Christian international identity of Akan diasporic community in the Bijlmer and their maintenance of economic overall trade links with their country of origin.

Methodology

This research is the result of postdoctoral fieldwork in the Amsterdam Bijlmer district in the Netherlands and in Kumasi in the academic year 2009/2010 as part of the Culture and Identities (media and diaspora) project of the Research Institute for History and Culture at Utrecht University, The Netherlands. Previously, the researcher wrote a thesis on Akan religion and chieftaincy in Ghana, University of Edinburgh 2009. The postdoctoral research consisted of participant observations in

the video shops 'Q-music' and 'Nana's Artifacts' in the Bijlmer that sell Ghallywood films and various interviews with the owners of these shops. Together with film students from Ghana and volunteers in the Bijlmer the researcher created a database of 75 Ghanaian films. Data were collected of the video text (content), the aesthetic representation of these religions (form), the filmmakers and the release date of the films. The researcher watched 47 Ghallywood movies on Video Compact Disc (VCD) and DVD, most of them together with Akan families at their homes in the Bijlmer. Forty-two Akan inhabitants of the Bijlmer were interviewed about their favorite choice of these movies. The age of the viewers varied between 15 and 65. The researcher's categorization of these films is the result of her visual experiences of the Ghallywood movies, an analysis of information in the data base and her general knowledge on the Akan religions and their philosophy of film.⁵

The historical, cultural and religious background of the Akan in Amsterdam

In this section, I will describe the cultural, religious and historical background of the Akan in Amsterdam to provide insight in the reasons for the favorite choice of movies of the Akan diasporic community in southeast Amsterdam. The majority of the ten thousand Ghanaians in the Bijlmer are Asante,⁶ who belong to the Akan cultural groups, and have migrated from the largest cities in Ghana (Kumasi and Accra) in which the majority of them were born (Blakely 2005; statistiek 2006; Orozco *et al.* 2005).

Historically, Ghana has over 300 years of Atlantic history with the Dutch, which began with the slave trade (1621–1792). Only a relatively small number of the total number of slaves who were shipped by the Dutch West Indian Company (WIC) were taken to The Netherlands (Heijer 1994; Emmer 2000; Schmidt 2009). The mass migration of Ghanaians to the Netherlands in the 1980s⁷ is thus a somewhat new phenomenon and is therefore often referred to as a 'new' diaspora that is distinguishable from the 'old' diaspora of slaves, servants of the European elites and Asante princes that were sent to The Netherlands for their diplomatic and religious education (Yarak 1987; Wilks 1989, 1993). However, the small old and the much larger new Ghanaian diaspora are connected by the chain migration that took place after the abolition of the slave trade by these countries in the second half of the nineteenth century. Akan commoner traders then followed the eighteenth century initiative of Akan royal merchants to settle in the European capitals and harbour cities (Wilks 1989, 1993). The WIC and the British Royal African Company (RAC) previously used these towns to bring slaves and raw materials, such as rubber, cacao and palm oil, from Ghana to Europe.

The end of the slave trade is marked by the beginning of Ghanaian (Akan) self-financed trade initiatives to send the same type of raw materials overseas by steamships that used to be sponsored by European trade companies (Dumett 1971, 2009; Reynolds 1974; Arhin 1979, 1990; Austin 1987). For the Akan the overseas trade and the following migration were an extension of their already existing West African trade network (Wilks 1961, 1966; Arhin 1979, 1980; Wilks 1982, 2000). In line with the much older Akan business tradition, the nineteenth century social business model of Akan traders was one of building a high trust network by investing in social relationships by conspicuous consumption. Material wealth was believed to be the result of one's belief (either Indigenous Religion or

Christianity). Because the majority of the Akan traders were Fante who were heavily influenced by European Christian missionaries, the self-initiated Akan diaspora migrated with their indigenous interpretation of the European missionary Christian belief. Since the nineteenth century, the Akan diaspora in Amsterdam is thus an economic-religious diaspora with a specific focus on Christianity and trade. Until Vatican II in the 1960s, generally European missionary Christianity in Ghana condemned the people's traditional belief. Consequently, many Ghanaians who from the fifteenth century⁸ until the second half of the twentieth century were converted to Christianity internalized negative feelings about their Indigenous Religion. These days, the majority of the Ghanaians in the Bijlmer are Christians and most of them belong to one of the many Pentecostal-Charismatic churches (Koning 2009). These churches promote a form of African Christianity that condemns the Akan Indigenous Religion and all those churches that do *not* condemn this belief. Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is very but not most popular in urban areas in Ghana. The Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians dominate the Ghallywood movie industry in Ghana as well as in its Ghanaian diaspora in Europe (Hackett 1998; Meyer 2010).

The Ghallywood industries' cultural-religious roots and the types of Ghanaian movies

The Ghallywood movie industry was founded in the 1980s, a period in which Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity rose in popularity in Ghana as a result of the failure of economic policies and a weakening image of the Ghanaian nation-state (Wilks 1982; Gifford 1994, 1998, 2004). The economic reform in this period caused a rise of the Ghanaian migration to the North Atlantic world, especially of people from southern Ghana (Van Hear 1998; Koser 2003). The Ghallywood movies are a highly popular and fast-growing⁹ new medium that entered West Africa as a consequence of globalization and the concomitant media revolution; it not only serves the need of the 20 million Ghanaians in Ghana, but also the more than two million Ghanaians in the diaspora (Ghana 2000; Daswani 2010). For the Ghanaian diaspora the movies provide the socio-cultural and religious glue that is necessary to build their 'imagined communities' in the North Atlantic world. According to Anderson (1991) a characteristic of imagined communities is that they are not (and cannot be) based on face-to-face interaction, but are a mental image of people's affinity with a community. The example used by Anderson is that people in for instance a nation do not know one another but feel connected via a common set of symbols, history, language and myths about the nation. Through their viewers, media such as films also create an imagined community. The Ghanaian film images make people realize the existence of an Akan diasporic community and make them feel connected to it. The same recent processes of globalization that have enlarged the African diaspora have brought a new medium to Africa. The Ghallywood movie industry is an independent African initiative that is self-financed and sustainable because of the help of the African producers and consumers in Ghana and in the African diasporic communities. The new media connects Ghanaians in Ghana with those in the diaspora by means of the digital spread of Ghanaian culture and religions. The Ghallywood movie industry consists of a great number of production houses that are dominated by the major cultural groups in this country and can be

