The Craft of Pastorship in Ghana and Beyond

Ph.D. thesis submitted by
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CONTENTS

List of maps and figures iv
Abbreviations v
Glossary vi
Acknowledgements viii

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION
Introduction 1
Approaching pastorship: some premises 4
Engaging the literature 13
Concepts 17
Methodological reflections 25
Structure of thesis 34

CHAPTER TWO WEALTH AND WORTH IN ASANTE
Introduction 42
Wealth and ‘big men’ in pre-colonial Asante 44
Religion in pre-colonial Asante 50
Wealth, status and power: Asante colonized, c. 1900-1950s 54
Religion and colonialism: institutions and innovators 61
Independence and political change 66
Religion and politics: 1950s – present 68
Social change and ways of becoming 70
Discussion: history and Pentecostalism 71

CHAPTER THREE THE ETHICS OF NEO-PENTECOSTALISM:
DOCTRINE AND THE MOVEMENT
Introduction 75
Wealth and neo-Pentecostalism in public debate 77
The Pentecostal movement 81
Kumasi—‘the spiritual capital of Ghana’ 86
Doctrine and ideas 90
Institutional setting 97
Church services—mise-en-scène 103
Discussion 105
# CHAPTER FOUR  THE CRAFT OF PASTORSHIP

Introduction  
Part I – Pastorship  
Pastoral calling  
Charisma and spiritual genealogy  
Bible schools and training  
The work of pastors  
Part II – Pastors and platforms  
The complete pastor – discussion

# CHAPTER FIVE  BECOMING A PASTOR—TRAJECTORIES

Introduction  
Social mapping of pastors: background and aspirations  
Trajectory I: Home-town church building  
Trajectory II: Francis Afrifa  
Trajectory III: Victor Osei  
Discussion

# CHAPTER SIX  THE FUNERAL OF A BISHOP

Introduction  
Approaching funerals  
Context – Akan funerals  
The funeral of Paul Owusu-Tabiri – description of a social situation  
Ceremony – portraying and performing  
The place of rest: conflict over burial site  
Succession  
Discussion

# CHAPTER SEVEN  CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAHY

APPENDICES  
Appendix A  List of interviews and collected material  
Appendix B  Questions for pastors  
Appendix C  Questions for churches  
Appendix D  Questionnaire for church members in Ghana  
Appendix E  Ohwim pastoral seminar programme
# LIST OF MAPS AND FIGURES

## Maps

1. The Gold Coast  
2. Administrative regions of Ghana  
3. The growth of Kumase

## Figures

1. Banner announcing prayer meeting, Kumasi  
2. & 3. Registration cards, Calvary Charismatic Centre, Kumasi  
3. Churches in school building in Kwadaso, Kumasi  
4. Book cover, Victor Osei: Building Your Spirit Man  
5. Joshua Kas-Vorsah at church premises, Daban, Kumasi  
6. Graduation ceremony with pastor Felix Addai  
7. Graduation envelopes  
8. Gloria Afriyie preaching at Kejetia market  
9. Emmanuel Appiah and wife in front of printing shop, Techiman  
10. Edward Owusu-Ansah in Alive Bible Congregation, storeroom  
11. Flyer advertising a church programme with Francis Afrifa  
12. Francis Afrifa in front of his church Bremang, Kumasi  
13. Francis Afrifa and the Apenkrahene  
14. Flyer announcing church programme, Victor Osei  
15. Dancing at Thanksgiving service  
16. Funeral programme, cover page  
17. Pictures of Owusu-Tabiri on fan
ABBREVIATIONS

ABC  Alive Bible Congregation
ACC  Ashanti Confederacy Council
BPMI  Bethel Prayer Ministry International
CCC  Calvary Charismatic Centre
CCG  Christian Council of Ghana
CPP  Convention People’s Party
FCI  Family Chapel International
ICBC  International City Baptist Church
IMF  International Monetary Fund
NDC  National Democratic Congress
NLM  National Liberation Movement
NPP  New Patriotic Party
PNDC  Provisional National Defence Council
SU  Scripture Union
WMCI  World Miracle Church International

Dollar values in the thesis are based on the conversion rate of the Ghanaian cedi for 1 September, 2005.


**GLOSSARY**

List of Twi words used in the text (the list is mainly based on McCaskie, 1995):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twi</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asantehene</td>
<td>king of Asante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asanteman</td>
<td>the Asante state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bayi</td>
<td>witchcraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abirempoon, pl. abirempoon</td>
<td>'big man', accumulator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abosom, pl. abosom</td>
<td>powers of supernatural origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abusua</td>
<td>family, kin, matrilineage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abusua panin</td>
<td>male lineage head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akomfo, pl. akomfo</td>
<td>priest or fetish priest, one who is possessed by powers of supernatural origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obemaa</td>
<td>queen mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obene, pl. abene</td>
<td>chief, king, office holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abenkwa, pl. nhenkwa</td>
<td>servant of the Asantehene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akomfo, pl. akomfo</td>
<td>priest or fetish priest, one who is possessed by powers of supernatural origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akonkofo</td>
<td>businessmen in the early colonial period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nkrabea</td>
<td>fate, destiny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nkwankwa</td>
<td>youngmen, commoner</td>
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<tr>
<td>mena</td>
<td>the elephant tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mmoatia, sing. aboatia</td>
<td>creatures living in the forest or bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mogya</td>
<td>blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anibue</td>
<td>being civilised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onyame</td>
<td>God creator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onyame nnipa</td>
<td>man of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sika</td>
<td>gold, money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sika dwa</td>
<td>golden stool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>osfo, pl. asofo</td>
<td>a priest, one who officiates in the service of God or a Fetish, one who performs a religious ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asomfo</td>
<td>administrative class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asuman, sing. suman</td>
<td>fetiches, charms, amulets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sunsum, pl. asunsum</td>
<td>soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sunsum sore</td>
<td>spiritual churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atano</td>
<td>a category of abosom, which powers have their origin in water, here the river Tano.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ntorc</td>
<td>spirit, related to descent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>otumi</td>
<td>the ability to bring about change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awunyadie</td>
<td>death duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yafunu</td>
<td>the family, the children of one womb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ayibuadee</td>
<td>inheritance tax</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Alive Bible Congregation is a small neo-Pentecostal/charismatic church in Kumasi. It is founded by a Ghanaian pastor residing in Denmark as a branch of a church the same pastor founded in Copenhagen. When I first visited the church in Kumasi, in December 2004 it was headed by a senior pastor, who was selected by the founder. The senior pastor was assisted by three junior pastors. They worshipped in a school classroom, as do many other new churches. The church had around fifteen members. At the time of my next visit, in February 2005, the church had moved to a small storeroom. One Sunday morning I came to join the Sunday service. At my arrival the room was locked. A little later one of the young pastors came. He sat at the back of the room, behind the pulpit with his head bowed and prayed. Little by little more people arrived. An hour into the service the senior pastor arrived and did the preaching. However, when talking to the young pastors afterwards, they explained his attendance with my presence, as they had not seen him for some time. In August 2005 I visited the church again. The senior pastor was no longer part of the church. It was instead headed by four young pastors. It had moved to an old restaurant, which was more spacious. The church was visited regularly by an elder from the church in Copenhagen and was about to get electronic music instruments. One of the young pastors was just about to graduate from Bible school. One of the young pastors heading the church claimed himself to be a prophet and to have the gift of healing.

In February 2005 I attended a church service in Atosu, Kumasi. The preaching was done by a so-called independent pastor. He explained that he was preaching the word of God, but did not want to belong to a congregation. He had before been trained under one of Kumasi’s leading neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors, had been to bible school in Denmark and had upon his return to Kumasi decided to leave his old church, to work on his own. In August and September 2005 I met with the pastor again. He had now founded his own church in the garage of his aunt’s house, where he was also living with his wife and children. He had moreover become the president of a pastoral association.
A bishop, church founder and bible school leader had organised a pastoral seminar at Ohwim, Kumasi in August 2005. The seminar was attended by about 600 pastors and the teachings were done by ministers from different Christian churches in Kumasi. While attending the seminar I discussed with a number of pastors about their careers. They were mainly younger pastors who had recently established churches of their own or who were attending bible school. The programme of the seminar included themes such as ‘How to keep your gifts of grace’, ‘The moral and spiritual life of a pastor’, ‘Knowing the gifts of your wife’, ‘Pastors and finances of church’, ‘Pastors, church and hypocrisy’, and ‘Accomplishing God’s Given Task’. The pastors were there to learn how to make their church grow, how to keep members, and how to succeed as a pastor.