sub-divided into the ethnic film industries of the Akan (Fante and Asante), the Ewe, the Ga, and the Dagomba people of Ghana. The Akan language (Twi¹⁰) is the dominant indigenous language in Ghana and the preponderant Christian Akan groups own the largest VCD and television industry in the country. The Akan VCDs are produced in Twi only or in Twi with often poor English subtitling or in English. The Akan movies are shown on television in Ghana, in Internet shops, hotel lounges, and buses.¹¹ In Amsterdam's Bijlmer district, Ghallywood movies can be watched on the local TV channels¹² and on all West African channels available via obeTV satellite. Ghanaians in the Amsterdam Bijlmer district frequently watch them, and like Ghanaians in Ghana, they are also familiar with the industry's main actors and actresses who visit the Bijlmer area occasionally to provide autographs to their fans and to promote their latest movies.¹³

Besides the categorization according to cultural group, the Ghallywood movies can best be classified per religious belief of the people belonging to those groups. Each cultural group and each religious group within has its own distinguishable style, which becomes apparent when viewing the movies and looking at its posters, the movies' trailers and their VCD or DVD covers and religious messages. Within the Akan cultural group there are three distinguishable religious groups of believers and types of Ghallywood movies: those of the Akan indigenous religious believers; the Christians; and the tradition of sunni Muslims with sufi elements (Asante *Nkramo*¹⁴) (Horrie and Chippindale 2003; Muller 2009; Austen 2010). Additionally, within each type of religious Akan Ghallywood movies there are a number of visual distinctions. With regards to all Ghanaian indigenous religious movies, including the Akan, the renowned anthropologist of media and religion, Birgit Meyer (2010) mentions that there are three categories. The first includes movies with indigenous religious themes that are the result of an 'invention of tradition' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992) and use a symbolic language and colourful images to portray an imaginary past (in a village setting). In the opinion of this researcher, the Danfo B.A movie 'Ashanti' (2008) which tells about these cultural group's village life in the past and the Venus film productions 'Wedlock of the gods' by Frank Rajah Arase (2007) that is about the role of the deities in traditional marriage, and 'My mother's heart' by Abdul Salam Mumuni (2005) are examples of these films. Then, according to Meyer, there are also movies with indigenous religious themes that are the result of an 'invention of tradition' which use a symbolic language and colourful image to portray an imaginary present in a city setting. According to this researcher the Venus film productions 'Royal battle' by Adim Williams (2005) and 'The king is mine' by Frank Rajah Arase (2009) dealing with the issue of arranged traditional versus love marriage and 'Kankan nyame' by George Walker Darko (2010) which is a comedy about the demands of the gods are illustrative of this type of Ghallywood films. An indigenous religious genre that Meyer did not (yet) mention is movies with indigenous religious themes in the present that give a realistic account of the Indigenous Religion and the outlook of its representatives – the traditional priest (ess) and the traditional authorities and believers. An example of this type is the movie 'Homeda' (sacred day) by Clement Opam (2009) that shows what can happen when one does not obey the demands of the gods (see section 4.1).

This researcher further divides the Akan Christian Ghallywood movies into two subcategories: Christian movies with proselytizing messages and movies with Christian religious themes. Examples of the first category are the Miracle movie

productions by the filmmaker Samuel Nyamekye such as 'Mogya Apam' that promote the church of Apostle Prah. The main actor who is leading the deliverance services in the movies and who has his own Pentecostal-Charismatic church in Kumasi. The same Apostle Prah also plays in the movie 'Pastor Ataayi' (pastor thief) by Jones Agyemang (release date unknown). Another production house that makes movies that are meant for conversion is Landy (K. Fosu Landy) music and film productions, such as the movie 'Onipa nni nkaee' (ungrateful being), 'Onyame mmere' (god's time) by Asare Bediako (release date unknown). An example of movies with Christian religious themes are the Miracle film 'Kumasi yonko' (Kumasi friend) by James Aboagye (2003), a soap opera of market women in Kumasi who misbehave by destroying other people's marriages out of jealousy and by sleeping with other women's husbands; the film 'Material girl' by Frank Rajah Arazé (2009), a movie that teaches its audience that it is wrong for a woman to pursue material wealth by stealing and sleeping with rich men for the sake of money; and the 'The heart of men' by Frank Rajah Arazé (2009) which focuses on the negative consequences of a man's wicked schemes to take advantage of others. All of these movies teach their viewers the Christian lesson that you should be good to your environment and behave well because 'what you sow is what you reap', meaning life is like a ball thrown against a wall. Thus, whatever bad behaviour one puts up bounce back to a person in the form of misfortune and vice versa. With regards to the Islamic Ghallywood movies this researcher distinguishes the following films: Islamic movies with proselytizing messages such as 'Saidah', a movie by Yakubu of 'Chief production' house (2006) which gives a realistic account of the Akan Indigenous mild Sunni Islamic tradition with sufi elements of the Soninke scholar (*ulama*) Al-Hajji Salim Suwari (1523/24–1594). This scholar was brought to the Akan in the fifteenth century by the Mande-Dyula traders and was introduced in Kumasi by the Asante *Nkramo*. The latter Muslim *ulama* came to the capital of the Asante Kingdom in the eighteenth century on invitation of the Asantehene Osei Kwadwo for the purpose of record keeping, the performance of religious services for the protection of the Asantehene and maintaining the diplomatic relationship with the inhabitants of the Muslims of northern Ghana (Schildkrout 1970; Adjaye 1984; Silverman and David 1989; Wilks 1989, 2000; Robinson 2004). The movie that portrays the Islamic Suwarian tradition and their representatives (the chief imam, the headmen) and believers realistically tells the story of an Asante woman who by converting to this form of Islam is protected against evil forces with the help of charms and amulets. Another type of Islamic movie is those with Islamic religious themes, such as 'Asante *Nkramo*' by the filmmaker Amoateng Abraham and storywriter A.H. Banda (release date unknown). The message of this movie is that one should not judge people by their appearance and/or religious background and that people of whom it is least expected can bring good things to the community. One should therefore accept every person regardless of their religious belief and outlook and attempt to live together in peace and harmony. This message is an important one in the teachings of Al-Hajji Salim Suwari, who focused on those Muslims in the southern parts of West Africa who for the purpose of trade had to live together with non-Muslims in the 'land of the unbelievers' (*dar-al-harb*) (Wilks 2000; Robinson 2004). An important difference between the Christian and the Islamic movies is that Christians deliberately make their movies attractive to members of all Christian congregations – the mainstream churches (Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, and Protestant) and



the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches – and spread the message that all Christians are one because they believe in the same God. Muslims, on the other hand, make a distinction between mild *sunni* (Akan) and orthodox *sunni* (Hausa) movies, which have different Islamic and cultural audiences.

The most popular religions and the religious messages in the favourite Ghallywood movies of the Akan in Amsterdam southeast

In this section, I will focus on the two favourite types of Ghallywood movies of the Akan in the Amsterdam Bijlmer district: the movies with Akan indigenous religious themes in the present that give a realistic account of the Akan Indigenous Religion and the outlook of their representatives (the traditional priest(ess) and the traditional authorities) and believers and the Akan Christian movies with proselytizing messages. The movie 'Homeda' by Clement Opam (2009) is an example of the first; the film 'Mogya apam' Samuel Nyamekye (2009) is an illustration of the latter type. The religious messages in each type of these movies are similar, so that it suffices to summarize and analyse one of each. However, to gain an in depth understanding of these movies it is necessary to give a short overview of the content of the most Akan popular religions, which are the Akan Indigenous Religion and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity.

The Akan Indigenous Religion consists of a hierarchal ordered spiritual world that is inhabited by the Supreme Being (*Nyame*) on top and followed by the less powerful ancestral spirits (*nananom nsamanfo*) and various natural deities (*abosom*) that can dwell inside rivers, seas and oceans and also inside mountains and trees. Human beings are believed to be less powerful than those spiritual beings but more powerful than the so-called inanimate objects, such as pieces of wood as in stools (a royal seat) or stones. It is believed that these objects can, however, become more powerful than human beings when they are venerated. In that case, people can gain spiritual power by connecting to these objects, which is for instance that case when after an initiation ritual a chief takes his place on his stool (throne) (Gyekye 1995; McCaskie 1995). Characteristic of Pentecostal-Charismatic-Christianity in Ghana is that it condemns the Indigenous Religions in the country, whereas at the same time

this belief has become popular by the existence of these religions (Meyer 1998). In the Pentecostal-Charismatic religion, all mentioned spirits that belong to the indigenous religious believers' spiritual realm (see section 5.1) are understood to be the accomplices of Satan. Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic believers therefore refer to these spiritual beings as 'evil spirits' (*sunsum bōne*). By believing strongly in the Lord, one is protected by God through His son, Jesus against the malevolent forces of these evil spirits and the Devil. However, it is believed by Pentecostal-Charismatics, that if one's Christian faith is absent or weak, the evil spirits such as the river deities (*abosom ba*) can dwell inside one's body and cause illnesses, such as barrenness or drunkenness. In that case, it is of the utmost importance for people to remain committed to God Almighty and in situations where their afflictions are seemingly incurable medically, they are believed to be spiritual. Hence, there is the need for one with afflictions to attend a deliverance session in a Pentecostal-Charismatic church, in which the Pentecostal-Charismatic pastor casts out the evil spirits inside the body of the affected person and enhances his or her belief in the benevolent Christian God (Van Dijk 1997). However, if the person does not devout himself to God, the evil spirits can come back to dwell in him again and his situation will become worse. Akan indigenous religious believers are of the opinion that ancestors and natural deities, such as mountain and river gods can behave good or bad depending on the situation of the believer. Wiredu (1992) says for instance about the ancestors that 'they watch over the affairs of the living members of their families, helping deserving ones and punishing the delinquent'.

The Pentecostal-Charismatics believe in the existence of the same spiritual beings as the adherents of Ghana's various Indigenous Religions. The character of those spirits though is no longer regarded as ambivalent – being good or bad depending on the circumstance of the believer – but as solely malevolent. Influenced by the negative opinion on Ghana's (or better the Gold Coast's) Indigenous Religions of the majority of the European Christian missionaries in the fifteenth century until the 1960s, the Pentecostal-Charismatic church leaders condemn these religions (Ringwald 1952; Platvoet 1979; Middleton 1983; McCaskie 1995; Fisher 1998; Mitchell 2005). At the same time, though, the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches are highly popular, because they simplify Christianity and although negatively, they link up with the people's indigenous religious cosmological worldview (Meyer 1998). To compare the two, the main differences between the Akan Indigenous Religion and the Akan Christian (Pentecostal-Charismatic) religion is that according to the latter, one is less obliged to follow the traditional authorities who in turn obey the demands of the gods. In the Pentecostal religion there is more space for personal freedom and the belief is much stronger that choosing the right path (by following Jesus) is one's own responsibility. According to Gyekye (1998) in the Akan Indigenous Religion, one also has one's own responsibility to follow the right path but in case of wrongdoing it is also the community that is made responsible. In the Pentecostal-Charismatic belief one is instead solely personally responsible for fighting those spirits that attempt to lead one astray. Furthermore, the Akan Indigenous Religion legitimizes the power of the traditional authorities, whereas Pentecostal-Charismaticism promotes the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. These differences in the religious messages in the Akan's most favourite Ghallywood movies correspond with the main distinctions between the Akan Indigenous Religion and Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian belief.