These depictions of young and up-coming pastors, establishing their own churches in storerooms and garages, stand in contrast to the picture of the flamboyant mega-star pastors of some of the more established and successful neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in southern Ghana and elsewhere in Africa. However small and insignificant these young pastors may seem to be, they represent a larger group of younger, junior or associate pastors that are serving under senior pastors, are attending bible schools or are trying to set up their own churches. Their actions and behaviour express an eagerness to succeed, to become someone, and to become big ‘men of God’. In doing so, they draw on both socio-political and religious criteria for success. Seeing and talking with these pastors motivated me to explore and understand the processes by which one becomes a pastor and by which pastors become ‘big men’.

Pentecostalism has until the end of the 1990s been an overlooked phenomenon in Western social scientists’ accounts of development and change in Africa. According to Maxwell (2006a: 10) this is due to a number of reasons of which one is the “biases and prejudices of the academic community”. The role of religion in the social and political life of Africans has simply been ignored by mainstream social science. Moreover, the branch of Christianity dealt with here has been perceived as awkward, partly due to their “aggressive intolerance towards aspects of their own local culture” (Maxwell, 2006a: 10). Besides their stance on culture and tradition, the discourse of the churches on for instance wealth as well as Islam and other variants of Christianity, has been interpreted as being immoral and intolerant.
The cases referred to above challenged my initial understanding of Pentecostalism in Ghana. Based on the existing literature my first research idea was about transnational Pentecostal churches and the influence membership of these churches would have on Ghanaian migrants’ relations to home. This literature portrays pastors as megastars and as promoters of a distinct individuality. The pastors I met in store rooms, garages and class rooms did not fit into this image. They did not shine, were not rich and their success depended on a variety of social connections, including family and kin. I was wondering why it made sense for them to become pastors, if this did not entail travelling, escaping social bonds and belonging to a global religious community.

This thesis is an exploration of the social and political implications of neo-Pentecostal ideas, institutions and actors in present day Ghana. It interprets religion as part and parcel of everyday socio-political processes and shows that religion is an important aspect to include when studying broader processes of social change. It points out that new spaces for social mobility occur in particular in the overlapping zones between religion, politics and social life (for instance family relations). It also underlines that pastors, as new figures of success, are deeply embedded in their socio-historical background, but at the same time redefine and transform established ideas, values and practices.
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an account of the configurations and dynamics of pastorship in neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Asante and in particular in and around Kumasi. It is an exploration of how Ghanaian pastors build up their careers and of how becoming and being a pastor is a process by which one contests for status, wealth and power and thus fights for becoming a 'big man'. It examines the social processes that evolve around the craft and politics of pastorship; the power structures and struggles involved in building up and maintaining a strong position as a 'man of God' (Onyame nnipa). More broadly, it is an analysis of the intersection between religion, social ascension and politics as expressed in the construction and meaning of pastorship.

Since the 1980s a new group of pastors has emerged in Ghana with the proliferation of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a; Gifford, 2004; Meyer, 2005: 282). The pastors (asofa) of these new churches are gaining prominence, are emerging as public figures and as figures of authority. They have been described as being self promoting, flamboyant, and icons of success and power (Gifford, 2007). Within these churches there is

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1 Different terms are employed in the literature on Pentecostalism in Ghana. There is a distinction between the classical Pentecostal churches and neo-Pentecostal churches. The former were introduced by foreign missionaries, and include churches such as Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God. The latter group represents the more recently established Pentecostal churches. These churches are either the offspring of the older Pentecostal and Protestant churches, or are independent churches. The term charismatic is used more broadly to include charismatic groups outside the Pentecostal churches, such as the Catholic Church. Some use the term Charismatic Ministries (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a), or simply charismatic (Gifford, 2004). Other churches again are designated evangelistic, which alludes to a somewhat broader group of churches. The 'born-again' movement is a label that is widely used. It refers in particular to the personal experience of conversion (Maxwell, 2006: 5-6). On the difference between Pentecostal and evangelical see Maxwell (2006: 7-8). In this thesis I use the term neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches, as it best encompasses the varieties represented in the group of churches I am interested in. Moreover, it underscores the sometimes blurred boundaries between the various denominations and churches. I am mainly interested in the newer independent churches and fellowships, and do not deal with the churches belonging to the group of classical Pentecostal churches. I do, however, occasionally use the term Pentecostal movement. This refers to the movement in general, and includes both the classical Pentecostal churches and the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches.

2 The Twi word asofa (pl. anfo) means a priest, one who officiates in the service of God or a Fetish or who performs a religious ceremony. The word was in use before the introduction of Christianity; but has been adapted by Christianity. It is worth emphasising that the term asofa does not represent an insulated vocabulary specific to Ghanaian Pentecostalism. It is part of a terminology that has a history beyond Pentecostalism and is rooted in Asante experience (T.C. McCaskie, personal communication, McCaskie, 1995: 290). See also Sackey (2000).
a widely noticeable attention on the pastor and he is in many ways the pivot point of the church (van Dijk, 1999: 79). Tellingly, the churches are popularly known as ‘one-man churches’, meaning the church of one person, belonging to one person, and in the control of one person. One way in which pastors have become more visible, has been through the use of new media such as videos to “aggrandize the pastor as a true man of God—a man with true vision, whose charisma is created, or at least affirmed, by projecting his endlessly reproduced image onto the television screens” (Meyer, 2005: 283).

It is difficult to provide figures on the growth and spread of the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic sector, hence the difficulty measuring the significance and importance of the movement in numbers. We have to be content with some relatively dated figures related to the individual churches (mostly provided by the churches themselves), as well as some general observations of the phenomenon. According to Gifford’s most recent study focusing on the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic mega-churches in Accra, he estimates that the top five churches attract somewhere between 1,600 and 13,000 people to their Sunday services (Gifford, 2004: 24-26). It has moreover been reported that the number of Pentecostal churches in Ghana has grown with 43 per cent between 1987 and 1992 (Meyer, 1998c: 759, fn. 10). A more recent survey has estimated that 24 per cent of the Ghanaian population defines itself as Pentecostal/charismatic (Larkin & Meyer, 2006: 290).4 If comparing to other Christian dominations it is worth noticing that the Methodist Church had 184,723 attendants in 1988 and 188,725 in 1993, whereas the Church of Pentecost had 198,041 in 1988 and 259,920 in 1993 (Larbi, 2001: 33). According to Barrett et al (2001: 307) the Pentecostals and charismatics accounted for 21 percent (3,160,000 adherents) of the total number of religious adherents in Ghana in the mid-1990s. In comparison the Roman Catholics accounted for 10 percent (or 1,500,000 adherents) of the total number.

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3 There are both male and female pastors within the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches. I use ‘he’ when discussing pastors in the thesis, for the sake of linguistic clarity and because the majority of the pastors are men.

4 Bearing in mind the unreliability of many of these figures, it is worth to pay attention to the growth in the numbers of Christians in Africa: from 143 million in 1970 to about 393 million in 2000 (Maxwell, 2006a: 5). This growth also entails a shift in the composition of African Christianity with the enormous rise of the Pentecostal sector. According to one source there were 126 million Pentecostal/charismatics in Africa in 2000 (Meyer, 2004: 451). It is, moreover, estimated that a quarter of the world’s Christians (two billions) are Pentecostals (Maxwell, 2006a: 7).
Both the classical Pentecostal churches and the neo-Pentecostal churches are organised in various councils and associations. The most important one is the Ghana Pentecostal Council, which was created in the late 1970s by the classical Pentecostal churches. Today the Council also includes neo-Pentecostal and charismatic churches and has around 180 member churches. These figures underline the tendencies described above; that the Pentecostal movement constitute an important part of the Ghanaian religious landscape. Moreover, the impact and significance of the Pentecostal movement go beyond the figures referred to here. As this thesis shows, its influence on Ghanaian society transgresses religious as well as social boundaries.

The early Pentecostal movement emerged in Ghana in the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Larbi (2001: 32) the forerunners of the movement were prophets like Wade Harris, Sampson Oppong and John Swatson, who attracted many members to the already established churches (for example the Catholic, Methodist, and Anglican churches). Another prophet operating in the 1930s was Peter Anim, who established a church on his own (Faith Tabernacle Church, later Apostolic Church, Gold Coast). In 1931 the Assemblies of God arrived in the Northern Territories, and in 1937 the missionary James McKeown arrived from the Apostolic Church in the UK. He founded what was later to become The Church of Pentecost. This church, which had approximately one million members in 2002, is Ghana’s second largest church, only preceded by the Roman Catholic Church (Bredwa-Mensah, 2004; Larbi, 2001: 32-33, 2004: 142). The recent wave of Pentecostal churches – the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic wave – started in the early 1980s and has been marked especially by an increasing number of new and independent churches, as well as a number of mega-churches that take form as international business corporations.