‘Homeda’

An example of a movie with an explicit indigenous religious message is ‘Homeda’ (sacred day) by Clement Opam (2009). This 262.5 minutes¹⁵ (three parts) movie, shot in Kumasi, is about life in Aseso, a real village near Kumasi. The main lesson of this and other Akan indigenous religious Ghallywood movies is that as an ordinary subject (*mmrante*) one should not turn oneself against the demands of the ancestral spirits that are represented by the traditional authorities (the chiefs, the queen mothers and the traditional priests (esses)) or any other above mentioned spirits with whom these authorities maintain the spiritual connection. The spirits can behave well or badly depending on the circumstances and behaviour of an individual (Wiredu 1992). As an individual, one is obliged to contribute to the communal well-being but also to one’s own well-being, an attitude towards the community that the Ghanaian philosopher Gyekye (1998) has called ‘moderate communitarianism’. One should obey the laws that are set by the chiefs in consultation with the queen mothers and the ancestral spirits but does not have to sacrifice oneself fully to the communalistic aims and goals. The chiefs maintain the connection with the ancestors that help them to rule by their occupation of a stool, which is a royal seat (or shrine) that is believed to be sacred because of the spiritual power or communal soul (*sunsum*) that dwells inside this object. The chiefs maintain the connection with the ancestors that help them to rule (Rattray 1923). The Akan Indigenous Religion so legitimizes the power of the chiefs, who are assisted by the queen mothers. The traditional priests and priestesses equally represent the power of spirits not only by tapping from the wisdom of the ancestors (*nananom nsamanfo*) but also from the High God (*Nyame*) and the natural deities (*abosom*) to cure the commoners (*mmrante*) from spiritual illnesses. According to Cooper (1988) a characteristic of Traditional Religions (Indigenous Religions) is that a human being should maintain a harmonious relationship with the inhabitants of both the spiritual and the material world. According to Gyekye (1995) in the Akan Indigenous Religion a human being consists of the same material (such as the body or *honam*) and immaterial elements (such as one’s eternal (*kra*) and personality soul (*sunsum*)) as one’s environment, which connects one’s microcosmic being to one’s surrounding macro-cosmos.



A disharmony with the beings in one's environment can therefore bring misfortune. Gyekye remarks that the function of the traditional healers (*adunsifo*, and some traditional priests (esses) are also healers) is to cure people's illnesses by bringing back harmony between one's body and souls (*okra* and *sunsum*). If Gyekye is correct that the body is material and the souls are immaterial (Wiredu 1996, prefers the term 'quasi-material') than this recovering of the microcosmos encompasses the individual's relationship with the spiritual and the social world.

'Homeda' tells the story of Abrefi and Owusu, who are in love with one another, but who have to meet in secret because they have not performed traditional marriage rites and have therefore not received the consent of their parents and the traditional authorities for their relationship. A traditional marriage is an arrangement between a man and a woman with the approval, and in the presence, of both families, creating an alliance between the two. The main lesson of 'Homeda' is that it is wrong for young couples to rush into a relationship and have children before traditional marriage. A woman should seek a partner who is economically and physical able to take care of her and a man should take care of his wife. The movie highlights certain aspects of the Akan Indigenous Religion. According to that religion a youngster one should not turn oneself against the hierarchically organized established religious-political order that on top consists of a *primus-inter pares* paramount chiefs (the King or Asantehene), the other paramount chiefs (*omanhene*), the sub-chiefs (*ohene*), the village chiefs (*odikro*) and one's extended family (grand) parents (*abusua panyin*) that are all accompanied by the queen mothers (Platvoet 1979). Neither should one turn oneself against the religious order of priests or priestesses, who are there to help the chief's subjects (*mmrante*) to maintain a harmonious relationship between one's inner and outer life, between the micro- and macro-cosmos and between the material and the social world (Gyekye 1995). The moral of the movie becomes most clear at the end. By then Abrefi has not only disobeyed the chief's customary law and thereby offended the ancestors and the deities, but she also disobeyed the traditional priest (her father's) protective shrine spirits. Consequently, the deities of a piece of farmland kill Abrefi and her secret lover the village elder Mosi, who is also her landlord. She offended the deities of the land by going to the farm on a sacred day (*homeda*), which is against customary law. After the Ablekumahene or chief of the village that Abrefi, Owusu and also Mosi lived in has informed Danso, who is Abrefi's father and also a traditional priest, of what happened Danso seeks the spiritual help of his shrine



spirits to purify the land of Ablekuma that was polluted by Abrefi after her disobedience of customary law during homeda. By pouring libation, Danso invokes the spirits of his shrine, who answer his prayers by bringing back the body of his deceased daughter, as usual in West African movies, wrapped in a white bed sheet to cover her nakedness.¹⁶ For Abrefi to rest in peace and to recover the relationship with the shrine spirits to prevent misfortune in the community, the spirits demand that Danso performs the traditional marriage rites. As part of the marriage ritual, Owusu spends three days with the body of Abrefi, after which they will leave things to the *abosom*. As usual for this type of movie, 'Homeda' has an abrupt and unhappy ending, because according to the Akan Indigenous Religion the course of life is not in the hands of human beings but in those of the Supreme Being (*Onnyame*) who decide when and how to end a person's life (Gyekye 1995).

The reason why Abrefi and Owusu were in Ablekuma is that they had to run for their lives after being chased by Abrefi's father Danso; the traditional priest and chief of the couple's birth village Aseso. Because of his extraordinary mind and the help of his shrine spirits, Danso foresees that Owusu is a lazy and irresponsible man who will not be a good partner for his hardworking and easily exploitable daughter. He therefore forbids his daughter to continue her relationship with Owusu. For Danso this results in spiritual problems with his shrine deities who are polluted by his daughter's behaviour. For Abrefi, especially after her second pregnancy, the disapproval of her father of her relationship with Owusu is a reason to leave her birth village together with her partner and her first-born child. By running away, Abrefi and Owusu ran into trouble because they went against a traditional priest's will and were disobedient to the demands of the spirits of the village shrine. The couples' departure from Aseso does not mean that they are spiritually freed from Danso's shrine spirits. To protect his daughter, Danso has cursed Owusu so that wherever he goes the spirits of his shrine will haunt him. Danso hopes that this will bring Abrefi back to Aseso where he will be able to look after her. During their journey Abrefi and Owusu encounter Danso's spirits, who tell them to go back to their source. The couple, however, refuses to listen to the demands of the ancestral spirits, which are represented by Danso, the traditional priest. After a number of spiritual attacks by Danso's shrine spirits that almost manage to disrupt Abrefi's pregnancy of her second born by taking away her child to the spiritual world, the consequences of the couple's disobedience are felt the hardest after their settlement in the village of Ablekuma, which in reality is a suburb of Accra. It is in this village that the Abrefi's and Owusu's relationship quickly deteriorates, and as predicted by Abrefi's father, Owusu does not behave as a responsible and loving husband. He does not take care of Abrefi and he lets her and her two daughters do all the work on the farm. Danso tries to interfere and improve their relationship by telling his shrine spirits who are haunting Owusu that he should go to the farm to help his family on the farm. Owusu, however, remains too lazy to work. This scene is crucial to the understanding of the movie because it shows the audience what can happen when you disobey the demands of the inhabitants of the spiritual world (*nsamanfo*), which are represented by the traditional priests and/or traditional authorities (the chiefs and queen mothers). Abrefi disobeyed her father by continuing her relationship with Owusu. She thereby disrespected the wishes of the shrine spirits (*abosom*) and consequently she ran into trouble being with a man who did not lift a finger for her and her two children.

As is usual in West African movies, the main lesson of the movie is delivered with the help of a theme song in the local language (Twi) that includes a number of locally well-known maxims and/or proverbs. The theme song of this movie explains that a traditional marriage is a must because it is a union that places a set of rights, responsibilities, and obligations on the man and woman. However, Abrefi and Owusu's relationship is weak, because they ran away without the consent of their parents and the spiritual beings, as they did not perform traditional marriage rites.¹⁷ Because the couple's relationship is bad and Owusu is not there to protect and take care of Abrefi she is easily seduced by her landlord Mosi who disobeys customary law and the demands of the spirits of the land during Homeda. Abrefi's premature death is the result of a series of disobediences to her father the traditional priest of Aseso and his protective shrine spirits, the absence of traditional marriage and Owusu's lack of care for Abrefi who drove her in the hands of her landlord.

'Mogya apam'

In this section I will give a detailed synopsis and analysis of the Christian evangelistic Akan Miracle movie, 'Mogya apam' (blood covenant) by Samuel Nyamekye (2009). An important actor in this and other Christian proselytizing Ghallywood films is Apostle John Prah, a real pastor of the Gospel House Ministry at Kumasi, a Pentecostal-Charismatic church that originated in Nigeria. Mogya Apam deals with a number of rivalling players on the religious market – the traditional priest, the spiritual churches or New Traditional Religious Movements (NTRAM), and the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches. At the same time the movie is again representative for all Christian Akan movies with proselytizing messages.

'Mogya Apam' is meant to warn people about the consequences of entering into a blood covenant, which consist of the mingling of blood of the persons involved. Kofi and Araba, two ex-lovers, entered into such a covenant and as a consequence they experience a lot of difficulties in building a successful relationship with their current partners. The blood covenant is a bond between man and woman that is competitive with a marriage. When broken a blood covenant can ruin people's life,



because in fact such a bond can not really be broken without the right spiritual intervention and so the bond is unwanted continued in the minds of the ex-couple. Consequently, an evil spirit that makes it difficult for the ex-lovers to build a successful relationship with their current partners tortures them. Mogya Apam ends with a church service in the Pentecostal-Charismatic church of Apostle Prah. In wondering around seeking solution to Kofi's problem, Kofi, Araba and their beloved ones ended up in the church and coincidentally, the preaching for that day was a key to unlocking Kofi's problem. Realizing this, Kofi decided to be part of the church and work for the Lord because he believed this could save him from the torture of the evil spirit. Apostle Prah succeeds in forever breaking the spell that had come upon them due to their infringement of the blood covenant. After Apostle Prah uses the name of Jesus as a verb to exorcize the evil spirit from their bodies, a river spirit comes out and at the moment that the bodies of Araba and Kofi join together (an Adobe software special effect) the river spirit attempts to come between them until he is beaten by the angelic powers of Apostle Prah in a tense spiritual fight between the two.

All Akan Christian Ghallywood movies with proselytizing messages end with a deliverance session of a (mostly Pentecostal-Charismatic) pastor who fights against the evil spirits and who with the help of the Holy Spirit (*sunsum kronkon*) overcomes all evil. These films thus end with a spiritual battle between good (the Holy Spirit) and evil (a river spirit or other indigenous religious spirits) forces. This battle is always won by the pastor, which shows his spiritual power and confirms that he is a true man of God, who is protected and guided by the Holy Spirit. One should therefore not only have faith in Jesus but also believe that the pastor is a true man of God, who can help to strengthen one's faith and to overcome spiritual difficulties caused by evil spirits. However, the choice to follow the advice of the pastor who receives his help from God is one's own. Eventually, to follow Jesus in living a morally good life rather than pursuing the path of Satan is one own responsibility.

These Akan Ghallywood movies that are funded with money of these churches not only promote the Pentecostal-Charismatic belief in general but also that of their own church in particular. The general Christian message of these proselytizing movies is cloaked in their theme song, which is repeated at least once in each part of the movies. Most theme songs, including that of Mogya Apam, preach that by being kind to one's fellow men, one will encounter the kindness of others and vice versa. The theme songs carry the message that life is in the hands of human beings who are responsible for their own behaviour. It is a person who decides what forces he or she follows-the good forces of God or the evil forces of Satan. This message is mostly communicated indirectly with the help of Akan proverbs or maxims. In Mogya Apam, for instance, the Akan proverbs in the theme song are 'what goes around comes around and what goes up certainly comes down' (*se wo tow obo ko soro a, esan ba fam*) and that 'what you sow is what you reap' (*na nea onipa gu no, eno ara na otwa*). The song ends with the message in Twi and English that, 'We are affected by the choices we make and the decision we take. Evil lives with people who do evil, but the righteous will be blessed. Life is what you make of it. That is the way it is' (*adea yifibi paw ene nsusufia yifibi yfi no, eho akatua na yanya*). The specific main Christian lesson of Mogya Apam and other movies of Apostle John Prah is that it is only in a true house of God such as his own church that one can be delivered from the spell of evil spirits. The pastors of other churches such as those in the movies of

K. Fosu Landy are rivalling forces at the religious and self-financed Ghallywood movie market place. Needless to say, they also preach that they are the true men of God and that the true house of God is their own church. In fact, all religious authorities in Ghana and its diaspora that have money and power (the traditional authorities, the chief-imams and the church leaders) use Ghallywood video films to maintain and attempt to improve their position and increase their power. However, not all production houses are in the hands of religious leaders, which makes Ghanaian film a form of popular culture (Barber 1987; Mitchell 2007).¹⁸