The prominence of pastors is according to some, one of the more dominant features of the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Africa (Gifford, 1998, 2004; Maxwell, 2006a: 9; Meyer, 2001, 2005; Marshall-Fratani, 2001). Commenting on Gifford’s work on African Pentecostalism and their leaders Maxwell notes that:

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5 Interview with general secretary of the Ghana Pentecostal Council, Rev. Wood, Accra, 17 March 2003. This interview was conducted by Camilla Strandsbjerg, who has kindly put it at my disposal.
6 According to van Dijk (2001: 220) The Church of Pentecost had 260,000 members. The year is not specified. The total population of Ghana is approximately 20,000,000.
“[m]any Africanists may not have heard of these men but they are nevertheless extremely important. In the range of issues they address—moral, material and political—they are the heirs of the community and nationalist leaders of the 1950s” (Maxwell, 2000b: 471).

He alludes in particular to leaders such as Ghana’s Duncan Williams and Mensa Otabil and Zambia’s Nevers Munda, and argues that the “leaders of the ‘personalised’ churches […] should be properly seen as Christian versions of Bayart’s ‘big men’” (Maxwell, 2000b: 476) (see also Nugent, 1995: 3). However, the main perspective of this thesis is not that of ‘big men’ in the sense of superstar pastors (such as Nicholas Duncan Williams, Mensa Otabil, Charles Agyn Asare, Dag Heward-Mills), but rather that of intermediary and middle-ranking pastors or ‘small big men’. I do include pastors of the ‘premier league’ in the analysis, but primarily try to downscale the Giffordian charismatic ‘big man’ and look at pastors at various stages in the process of becoming big.7

A pastoral career can be seen as an alternative to other careers paths, for example civil servant careers. It is a possibility of achieving status in ways which involve other strategies and criteria of success than a civil servant career. Becoming a pastor is a way to obtain more than what can be obtained through a salary employment (in terms of status and social mobility), as pastorship also involves ideas around access to spiritual power and mediation between the spiritual and the material world. Historically, mediators (such as a chief (obené) and a priest (ɔkomfɔɔ)) between these spheres have been ascribed status. Pastors are also performers, they perform rites, and they are mediators of the past. Pastorship as an alternative career path can be seen as a reflection of a wider tendency in a number of African countries, where one observes a decline in the attractiveness and status attached to the social position of the civil servant or ‘fonctionaire’ (Banégas & Warnier, 2001). This change entails a challenge of the idea that education and diplomas leads to employment in the public sector, which leads to status. New trajectories of ascension are emerging; trajectories that, according

7 I am grateful to Harri Englund for emphasising this point. Gifford does, however, recognise that the layer of pastors he is concerned with are merely the top of the iceberg or the “‘premier division’ in a multi-divisional ‘national league’” (2004: 24).
to Banégas and Warnier (2001: 7), are at the interface of the public and the private, the local and the international and the formal and the informal. Signs of status are changing and new types of popular leaders emerge (e.g. pastors, movie stars, musicians, businessmen). They are not necessarily replacing the old type ‘fonctionnaire’ in the strictest sense, but are rather pushing their areas of influence, for example the pastors’ influence on both the spiritual and the mundane.

Pastors as new figures of success can be seen as part of a broader pattern of reconfiguration of elites, where young people are challenging the positions of more established holders of power. Put in a larger context this pattern can be seen as a reflection of the tendency towards an opening up and creation of a more plural public sphere that has come with economic and political liberalisation (Banégas & Marshall-Fratani, 2003: 15; Meyer, 2004: 465). Ghana, as well as other West African countries, has since the 1990s been through structural adjustment programmes and political and economic liberalisation, under the supervision of international donor organisations. Although these reforms have not to a great extent had their intended effects, they have had decisive influence on the organisation of power and the composition of the public sphere (Banégas & Marshall-Fratani, 2003: 5). One example of this is the role of private media in Ghana. Private media was banned and repressed under the rule of Flight Lieutenant Rawlings and the PNDC throughout the 1980s, but became free and took a new role with political liberalisation in the beginning of the 1990s (Hasty, 2006).

Neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors, as well as other emerging elites, are part of the above mentioned plural public sphere. According to Banégas and Marshall-Fratani (2003), this change in power constellations and the public sphere has come about at a time when the existing ‘post-colonial compromise’ came under pressure, because of the imposition of political and economic structural reforms from outside. This ‘post-colonial compromise’ was established under the construction of the post-colonial state, where both the existing elite and the new political elite that emerged with the struggle for independence, were integrated. Building on the work of among others Bayart, Banégas and Marshall-Fratani assert that this social contract worked along clientilistic principles; it guaranteed resources for the non-elite and political stability at the same time. It was built on a system of “politique systématique de
cooptation et de circulation des élites qui permettait la neutralisation des potentiels contestataires…” (2003: 10). With the imposed structural reforms that aimed at political and economic liberalisation, this compromise was challenged and destabilised, and the legitimacy of existing elites and the state declined. In this situation new forms of political and social regulation have emerged or re-emerged (self-help associations, family networks, religious movements etc.). These processes have resulted in a change in power relations and in a situation where the opportunities for social and economic ascension are diversified. I see the emergence and influence of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors as part of these larger socio-political processes.

The proliferation of pastors is, moreover, an illustration of the growth and spread of the Pentecostal movement on a global scale. The significance of the movement has not only been observed on the African continent. It has since the 1960s had a tremendous impact and prevalence in Latin America (Brusco, 1995; Martin, 1998; Martin, 1990), and more recently in the Caribbean and Asia. What I observe and analyse in a Ghanaian/Asante context is an expression of a broader trend that has a distinct global character (Corten & Marshall-Fratani, 2001; Maxwell, 2006a: 17-37). The question of whether the growth and spread of the Pentecostal movement can be interpreted as a re-emergence of religion in the public sphere, refers back to the discussion of the validity of the secularisation thesis (see among others Asad, 2003; Casanova, 1994). This overall debate is not particularly relevant for this thesis. The tendencies I have observed are, nonetheless, expressions of changing configurations of relations between religion and politics, and in particular of the role of religion in the public sphere in an African context. It is evidence of a so-called religious revitalisation that comprises both neo-Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity and reformist Islam. Religious institutions and identities are essential in many people’s everyday life and play a major role in their opportunities for improving their lives. It is, as noted by Larkin and Meyer (2006: 288), in “the daily routines of everyday life … and how one is to live in the world … that are often the most intense battlegrounds where the influence of these new religious movements are revealed and fought over”. New religious movements are also taking on an increased role as providers of social services (cf. the increasing number of Christian and Islamic NGOs), and
have a political significance in the sense that they take on explicit political standpoints and engage in defining moral values and political ideas.\textsuperscript{8}

It is noteworthy that the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches share many common traits with newer Islamic movements. Albeit disagreeing strongly on religious ideas and values, many of the ways in which they function are similar. They “overlap strikingly in the procedures by which they have come to prominence, the practices on which they depend, and the social processes they set in motion” (Larkin & Meyer, 2006: 286).

\textit{Pastorship as a way to achieve status, wealth and power}

This thesis is a study of how pastors of Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches contest for and achieve status, wealth and power and become public figures through engaging in the craft of pastorship. I will explore and map out how a pastoral career is made and built up. Moreover, I will analyse and discuss how pastors both build on and reconfigure social norms and practices. Who wants to become a pastor, why and how? What are the young pastors meeting in store rooms, garages and class rooms striving for and what are the social processes they engage in to become ‘small big men’? An exploration of these questions gives insight to the figure of the pastor as more than a religious figure; as a highly social, political and public figure. Their influence transgresses these fields, as well as boundaries of faith, kinship, social status, ethnicity, generation and gender. Understanding the processes that lie behind becoming a pastor, can contribute to the knowledge of other forms of social ascension, as well as on the broader pattern of reconfigurations of power relations and on emerging new elites as described above. What is striking about the case in point is not so much that becoming a pastor is a way to gain some sort of power, but more that this power is recognised and regulated by the social surroundings and that it is rooted in existing social and cultural categories. This study brings two new things into the debate. First, I draw on and bring in vernacular ideas and concepts from politics and society in order to grasp what it means to become a pastors. Secondly, I challenge the narrow focus on Pentecostal pastors as the study of ‘big men’ in big churches in big cities and relocate it to the pastors of class rooms and garages.