The movie *Mogya Apam* is more interesting than the average Ghallywood movie because it does not only contain the usual spiritual battle between good and evil forces, but also gives some understanding of the rivalry between the various religious leaders in Ghana. To find out the cause of the ex-lovers Kofi and Araba's current relational problems their beloved ones send them to one or more spiritual media. Kofi is sent to a traditional priestess, a spiritual church leader, and a fake pastor before he ends up in the Pentecostal-Charismatic church of Apostle Prah. Obviously, it is only after a deliverance service in the church of this Apostle that Kofi is able to put an end to his drunkenness. Araba is first sent to a spiritual church before she ends up in the same deliverance session of Apostle Prah. The aim of the movie is to promote the church of Apostle Prah and to condemn all other churches in Ghana by accusing their religious leaders of being false and solely money driven. The traditional priestess, for instance, is portrayed as a devious religious business woman, who deliberately asks for such a rare collection of offers for her shrine (a calabash full of fowl lice, the first born of a snake, and the first born of an elephant) that Kofi, his mother and Araba cannot satisfy the demands of the deities unless they compensate for it by giving a huge sum of money. Apostle Prah, on the contrary, does not ask for huge sums of money and his aim is to prevent the members of his church from getting into touch with evil spirits, such as the river spirit of Kofi and Araba. Furthermore, his objective is to heal all those church members who are tortured by such spirits by mentioning the name of Jesus during deliverance and at the same time by casting out the evil spirit. The idea behind this act that is visualized by making use of yellow firework (another Adobe software special effect) because of the spiritual fire attack of Apostle Prah in the name of Jesus, the spirits will feel so hot that they will leave the bodies of the church members in which they were residing. Araba and Kofi's faith in one another is weak, a fact that becomes clear from their



entrance into and then breaking of a blood covenant, which is a way to bind people spiritually, because without that bond they do not put enough trust in one another (Gyekye 1998; Gbadegesin 2003). A number of Apostle Prah's deliverance sessions are necessary to make sure the evil spirit will never return.

The reception of Christian and Indigenous Religious Ghallywood movies among the Ghanaian diaspora in Amsterdam

In the previous section the Akan Ghallywood movies 'Homeda' and 'Mogya apam' were mentioned as examples of the most favourite Ghallywood movies among the overall Christian Akan community in the Bijlmer district. As mentioned before, these are the movies that show realistic images of Ghana which are both types of Akan Ghallywood movies. In this section, the reception of these types of movies will be discussed among the Akan in southeast Amsterdam.

The Akan in the Bijlmer preferably watch Akan Christian evangelical movies and listen to Akan gospel music as a way of worshipping God. As a reason for this choice, an Akan member of the Pentecostal-Charismatic church of the joint Resurrection Power and the Living Bread Ministries said: 'I am a Christian and Sunday is reserved for praising God. However, since I live in the Netherlands my life is very busy. I work six days a week and in addition I am following a training to become a nurse. Unfortunately, I therefore have little time for practising my religion' (interview 15 February 2010). On a question in the same interview she answered: 'I like to watch Ghanaian movies with church deliverance and prayer sessions. My favourite movie is "Nyame ye Nyame", because of the prayer sessions inside. By viewing these movies, I can combine practising my religion and doing domestic work.'¹⁹ The respondents said that the lessons in the movies helped them to overcome problems, including those that are related to their migration to the Netherlands and that the messages of the movies are comparable to those provided by the pastors in their churches. The scholar of religion Ter Haar (1998a) found that the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches help Ghanaians in the Bijlmer District to make the transition from the pre-liminal to the post-liminal phases of the rite of passage they go through due to their immigration from Ghana to The Netherlands. The Pentecostal-Charismatic religion helps them to fight prevent an identity crisis as a result of their migration. The churches help them to find a job and housing, and they spread messages of personal empowerment. In the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in the Bijlmer the main religious message that the pastors preach is that the power is with Jesus, who can heal and deliver people from problems of a spiritual or a material nature. According to a number of renowned scholars of Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismaticism (Meyer 1996, 1998; Ter Haar 1998a,b,c; Van Dijk 1997, 2001, 2002a; Daswani 2010) by converting to Christianity and 'making a complete break with the past', one will be protected against the local divinity spirits (*sunsum abosom*) and be protected by the Holy Spirit (*sunsum kronkon*). Leaving the past behind is a necessary step for the church members to make the move from the pre-liminal to the liminal stage of the rite of passage the migrants go through, before they can enter into the international and interethnic Christian church community in Europe. The Pentecostal-Charismatic churches provide support in the Christian migrant's construction of a new Christian cosmopolitan identity that connects them to the global world. The Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian message is meant to

improve the often-deprived socio-economic situation of people from Ghana in their diasporic communities and to be in control of their lives. Furthermore, the Pentecostal-Charismatic church leaders promise their members that they will be blessed with consumer goods as a reward for their good behaviour as a result of their belief in the power of the blood of Jesus and in God.

The movies that are second in popularity among the Akan in the Bijlmer are those of an indigenous religious nature with realistic images of village life and a realistic representation of Traditional Belief (or better 'Indigenous Religion'; Cox 2007). The second choice of the Akan is contradictory, because viewing indigenous religious movies does not fit with the Pentecostal-Charismatic message of 'breaking with one's past' as a way of creating a new international Christian identity. The Akan Pentecostal-Charismatics who view these movies that in Ghana are referred to as movies about 'traditional belief', do not think that these movies contain indigenous religious messages. Instead, they refer to them as 'cultural films'. To illustrate, a great number of films, including 'Ama Ghana', 'Ashanti' and 'Homeda' that by the Akan in Kumasi were categorized as movies about 'traditional belief', the Akan in the Bijlmer referred to as 'cultural films'. A male member of the Bijlmer Church of Pentecostal-Charismatic community, said for instance: 'I like to watch Ghallywood movies about traditional culture, such as the movie "Ama Ghana"' (interview 17 February 2010). This film, which is in Fante Twi, tells the story about the beautiful lady Ama and the disputes about her traditional marriage. The reason that this respondent gave for his categorization of this movie as a 'cultural film' was as follows: 'For me, religion is something that is of an international nature. Christianity and Islam, these are religions. However, these movies from Ghana, such as "Ama Ghana" are about local customs so that is not about religion' (interview 17 February 2010).