\textsuperscript{8}I would like to thank Niels Kastfelt for numerous inspiring and instructive conversations on these issues.
The pastor is a two-fold figure. He is a religious leader perceived as capable of possessing and invoking spiritual power: he is able to deliver spiritual protection and material success. He is a religious figure in a classical sense; as the mediator between the spiritual realm and the material world. At the same time, a pastor is a leader in a socio-political sense: he is a provider, protector and a community builder. Hence, the pursuit of a pastoral career involves claiming authority and also generates “power and flows of patronage which are eminently worth contesting for” (Ranger, 1986: 31). The construction of pastorship can be seen as merging these two fields of influence. The thesis argues that neo-Pentecostal pastors constitute new versions of older religious leaders. They inscribe themselves in the tradition of being a religious figure in Asante and are deeply embedded in the societies, which they are part of. There are certain similarities with prophets, evangelists and missionaries who were also to some extent capable of achieving symbolic and political transformations and change. Pastors draw on cultural symbols and criteria for success in their endeavours. At the same time, they can be seen as part of an emerging elite that is actively involved in processes of social transformation. They hereby challenge other more established religious authorities and obtain socio-political influence at the local level.

The argument of the thesis works at two levels. At one level the thesis discusses pastorship with the aim of uncovering the social mechanisms involved in becoming a pastor, as well as the social, political and economic significance of religious office. I argue that becoming a pastor is a way to become a ‘big man’. In the analysis I show that this process involves both forms of apprenticeship and entrepreneurship. By being an apprentice, a young pastor draws on the credibility of a senior pastor, which permits him or her to invoke the power of God. Concurrently, young and up-coming pastors who aspire to leadership positions appear to be entrepreneurial and to get involved in various networks (congregation, colleagues and extended family) to realise their aspirations. Pastors involve in networks in both a horizontal and a vertical sense: in relation to older and more established people and in relation to people who belong to the same layer as they. When pastors seek to become ‘bigger’, the motive involved is not exclusive to the realm of the church, but reflect wider processes of a socio-political nature, which take on a specific expression within this particular strand of Christianity. Becoming a pastor is analysed as a way of building and negotiating leadership positions and authority. Although pastors and their churches build on former ideas of wealth,
status and power, they are innovative in the sense that the churches they establish and the hierarchies they are part of are flexible and easy to move in and out of. They create organisational forms where social ascension and status is more accessible, and in addition the achieved status is recognised inside as well as outside the church.

At this level I see my work as a contribution to studies of religion in Africa, which is based on an approach that view religion not within a cultural/religious – political dichotomy, but one that sees religion as part and parcel of the mundane (Fields, 1985; Lambek, 2002; Middleton, 1999). This approach also implies viewing religious institutions and actors as being linked up with other institutions and actors, and not as self-contained places (Jones, 2005). I therefore approach pastorship as a social process. At a more general level, studying neo-Pentecostalism and pastors provides a lens to study social change in a West African (Ghanaian) context that may allow us to think differently about strategies of social mobility and of becoming someone. Studying this field can not only throw light on debates about Christianity in Africa or Ghana, but also on the forms and expressions of negotiations of power and authority. It gives insight to a new group of figures of success and authority that play an important role in Ghanaian society, not only in terms of religious leadership, but more widely as they represent a new group of up-coming elite that transgress existing power relations and hierarchies in their trajectories of ascension (Banégas & Warnier, 2001). It opens up for an analysis of how practices and ideas around status, wealth and power are changing and being redefined.

I argue that these religious figures, institutions and ideas at one and the same time create disorder and maintain order, and that the religious field can be seen as an arena for contestation and innovation (Parker, 2000: 211). Pastors challenge existing power hierarchies, as they establish new ways of social ascension, which are recognised in society. Becoming a ‘big man’ by becoming a pastor moreover is a way of gaining influence in more than one domain. I therefore argue that neo-Pentecostal pastorship is a broadening of religious office, and at the same time it represents the emergence of a plural public sphere as described above. Pastors both build on existing notions of religious leadership, as well as ideas around status, wealth and power. They therefore create order in the sense that the new forms of
organisation and new ideas they introduce are in resonance with former ideas and practices. The thesis has a focus on these double processes of change and continuity.

Consequently, the focus of the study is on the links between religion and politics in the broadest sense and more specifically on how religious actors claim and strive for status, wealth and power. Within this particular scope, religion and politics intersect. First, because the practice and the rhetoric of these actors draw on idioms that refer to both a spiritual and a secular realm. Secondly, because the practices of the religious actors involve positioning in power relations and hierarchies. The craft and politics of pastorship is about invoking spiritual power that enables one to gain power and influence in ways that transcend the spiritual or religious sphere. The distinction (or dissolution of distinction) between religion and politics therefore works as a central theme throughout the thesis. However, it does not suffice to observe that pastorship contains both religious and political elements (Fields, 1985: 15). One needs to explore how the inter-linkages are manifested and reflect upon the consequences of this for the analytical approach to the concepts of religion and politics.

**APPROACHING PASTORSHIP: SOME PREMISES**

The analysis of the thesis builds on the premises that 1) new religious institutions and ideas resonate with existing institutions and ideas in society and of the past and 2) that religion is not necessarily a response to a situation of social malaise triggered by modernity.

I am interested in understanding how pastors build up status, wealth and power, not because I attempt to show that pastors are after all containing some elements of rational thinking, but as an attempt to view religion and belief as “routine common sense, [which implies that] we would try to see how the supernatural was embedded in mundane social relations” (Fields, 1985: 20; see also Beidelman, 1998: xviii). How are belief, religious ideas and practices part of ‘routine common sense’ in a Ghanaian context, how does this unfold and what are the socio-political significations of this?
Institutions, ideas and innovators resonate with the past

As Peel (2000) and Maxwell (2006a), among others, have shown, African Christianity has taken its form through processes of appropriation and encounters between missionaries and local adherents. In their important work, they put emphasis on the local constructions of religious narratives, and thereby highlight the important role of history and local participation in the making of African Christianity. There has been a tendency that the more recent studies of Pentecostalism in Africa do not put much weight on the importance of history (Maxwell, 2006b: 390). Following on from these insights, I see the ways in which pastors become ‘big men’ and establish their careers, as building on and integrating notions of status, wealth and power; notions that had particular meaning in Asante before the introduction of Christianity and prior to the emergence of the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic wave, but that were also shaped by these. My understanding is that in order for new churches and pastors to be legitimate, there has to be resonance with former practices and experiences. New institutions require a stabilising principle and there “needs to be an analogy by which the formal structure of a crucial set of social relations is found in the physical world, or in the supernatural world, or in eternity, anywhere, so long as it is not seen as a socially contrived arrangement” (Douglas, 1986: 48).

An exploration of the phenomenon of pastorship in Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches thus calls for a thorough review of the social history of pre-colonial and colonial Asante. In order to understand the meaning and significance of the role of the pastor we need to understand how the phenomenon resonates with former understandings of status, wealth and power on the one hand and belief and religious leadership on the other.

Religion and the social malaise argument

Another premise, which the thesis builds on, is that the rise of new religious movements is not necessarily a reaction or a response to modernity (or an expression of a ‘social malaise’). The following quote from Baëta ([1962] 2004: 6) is a reaction to the argument that the rise of African Independent Churches (in Ghana known as spiritual churches—Sunsum sorè) were a response to the anxieties brought about by colonial impact, modernity and Western influence:
“It appears to me that in recent studies of new cults and other movements of a religious nature among African peoples, the presumed background element of psychological upheaval, tensions and conflicts, anxieties, etc., due to ‘acculturation, technology and the Western impact’ has tended to be rather overdrawn. Here is a typical judgment in this connection […] Whether there is more anxiety in Ghana now than at any time previously, or than in most other countries of the world at present, must probably remain a matter of opinion. After all, people have seen some very rough times here, e.g. slaving era, and the ‘Western impact’ has been with us already for the best part of half a millennium […]’.

This ‘social malaise’ argument was and still is prevailing in explanations of the rise of religious movements in Africa. The fundamental assumption is that these religious movements and their popularity is a reaction to change (modernity) in society, a change that brings fragmentation, anxiety and chaos as well as hopes and aspirations (Meyer, 1998c: 759). Religious mobilisation is in this frame of understanding either a response in terms of providing security or in terms of permitting to contest new and suppressing powers. The causality is often not questioned, but taken for granted, and religion is seen merely as a reaction or a response.9

According to Ranger, the literature on religious movements and politics in Africa commenced with the assumption that religious movements “are in themselves a peculiar modern phenomenon” (Ranger, 1986: 2). In line with the above, Ranger sees this assumption as implying that religious movements have been understood as in opposition to colonial religious institutions, as well as pre-colonial religious institutions,

“[h]ence nearly all religious movements, whether witchcraft eradication movements or millenarian sects, have been treated as new and as explicable in terms of the special pressure and transformations of colonialism” (Ranger, 1986: 2).

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9 This idea is of course not limited to studies of religion in Africa, but part of classical theoretical thinking within the discipline of sociology of religion, where religion is seen as a response to a certain development of society. The idea is vivid (however contested) in today’s debates on the link between radicalism, terrorism and religion.
This view has accordingly informed and shaped studies of the interaction between religion and politics in Africa.

We need to question the taken for granted assumption of connections between certain developments of time and the rise of religious movements, and instead “treat them as problematic, as needing explanation, just as all other kinds of social and political implications of religious movements need explanation” (Ranger, 1986: 51). As Peel (2000: 5) reminds us, religions are not isolated in time, “but are bearers of messages from the past to the current situations in which they operate”.

Englund & Leach (2000: 227) have put forward a substantial critique of the concept of modernity as a meta-narrative in social analysis:

“the meta-narrative of ruptures, of sociocultural discontinuities, remains intact. It organizes, as ever in the discourse on modernity, the ways in which relevant research questions are identified and their potential answers circumscribed”.

Commenting specifically on research on Pentecostalism, Englund and Leach (2000: 234) assert that religion is interpreted as a way to come to terms with and negotiate “the dichotomies—individual vs. society, tradition vs. modern—which define the experience of modernity”, and argue, based on their ethnographic experiences and reflections that “specific cases of contemporary Pentecostalism may be ill-understood in terms of a meta-narrative of modernity” (ibid.). The problem is that if we solely see the rise of neo-Pentecostalism as a response to the experience of social malaise in modernity, the analytical labour becomes restricted, as do the conclusions.

That said, and even if rejecting the causality of the ‘social malaise’ argument, the understanding of this thesis is that religious institutions and ideas have an affinity with social, political and economic interests (Weber, [1939] 2001; Gerth & Wright Mills, 1991: 63). The point is that we cannot set up a causal line of argumentation, but rather that it is the interplay and affinities between these fields that must be explored through ethnographic fieldwork and reflections.
ENGAGING THE LITERATURE

Religion and politics in literature on Christianity in Africa

In a lengthy and detailed review article Ranger (1986: 1) argues that the term politics has been applied and defined rather uncritically in the literature on religion in Africa. Politics in relation to religion was perceived as a potential to transform society (revolutionary potential, e.g. liberation theology), as very state-centred, as opposition or counter-societies, and linked in particular to the independent churches and nationalism. The critique of some of these studies was that the distinction “between cultural and political; symbolic and instrumental” was too sharp (Ranger, 1986: 3). Others proposed to abandon the idea that African religious movements were directly linked to anti-colonial politics; they pleaded for an approach that only took into consideration the religious dimension. Another variant of de-linking religion and politics was apparent in much Marxist scholarship. This scholarship understood religious movements as lacking political analysis altogether and as representing “false consciousness which is the direct opposite of true political understanding just as their fantastic and escapist actions are the very negation of political practice” (Ranger, 1986: 4).

Later scholarship (from the 1980s) turned their attention to the form of religious and political activity, rather than exploring the question of whether religious movements were political or not. Van Binsbergen and Schoffeleers (1985: 2-4) saw the challenge as how to integrate and find a “relation between contextualised, social-structural analyses, on the one hand, and non-contextualised, culture-specific, symbolic analyses on the other”. Several authors argued for a combination of materialist and ideological perspectives as well as a focus on religious thought and local perspectives (Fernandez, 1978, in Ranger, 1986; Meyer, 2004: 449). An additional perspective was added in the sense that the importance of sacred symbols in the political domain was stressed (Ranger, 1986: 8). In sum, there was an increased interest in cosmology and critique of rationalist approaches to religion in Africa.

Fields (1985: 15-18) distinguishes between a political and a cultural approach to studies of religion in Africa. By this she means that those subscribing to the political approach merely look at structure and those within the cultural approach look at religious rituals in symbolic terms. She proposes to study what converts do and with what consequences, instead of focusing on “why they did not do what it would have been rational for them to do” (Fields, 1985: 19-20). She argues that both political and cultural approaches to religion work with the underlying (Marxist) assumption that “social conditions cause religious ideology […] Wherever in reality the cause is sought, the sense of a senseless world awaits reconstruction at a considerable distance from what converts actually do and say” (Fields, 1985: 19-20).

According to Ranger (1986: 18), her work on the Watchtower movement in colonial Central Africa “grasps the essential integrity of culture and politics”. One of the important points in Fields’ work is the insistence of the importance of context, and the danger of only highlighting the extraordinary: “I will examine not only the extraordinary content of millenarian revival, but also its ordinary context” … (Fields, 1985: 21-22).

Within the context of Asante historiography, McCaskie has criticised the focus on secular rationality on the one hand and a consensus treatment of Asante religion on the other. He writes:

“What historians would not touch, and for the most part still will not, were the muddy issues of cognition, belief, unknowing, confusion and apparent “irrationality”. And when historians did touch on belief and religion it was with a dead hand every bit as mechanistic as that deployed by social anthropologists […] Behind every cult and sect lay a rational programme of social protest; behind every prophet or syncretist lay a well thought out, radical, often millenarian, critique of the existing social order—and if colonialism could be thrown in the mix so much the better…” (McCaskie, 1983, quoted in Ranger, 1986: 43).

The insights of these approaches to religion and politics in Africa meant that religion was no longer solely perceived of as a response to political and economic situations generated by colonialism. The politics of religious movements were also seen as a question of internal contestations between various groups or within movements. Ranger pleaded for an approach
that emphasised the dynamic nature of religious movements, rather than an approach that linked specific religious manifestations to particular developments of society. What is important is not that a particular cult arose or faded in a specific moment in time, but “[t]he point is much more that through all these periods African religious movements were flexible and responsive, reflecting a great variety of aspirations and interests, and engaged both in micro and macro politics” (Ranger, 1986: 49). Later works focus on the appropriation of Christianity in Africa from historical and anthropological perspectives, and highlight the dynamic and creative nature of these processes (e.g. Maxwell, 2006a; Meyer, 1999; Peel, 2000).

Within the more recent literature the connections between religion and processes of democratisation and liberalisation have been brought into focus (Gifford, 1995; Haynes, 1995, 2004; Meyer, 2004: 464). In these debates there has been a tension between viewing religion as promoting democracy or seeing religion as a gateway to power and personal gain. Many have argued that democratisation and economic liberalisation have been influenced by religious movements and their leaders and vice versa (Gifford, 1995). On the one hand religious movements have challenged sitting governments to engage in democratisation processes and have enabled their members to express political rights and demand political change. On the other hand democratisation has provided a larger public space with room for religious movements, which were sometimes repressed before (Meyer, 2004: 465).

The Francophone school of political science11 should be mentioned as it to a large extent has integrated religion in the analysis of the making of the state in Africa. The interest of this interdisciplinary literature was to change the focus from being state-centred to being more culture oriented. Religion was considered cultural and social and the role of religion was studied in relation to the state (Strandsbjerg, 2000: 397).

Based on an analysis of popular religious texts in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ellis and ter Haar (1998) have studied the political implications of religion as a way to understand how power is organised and perceived in society, and how this is expressed in religious idioms. Consequently they look at politics as power and as distribution of power, and argue that

11 For instance the works of Bayart, Toulabour, Constantin, Coulon, Otayek, and Dozon.
since “all power is widely believed to have its ultimate origin in the same source, namely the invisible world” (Ellis & ter Haar, 1998: 178) it has political implications. The line of argument is that since the concept of power integrates the religious and the political, religious movements have political significance.

In this thesis I do not look at the relationship between religion and politics with the aim of assessing whether neo-Pentecostalism promote a political culture based on democratic principles or not. My interest is how neo-Pentecostal pastors through their careers become ‘big men’ and thus holders of power. I focus on the micro-processes of gaining social standing and power, and study this in the everyday interactions between religion and the mundane. I adopt a broad understanding of politics when I aim to uncover the ways in which pastorship becomes political in the sense of influencing the accumulation and distribution of wealth and access to power. My approach to studying the relation between religion, society and politics is following the work of Fields among others, as I look at how religion makes sense and is translated in lives of people. This means that I also seek to overcome the divide between cultural/symbolical and political/structural approaches to the study of religion in Africa. On the one hand I analyse the interpretation of religious ideas, and, on the other, I look at how social relations are constructed and understood within and around religious movements.