By categorizing these indigenous religious Ghallywood movies as films of a 'cultural' rather than 'religious' nature, Pentecostal-Charismatic Ghanaians in the Bijlmer avoid having religious conflicts over viewing these movies. In contradiction to indigenous religious movies, films of a cultural nature do not cause a threat to the Akan Christians' new international Christian identity as an outcome of their rite de passage they go through after their migration to Europe. But why do the Akan in the Bijlmer watch these movies in the first place if these films are not about Christianity, whereas the majority of the Akan in southeast Amsterdam are Christians? Two types of answers emerge from the data.

The first type of answers can be explained with the help of Anderson's (1991) theory of 'imagined communities'. According to this theory, the Ghallywood movies can be perceived as a flow of cultural-religious data from the South to the North Atlantic world that support Ghanaian immigrants to that world in creating a sense of belonging. The fact that Ghanaian movies are used by Ghanaians in the European diaspora for this purpose became clear for instance from the answer of an Akan Christian who said: 'I like to watch the Christian movies that are about life in the village. If I see people fetching water and hanging out with friends it makes me feel like I am back home in Ghana. Even though after watching these movies I miss Ghana more, the film makes me feel comfortable' (interview 22 February 2010).

The second type of explanation derives from theories that connect to the economic nature of the Akan diaspora. The philosopher Kwame Appiah (2006), for instance, explains that patrons in the diaspora and clients in Ghana are in an

economic relationship. Akan patrons in Europe have the honour of taking care of the material well-being of their Akan clients, who live in Ghana. Orozco *et al.* (2005) explain that the longer Ghanaians stay abroad the more remittances they send back home. Mazucatto (2005) and Van Hear (2002) clarify that these remittances are an investment in services that are provided by clients in exchange for money. Other recent studies on the nature of remittances make clear that the mentioned services are of a religious²⁰ and caring²¹ nature (Goody and Groothues 1977; Mazzucato *et al.* 2006; Quartey 2006; Fumanti 2009). Ghanaians in the diaspora thus remain connected to the Ghanaian language, religion and cultural customs (e.g. by watching Ghallywood movies and education the young ones) for pragmatic economic purposes. A female Christian Akan trader who has lived in the Netherlands for 20 years explained that she watches Ghanaian movies because she does not want to forget her understanding of Twi (the Akan language) and the Ghanaian customs, because she does not want to lose the respect of her grandparents and the elders when she is in Ghana. She said: 'If I do not know how to behave in Ghana, the people with whom I do business there will not take me seriously. If I do not know the Ghanaian culture, I will lose the respect of my clients. This will affect my business in a negative way' (interview, 26 February 2010). It is common for Ghanaians to go back to Ghana to visit family at least once a year and many Ghanaians are the patrons of some extended family members in Ghana (Orozco *et al.* 2005). The majority of Ghanaians focus on staying and building a life in the Netherlands (Ter Haar 1998). However, some Ghanaians who were born in Ghana plan to – and few also do – go back to Ghana often after they are pensioned, which is an extra motivation to stay connected to their country of origin (Kraan 2001; Van Dijk 2002a; Van der Geest and Mul 2004). Remigration after pension is also in the mind of a male Christian Akan who said: 'For the past twenty years, I have travelled back to Ghana fifteen times. Most of my family is in Ghana. I built a house for them and as soon as I will stop working here, I want to go back. It is good for me to be in Holland now, because I can make money here, but I do not want to grow old here in Amsterdam' (interview 27 February 2010).

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate the favourite choices of Ghallywood movies (films from Ghana) of Ghanaians in the Amsterdam Bijlmer district and to provide reasons for their popularity in the context of the search for a new religious identity of African diasporic communities in European contexts.

The research shows that the most popular movies among the Akan in Amsterdam are the Christian movies with proselytizing messages. These films are meant to be and are used by their viewers, who are for the majority Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian Ghanaians, for the purpose of religious worship. Second in popularity are movies with indigenous religious themes in the present that give a realistic account of their Indigenous Religion and the outlook of their representatives (the traditional priest (ess) and the traditional authorities) and believers. In the diaspora the latter movies are, however, perceived as movies with 'cultural' rather than indigenous religious themes, because the label of 'Indigenous Religion' does no longer fit with the international Christian identity that is dominant among the Akan

diasporic community in southeast Amsterdam. An aspect of this identity is to condemn the Akan Indigenous Religion.

The reception of the Ghallywood movies among Ghanaians in the Amsterdam Bijlmer district confirms that the Akan diaspora in the Netherlands is of an economic-religious nature. The choice of Christian evangelical movies can be explained with the help of insights derived from research of a number of renowned scholars on the Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity of Ghanaians in general and in the Bijlmer district in particular. Their studies show that Ghanaian Pentecostal-Charismatics want to make a complete break with their indigenous religious past and be finished with the Supreme Being who to a large extent was believed to control people's lives. The pastors of the Pentecostal-Charismatic churches preach the message that these natural deities are evil spirits that need to be chased away from the believers' bodies by the pastors during deliverance church sessions. The religious messages of the pastors are that by fighting the evil spirits of one's past, one can take control over one's own life. The transition in consciousness, which the pastors try to achieve in the minds of their believers, is that from an awareness of the High God as the one who decides over one's destiny that is always good but can be spilled by a person's bad behaviour to Christian individual consciousness and much greater personal choice and self-responsibility.

This study shows that the latter message that can, for instance, be found in the movie 'Mogya apam' financed with church money is more appealing to Ghanaians in the Bijlmer than the faith based message in movies such as 'Homeda'. Nevertheless, movies as 'Homeda' that are created with the money and that represent the ideas of chiefs, traditional priest (esses) and queen mothers, are also popular, but not for indigenous religious reasons. As part of the rites of passage that Ghanaians from Ghana go through to position themselves in the Netherlands as 'international Christians' and to maintain their more beneficial 'Christian international identity', they show a psychological and practical need for realistic images of Ghana. First, they use these images to create an 'imagined community' what helps them to maintain their own strong cultural codes within Dutch society. Second, the images of traditional culture of Ghana serve an economic pragmatic need. They enable Ghanaians in the Bijlmer to maintain a link with members of their transnational kin group in Ghana (*abusua*) to fulfil the function of patrons of economic clients in Ghana who are often members of the same matrilineal kin group.