I analyse religious ideas and practices in relation to a wider socio-historical context, whereby I seek to trace the continuities and changes in the intersection between religion and politics. With this approach I highlight religion as ideas and practices that are deeply historical (McCaskie, 1995: 103). Inspired by the works of Maxwell, Peel and others, I attempt to show how the neo-Pentecostal movement is responsive to society and local history. By studying religious actors and their creative attempts to achieve their social aspirations, aspirations that are to be conceived of and made sense of in a particular historical context, I aim at de-exoticizing (the study of) neo-Pentecostalism.

**Studies of Pentecostalism in Africa**

Within the last decades there has been an abundant and varied literature on Pentecostalism in Africa. One of the central debates of this literature is revolving around the question of
whether the Pentecostal churches have the potential to strengthen civil society and to mobilise people for change. This debate is broadly speaking about the socio-political influence and role of the Pentecostal churches. One of the first to notice the phenomenon and recognise the movement’s wide appeal was Gifford. In his later work on neo-Pentecostalism in Greater Accra, Gifford has emphasised how the churches operate within and build on a neo-patrimonial political culture. The discussion on how politics and power work is relevant with regard to the mega churches studied by Gifford. However, his representation of Ghanaian political culture appear to be somewhat static. Although he recognises that “African political culture is not static or unchanging” (2004: 14), the analysis remains within a framework that opposes what is labelled a neo-patrimonial political culture and a democratic political culture. My contention is that this position limits the analytical work, as it does not allow us to see how the practices of neo-Pentecostal pastors, for instance, are both the product of the political culture, but are also contributing to its transformation. With regard to the churches potential for transforming society and enabling a more democratic political culture, Gifford is highly sceptical. He criticises scholars like Marshall and Meyer who have argued that the ideas and practices of these churches result in social transformation. Gifford’s point is that these authors do not distinguish between what the churches say they do, and what they actually do. He asks, with reference to the work of Marshall, “Yet in what way have the charismatics transformed the public sphere in Nigeria? Is the country less corrupt, more transparent, more governed by law? No evidence is given of such transformation…” (Gifford, 2004: 172). The problem with much of this literature, including the work of Gifford, is that it seeks to measure the influence of Pentecostalism in terms of a preset idea of the ways in which this religious movement could contribute positively to the development of Ghanaian society (cf. the discussion in the previous section).

The point Gifford raises is important. Much of the literature has taken the preaching of pastors at face value. When for instance pastors tell members to break with bonds to ancestors and to family, it has been interpreted as a form of social transformation, and as if this was what church members then did, however with little empirical support (see for instance the influential article by Meyer (1998a) on ‘the break with the past’). Also Maxwell (2006b: 390) has pointed out that “[m]uch of the research is too self-referential and too ‘presentist’ in orientation”. Maxwell (2000b: 473) has raised another critique of Gifford’s
work that touches upon the question of agency and local appropriation in the analysis of Pentecostalism. Although Gifford criticises for example Marshall and Meyer for not providing the empirical evidence to support their claims, he does himself not put much emphasis on how people interpret and appropriate the religious message in their everyday lives. His strong focus on elitist and authoritarian leadership in the churches, makes him disagree with the view that Pentecostal churches are places where more egalitarian relations can be developed and promoted; an argument which has been Martin’s position in the debate (Martin, 2002; see also Maxwell, 2000b: 473).

This thesis positions itself in this debate by focusing on this tension between an authoritarian style of leadership and a potential to transgress hierarchical power structures. Pentecostalism is, in the words of Maxwell (2006a: 3), “a religious movement animated by a dialectic between primitive egalitarian ideals on the one hand and hierarchy and authoritarianism on the other”. This tension is not only to be found between for instance young members and leaders, but also within the church leadership. Becoming a pastor is attractive partly because the pastor is a figure of authority and the ruler of a church. At the same time the structure of the neo-Pentecostal churches allows younger pastors to rise in the system without the consent of their senior pastor, for instance by establishing an independent church. This means that there are both elements of a authoritarian style of leadership, and possibilities of transgressing these relations by being innovative. The one does not exclude the other.

Another central theme in the literature is that of continuity and discontinuity. This has a particular relevance in relation to Pentecostalism as the notion of rupture is prominent in the rhetoric of Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal churches in Africa, both in a temporal and a spatial sense. It has been shown how in the Pentecostal optic the world is divided into “this world” and “the world of God”. Pentecostals are no longer belonging to this world, but are still living in it. They belong to the world of God. However, living in “this world”, means being controlled by forces or things “that effectively alienate a person from God” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a: 135). These forces are most often spiritual forces, controlled by the Devil and beyond a person’s control. Rupture in relation to time implies that the born-again should make distance to the past, both the immediate past (one’s personality) and the
ancestral past (relations to ancestors) (Lauterbach, 2005; Meyer, 1998a). According to Meyer there is a link between the Pentecostals’ thrust for rupture and breaking with the past and modernity’s quest for progress. The focus on liberation of a person from the past and eventual links with ancestors and spirits is central when speaking of rupture. The person is seen as part of “a chain of generations and a web of kinship relations”, which should be broken (Meyer, 1998a: 339).

This powerful discourse and imagination on rupture, distance making and ‘breaking away’ has led many scholars to put particular emphasis on the transformative character of Pentecostalism as well as discontinuity with former forms of religious ideas and practices (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a; Engelke, 2004; Marshall, 1993; Meyer, 1998a; Laurent, 1999, 2003; Robbins, 2004). The focus has been on how “[b]ecoming a Christian would thus involve completely reordering all other forms of identification and all other relationships” (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a: 136) and on how conversion to Pentecostalism is a way to escape social bonds and distance oneself from an ancestral past and home in a sometimes radical way. Robbins puts it this way: “the kind of transformation involved is a radical one that separates people both from their pasts and from the surrounding social world” (Robbins, 2004: 127). Pastors promote themselves as bringing about change in people’s lives. They employ the religious idiom of ‘making a break’, which is part of a process of personal transformation (Maxwell, 2006a; Meyer, 1998a). Engelke (2004) asserts that the issue of discontinuity and change within African religious movements has been neglected, and refers to the work of Sundkler ([1948] 1961) on Bantu prophets. He pleads for more focus on church members’ interest in breaking with the past.

With regard to my empirical material I find the focus on breaking with the past in the literature somewhat exaggerated and stretched too far. In my understanding one needs to differentiate first between the official religious discourse and adherents’ social practice. The rhetoric on rupture is undoubtedly distinctive, but I did not see any direct links between this rhetoric and members’ or pastors’ relations to family and kin. One needs to bear in mind that other factors may influence these relations as well such as level of education, employment and migration. Secondly, there is in my perception difference when talking about people’s or pastors’ interest in and rhetoric on breaking with the past, and when
talking about continuity and discontinuity with regard to a religious movement and the context it operates within. Engelke, for instance, argues that there has been too much focus on continuity and syncretism in the debate, and he finds it “surprising […] that the analysis of religious rupture has been sidelined for so long” (2004: 83). I see it as particularly relevant to look at both continuity and change with regard to neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana. However, I find that the discussion about rupture and breaking with the past, is different in the sense that it relates more closely to a set of ideas.

With the example of urban Pentecostalism in Malawi Englund and Leach (2000) discuss whether the notion of rupture among Pentecostals implies a process of individualisation. They mention the importance that is put on the distinction between being born-again or not, which indicates the strong notion of mutuality among Pentecostals. Moreover they question whether the church members who have to admit that the Holy Spirit is guiding their lives and who see themselves as “relatives in the spirit” are engaged in a project of individualisation (2000: 234-235). This comment points to the importance of including peoples’ engagement in social relations more broadly and not solely regard religious adherence as a way to make distance to social bonds.

More generally, the rise of the Pentecostal movement in Africa has been interpreted as a major change of Christianity in Africa, with focus on new ways of structuring and practicing religion as well as in terms of innovations in religious ideas and belief (Gifford, 1998, 2004). One of the premises of this thesis is that these institutions and ideas are socially and historically embedded, to a much larger extent than the literature has acknowledged, and despite the often foreign origins and inspirations of this sort of religious movements. Moreover, the approach of this study is to see how neo-Pentecostal pastors build on and engage in wider social networks when establishing themselves. A critique of the alleged breaks with social relations, as referred to above, ensues from this approach. The problem with this literature is that is has focused mostly on church rhetoric, but not sufficiently on how people act, how people become someone within the church, or how pastors build up their careers. The present study therefore is positioned within the strand of Pentecostal studies that focuses more on the social lives and practices of people and that takes into
account the social and historical contexts people and churches are operating in (e.g. Maxwell, 2006a).

The literature I engage with and criticise (e.g. Gifford, Meyer) to a large extent focuses on the big churches in Accra and analyse membership as a way to cope with modernity and to get liberated from constraining social bonds. I was expecting to find church members and pastors who used their involvement in religious networks to escape social obligations by creating distance to their families and home towns. By moving away the empirical focus from the big pastors in Accra to middle-level up-coming pastors in smaller churches in and around Kumasi, I saw a different pattern. My findings suggest that the neo-Pentecostal churches and their pastors are much more dependent on and embedded in their social surrounding and the past than has hitherto been recognised.

**CONCEPTS**

Following Asad's (2003) approach to religion as always constituted in time and space, implies that a universal definition of religion entailing some kind of essence would not make sense. In the following I will outline and discuss my approach to religion, understood as how to understand the social and political processes involved in religious practices, institutions and ideas. Of particular interest is the ways in which religion as practices, institutions and ideas interplay with socio-political and economic power structures, and the ways in which people draw upon and make sense of religion in their engagement with the world. This means that religion should be studied from an empirical perspective, but it also implies that religion should be studied in relation to other institutions and social and political practices. As this thesis explores the ‘hows’ of pastorship, rather than proposing explanations to the rise of a particular religious phenomenon, I am not aiming at proposing an argument that involves an understanding of Pentecostal Christianity as a response to the social malaise of modernity or the ‘disenchantment of the world’. My aim is to explore the dynamics of and the interplay between religion and politics without proposing causal relations.
Religion and politics: status, wealth and power

Throughout the thesis I work around a triad of concepts—status, wealth and power—and the integration between them (see Shipton and Goheen, 1992: 307 for a similar approach). I perceive these as constituting the most important elements in the process of becoming ‘big’ or in pursuing avenues of ‘bigness’. Even though these concepts do not necessarily invoke spiritual or religious connotations, they are not, as will appear below, in my understanding merely expressions of mundane relations and ripped off religious meaning. To put it roughly, I see the processes of achieving and claiming status, wealth and power as what is involved in becoming a ‘big man’ in an Asante context. Status is about the recognition that follows with being a pastor; wealth is related to how being in religious office permits to accumulate and distribute wealth, and power regards the political aspects of becoming a pastor like ascending hierarchies and building up authority. These three perspectives are interlinked and reflect the Asante historical context where for instance economic wealth and political office were closely related (McCaskie, 1995; Wilks, 1993).

The notion of status involves social processes of recognition and social mobility. This is a central aspect of becoming a pastor, because being an ɔsɔfo entails being recognised in society. Part of my argument is that this is so because of the role and significance religious experts have had in Asante historically. Status is built up by claiming access to the spiritual realm, by being able to perform spiritually and thus having religious authority. Moreover, being capable of founding a church and attracting members is required. The social aspect of recognition goes beyond the followers and also involves family members, kin and society more broadly. Therefore, I assert that status is achieved by being able to ascend socially and thereby follow criteria of success that are not exclusively based on religious experience and ideology. Here social status and religious status are intrinsically linked.

Wealth (the accumulation and distribution of wealth) is a central concept in Asante history as well as contemporary Asante. Accumulation and display of wealth was and is seen as avenues to status and power (Lentz, 1998: 47). Part of claiming status as a big ‘man of God’ is to display wealth (in terms of money, cars, clothing, housing, followers, size of church etc.). In this way wealth is a way to prove one’s spiritual capabilities and also a way to get recognition in wider society. However, the meaning of wealth and the ways to accumulate wealth are not
given or fixed, but are under debate and negotiation. Therefore, one of the contentions of the thesis is that pastors invoke and build on ideas of wealth that resonate with an Asante experience (see chapter two), and that this understanding at the same time overlaps with the strong focus on wealth and prosperity within neo-Pentecostal discourse (wealth as a sign of God’s blessing, and the importance of sowing and reaping) (see chapter three).

One of the questions to be explored is whether neo-Pentecostalism introduces new perceptions of wealth? Within a neo-Pentecostal understanding wealth is understood as more than money; it is richness in both a material and a spiritual sense. Wealth is more than money, for pastors it also means control over people, over an institution, over international relations and possessing the capacity to heal and be in contact with God. Wealth could be displayed in different ways as success; both material and other forms such as education and children. Achieving wealth means that pastors have proven their abilities to perform as religious functionaries, and they have been rewarded by God by being wealthy. In sum there are different ways to acquire wealth in present day Asante society. Alongside with the capitalisation of the economy and the development of the cash nexus (Arhin, 1976/77), other meanings of wealth have occurred, which are clearly expressed in the neo-Pentecostal churches (such as regalia, positions, writing and self-promotion, books, posters, radio, television, ornaments, titles, but still also cars, houses, clothing). However, wealth in itself does not bring power and status, wealth needs to be displayed, recognised and legitimised, as Gilbert writes: “but wealth here (as elsewhere) has to be transformed, legitimised” (Gilbert, 1988: 307).

In an Asante context the concept of power both has a spiritual and a mundane meaning (Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995). One of the questions of the thesis is how claimed spiritual power is referred to and used in more mundane social relations. An important aspect of power is access to power, not the least when it comes to spiritual power. Hence, when trying to understand the role of neo-Pentecostal pastors in Ghanaian society we must explore how these ’men of God’ get access to power, both spiritual and social power. This is an attempt to understand power not solely from a political perspective (=influence and control over

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12 Note the link between spiritual forces, wealth and authority as expressed in the concept of *mana* developed by Mauss ([1924] 1990) among others (and Weber, 1978).
others in an institutional setting), but also to include “extra-human agency” in this understanding (Arens & Karp, 1989: xv). Arens and Karp argue for an understanding of power as a cultural construct, where power needs to be understood not only as something which is exercised, but also as something with a rationale behind it (culturally informed). Power is a question of legitimacy and takes various forms (ibid.: xv). Thus in the present case the spiritual is seen as a source of power. This also indicates the understanding that sources of power not only are rational and secular (ibid.: xvii).13

First, being in possession of spiritual power (one is perceived as having access to the spiritual realm) means being in a position to influence other peoples’ lives. This perspective feeds into broader theoretical discussions on witchcraft14, personhood and individual agency (as discussed among many others by Englund, 1996 and Geschiere, 1997). In her work on chiefs in Asante Berry touches upon these discussions and points to a central aspect when writing: “[p]eople act, with good or evil intent, but the social effectiveness of their actions depends not only on their own capacities but also on their access to sources of power that lie outside the individual and beyond his or her control” (Berry, 2001: xxv). The point here is that in order to be successful one need not only to rely on own capacities and abilities, but also largely on other people who have proven to have access to ‘the power of God’ (this could of course also be other sources of power).

Secondly, when attempting to grasp the dynamics of the role of Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal pastors their social networks must be taken into account (where they come from, how they got promoted, how they eventually started on their own, who they relate to and who assisted them). One could say that it is illogical to emphasise social relations and networks, when dealing with neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors and ‘one-man churches’, where one of the most prominent features is the creation of new and independent churches, and as one of the central arguments in the literature has been that individualisation and distance creation (from kinship and wider social contexts) is one of the social outcomes of Pentecostalism (van Dijk,

13 It should be noted that the present study is not about domination and how it is exercised. It is dealing with the ways in which Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors legitimatise their social positions by being mediators of the spiritual world, and how this role is in itself a source of power.
14 The term ‘witchcraft’ is maybe a bit too narrow, as we are talking about spiritual power and the spiritual realm, which is more than witchcraft (also healing, divination etc.). Witchcraft is probably the aspect which has received most scholarly attention (lately).
Notwithstanding, my empirical material suggests that the social networks pastors engage in are central to how they operate and how they become successful. Founding and leading a ‘one-man church’ does require relations to other churches and pastors. Moreover, if one does not succeed within one church (getting the right promotion or possibility to grow) and one creates a new church, it implies being involved in new social relations or adapting/adjusting existing ones. So a pastoral career is not only about individual self-promotion, but it is also largely an investment in social relationships, which serve as the foundation for being able to operate as a figure of authority\(^\text{15}\) in a given community, in this case as pastors. This is to say that becoming a pastor is not merely a question of having a pastoral calling or studying the Bible, it is also very much a question of building and investing in the right social relationships, and of being able to impose oneself as and play the game of a ‘man of God’. The point is that we are not only dealing with individual pastoral careers, but in order to make these careers one needs to have people above (spiritual fathers or mentors) and people below (church members). In other words one needs to operate in a web of social relations.