Notes

1. I use the term 'Pentecostal/charismatic' because they share the same faith, belief and worship in the same way. The only difference between the two is the approach to mentoring their members to live according to the Bible. The Pentecostal believers have a strict approach where they try as much as they can to monitor their members to live according to the teachings given them from the Bible. Some of these approaches include strict dress code – modest dresses without entertaining mini/skirts, cautioning of perceived excessive drunkenness of the opposite sex, unhesitant suspension for acts like pre-marital sex, adultery, drunkenness, etc. However, the charismatic believe in teaching and encouraging the person and allow him or her to do it by him/herself. Though the Charismatics also frown on these acts and, depending on the pastor in charge of the church who may also suspend occasionally, usually they are not as strict as the Pentecostal believers.
2. The Ghanaian film industry is the umbrella name of over 50 production houses in Ghana (interview with Augustine Abbey, the president of the film industry association of Ghana,

- 12 March 2010) including that of William Akuffo who has produced over 30 Ghallywood movies. His production house is called 'Ghallywood' (interview with W.A. Akuffo, pioneer of the video feature film production in Ghana, 9 March 2010). There is thus no such thing as one Ghanaian film industry but that also counts for the film industry of Nigeria which in and outside the country is known as 'Nollywood'. It is for this reason that the researcher refers to the Ghanaian film industry as Ghallywood.
3. The term 'cultural group' is also used in relations to the Asante and the Akan by Stoeltje (2003).
 4. The number of Ghanaians in Amsterdam (of whom two-thirds live in the Bijlmer) is 10,353. Since 1992 the figures of Ghanaians in Amsterdam have gone up 97 percent and they currently make up 1.4 percent of the city's inhabitants (statistiek, G. A. d. o. e. 2006. Overige niet-westerse allochtonen in Amsterdam Fact sheet).
 5. See also Müller (forthcoming).
 6. In the early nineteenth century, the Swiss (Basel) missionaries wrote down the Akan language. They tried to duplicate the name 'Asante' as they heard it, which resulted in their spelling of the word as 'Ashantee' and 'Shanty'. After Ghana gained independence in 1957, the new government commissioned the African Studies Centre (ASC) at the University of Ghana, Legon, to standardize and rationalize the spellings of traditional and historical names, resulting in the word 'Asante' (www.scn.org/rdi/index.htm).
 7. The more recent migration of Ghanaians took place in three strands. The first mass movement of Ghanaians migrants to various countries in Europe (e.g. The United Kingdom, Germany) including the Netherlands took place in the period 1974–1983 as a result of the oil crisis in Ghana. The second mass migration of Ghanaians to the Netherlands took place in 1983 as a result of a great drought in Ghana and the deportation of over one million Ghanaians out of Nigeria under the regime of the Federal Military Government of General Muhammed Buhari who believed the internal security of his country to be threatened by the large-scale presence of illegal aliens (Aluko, 1985). Between 1992 and 1998 'network migration' took place, a term, which refers to the economic migration of Ghanaians who by their movement attempt to support their families back home (statistiek 2006).
 8. The first European Christian missionaries who entered the Gold Coast were the Catholic Portuguese who negatively portrayed the Akan Indigenous Religion as a form of fetishism and who introduced Catholicism and especially the worshipping of Santa Maria (Platvoet, 1979).
 9. In 1999 over 50 Ghallywood movies were produced. Two years later Ghana already produced twice as many digital movies (Ginsburg *et al.* 2002; Mitchell and Plate 2007).
 10. The researcher has a proficiency in Twi. There were necessary she received help with her movie analysis of the native speakers Richard Okine in Takoradi (senior geologist at Anglo gold limited and Ghallywood fan) and Alexander Mantey and Mohammed Sesi in Accra (students in film studies).
 11. These movies are shown in English or in Twi with English subtitling for the non-Twi speaking cultural groups in Ghana.
 12. These channels are Salto TV 1 and 2 and GTV.
 13. Examples of these actors and actresses are John Dumelo, Jackie Appiah, Ivonne Nelson, Nadia Buari and Majid Michel. The television channels in Ghana that show Ghallywood movies are: Metro TV, TV3, TV Africa, viasat, Adom TV, and GTV where drama movies of the Ga, Ewe, Dagomba, and Fante are shown every Saturday at 5 p.m.
 14. 'Nkramo' is derived from the Malinke (Mande) term 'karamoko' that comes from the Arabic term 'qura'a', which means 'great scholar' or 'one who is able to recite the Qur'an' (McCaskie 1995). Because of the Arabic origin of the word 'karamoko' (or Nkramo) it is no wonder that the Akan did not know the original meaning of the word 'Nkramo' and gave it the same meaning as to the word they use for Muslims (*nkramofo*).
 15. Ghallywood movies on VCD or DVD consist of one, two or three parts. One part has a length of 87.5 minutes.
 16. As in Nollywood movies, Ghanaian filmmakers seldom show any female nudity, because generally in African culture nakedness is regarded in abhorrence as a mark of witchcraft (Heald 1995).

17. The messages of the images that are shown during the theme song always oppose the moral lesson of the song. So whereas the theme song emphasizes that as a married couple one should work together as a team, the images show a lazy Owusu who is sitting down under a tree drinking palm wine. The purpose of the opposition between the images and the song is to emphasize the movie's main idea (Akuffo, filmmaker and the founding father of Ghallywood films interviewed in Ghallywood village by Müller in 2010).
18. An example of a filmmaker who says to be inspired by religion but who is not an adherent of any religion is William Akkufo, founder of the Ghanaian film industry (interview with W.A. Akuffo, 9 March 2010).
19. Afia Duffie mentioned that she also put up gospel music such as that of Ohemma Mercy or the spirit man Ernest Opoku Jnr to worship God.
20. The *abusuafo* (members of the extended family) in Ghana organize funerals for the *abusuafo* who 'have gone to the village' (passed away) in the North Atlantic part of the world. Additionally, the *abusuafo* in Ghana send movies with self-made videos about religious rituals to their fellow family members in the diaspora.
21. Ghanaians in the diaspora make use of the *abusua* to partly raise their children in Ghana, which releases them for a while of their parental responsibility so that they can focus on their career and education.

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