In sum, one obtains status by possessing wealth and this process is also part of achieving power, as a certain social standing, historically, was related to a political standing as well. I therefore find it useful to view the processes at stake when making pastoral careers as processes that involve elements of politics. I would argue that the ways in which pastors navigate in a religious field, drawing also on a repertoire of local politics, can be seen as ways to get access to wealth and to obtain social status. Commenting, in an interview, on his first book on Lugbara religion Middleton explained:

> “You see, it’s power. Evans-Pritchard once said to me—he didn’t write it, as far as I know—that what we study is the concept and exercise of power: the Nuer saw their lives as guided by the power of spirits, and the Lugbara saw theirs as guided by the power of ancestors, which could be manipulated by the living if they could only understand it. So that book is really on micropolitics” (Pellow, 1999: 218).

\(^{15}\) Authority is understood as claiming and being conferred the legitimacy to define and promote values (ideologies), and not necessarily as linked to the hegemony of the state.
This, as mentioned before, is an attempt to argue that religious values, ideologies and institutions have a broader social and political significance.

Religion and politics: Processes of becoming a ‘big man’

I employ the metaphor ‘big man’ throughout the thesis to indicate that I see pastorship as a social process of becoming that involves pastors and their social surroundings. In addition, the idea is not to employ the term ‘big man’ as a labelling to a certain type of leadership figure; I am interested in the social processes around becoming bigger and not in the figure of a ‘big man’ per se.

My perspective on ‘big men’ is inspired by Joan Vincent’s book from 1971 ‘African Elite. The Big Men of a Small Town’. The focus in Vincent’s book on the social processes involved in becoming ‘big’ in village life in Uganda offers obvious parallels to the argument developed in this thesis. The process of becoming a pastor is analysed as a way to become a ‘big man’, and I suggest that this metaphor is useful in laying out the social relations and networks individuals involve themselves in when becoming a ‘man of God’ (Sahlins, 1963; Vincent, 1971). In other words, it is the processes of achieving bigness, rather than the figure of a ‘big man’ per se that are central to my understanding of why and how pastors become pastors.

Looking at pastorship as a process, and employing the metaphor of the ‘big man’, does not imply that I try to argue that pastors are ‘big men’ as such, or that they are ‘reduced’ to being self-maximising political actors. What I attempt to do is to use this metaphor as a way of illuminating the broadness and ‘bigness’ of pastorship. Bayart (1993: 141) points out that religious leaders form a sort of entrepreneurial elite, not only in religious terms, but also in economic and political terms. Religious leaders act as a kind of chiefs. They draw on a certain symbolism related to chieftaincy. However, one of the major differences between chiefs and neo-Pentecostal pastors understood as ‘big men’ as described among others by Médard (1992: 170) (drawing on Sahlins), is that chief disposes of institutional power and an inherited legitimacy, whereas the ‘big man’ only has “un pouvoir d’influence qu’il s’est construit lui-même : c’est un self made man, un entrepreneur …”. A key point is ‘the art of redistribution’. In order to be legitimate the ‘big man’ must redistribute the accumulated
wealth, which gives political capital, which again permits him to accumulate further: “il faut avoir du pouvoir politique pour être riche, il faut être riche pour le conserver” (Médard, 1992: 172). Another central aspect in the literature is the strategy of straddling various positions (or accumulation of positions). There is a changeability of accumulated resources, which means that the role of the ‘big man’ is not only political, but also economic and social. Furthermore, Médard argues that straddling is not only about accumulating positions, but “d’utiliser une position pour en obtenir une autre et dans le même movement renforcer la position précédente ou changer de position en passant d’une position moins importante à une position plus importante” (ibid.: 176).

I argue, in the same vein, that becoming a pastor is about operating in and between various platforms simultaneously. Achieving recognition as a pastor in a church or a religious community implies gaining respect within other domains than the church, for instance within families, kinship and community groups. Lentz criticises the use of the straddling image as it “entails the danger of reifying different fields of action” (Lentz, 1998: 61). She proposes to speak of complementarity and combination of different registers of power. Refining my argument, and taking this critique into account, I would suggest that by operating in and between different platforms, pastors combine different registers of power to achieve bigness (ibid.: 48), and in a way that combines the essence of the positions they are occupying. Their positions in different platforms are not distinct as such, but the bigness

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16 I use the term platform as it alludes to an entity with not so fixed boundaries, and where one (pastors) can manoeuvre betwixt and between platforms with the same aim (to enhance their status, wealth and power). Another reason for using this term is that it does not have a whole theoretical baggage that one would also subscribe to, as for instance the concept of field. Bourdieu’s concept of field is defined as a system of social positions organised around power relations, where agents seek to achieve and claim different forms of capital. Bourdieu has worked with the concept of religious field (champ religieux) (Bourdieu, 1971; Rey, 2004). Fields are not autonomous and capital can be transferred from one field to the other, thus “[o]nce transferred to other fields and transformed into other forms of capital, religious capital enables elites and affiliated institutions to perform better in the economic and political fields and thus to dominate the social world” (Rey, 2004: 333). The religious field is structured by oppositional relations, for example between religious specialists and the laity. It is crucial for me to stress that the entities (field or platform) that I analyse should not be understood as isolated entities. The religious platform refers to an overall frame of reference in the way it functions. In addition, what I am interested in here is not to define or analyse a platform per se, but to uncover how pastors manoeuvre between and within different platforms. My contention is that it is precisely the ability to do this that makes them powerful. The point is to see pastors in these platforms from the connectedness or the conglomerate of platforms; as holistic and as connected, rather than platforms as separate systems. I have used the term arena more in the case of people competing over different resources e.g. in the church. The term realm is employed when referring to the spiritual (or to alternate the terms I use). The spiritual is different in the sense that it is part of a broader understanding of the world. It is to be understood in a definitional relation to the material.
they achieve is transferable and recognisable in several platforms. Pastors do not shift from one position to another, but their accumulation of recognition and legitimacy works simultaneously and within several platforms. This does also not imply that pastors come to obtain for instance official political positions or are (s)elected for political office. Rather, my data suggests that neo-Pentecostal pastorship integrates aspects of politics (by building up and drawing on different registers of power) into religious office.

In this way I seek to move beyond a depiction of religious leaders as ‘big men’ that “are persistent performances of the patrimonialist narrative as a form of static normative labelling” (Gould, 2006: 923). The point is that the new holders of religious office draw on features of political office, and their ability to combine these two registers is what makes them powerful. They are not ‘big men’ in the sense of Médard (1992) or Bayart (1993), as they are not ‘trapped’ in clientilistic relations, but are able to move beyond and recreate the relations that permit them to grow. The important question is what a ‘big man’ is and who a ‘big man’ relates to. In the case of neo-Pentecostal pastors becoming ‘big men’ involve more than getting rich, accumulating material wealth and being elected. The important question of redistribution, when exploring the becoming of ‘big men’, is also somewhat different in the case of pastors. The issue of ‘reaping’ and ‘receiving God’s blessing’ can be seen as a form of redistribution, however, with a spiritual connotation to it. Moreover, as I see it, there is not necessarily a direct link between pastor and followers in the sense that the pastor must be the one redistributing. The pastor can be the mediator, and the actual redistribution could for instance be in the form of a loan from a cousin in London. Other forms of redistribution can also be thought of, for example, in the form of prayers and healing. Additionally, accumulated wealth is not a prerequisite for establishing oneself as a pastor. Wealth is not only to be understood in material terms, but also in terms of people, institutions, and relations. Wealth is in this case seen as a sign of that claimed access to spiritual power, which implies that other parameters/skills/virtues than economic accumulation are at stake. What is central is the claimed access to spiritual power (and hence a transgression of the material focus in Médard’s ‘big man’) and the ability to perform spiritually and possess charisma. Also, becoming a ‘big man’ involves the recognition and legitimisation of others (e.g. the following) of this position, as for instance expressed in the concept of charisma.
Religion and politics: Charisma or invoking the power of God

According to Barker (1993) charisma should not be perceived as a quality someone possesses, but as a social process whereby charismatic authority is endowed. Thus, the aim is to understand the dynamics of the social processes around charisma and how these relations work, rather than to understand the personality of ‘one man’ (Barker, 1993: 182).

Charismatic authority is linked to the concept of power in the sense that power “is the ability to get others to do what one wants them to” (ibid.: 182), and authority is power which is legitimate. Barker writes: “Charismatic authority is accorded to a person whom his (or, occasionally, her) followers see as having special grace from God, and/or personal characteristics that make him or her ordinarily special” (ibid.: 182). Contrary to traditional and rational authority, charismatic authority is based on a break from tradition and permits innovation (builds on Weber’s distinction between traditional, bureaucratic/rational and charismatic authority). Barker claims that it is unrestricted in scope, in terms of what areas of life the person has influence on. However, there are certainly limits to the scope of relations that are under influence from charismatic authority (a religious leader will not have influence on all relations he/she engages in).17

Lentz (1998) points out that the Weberian distinctions between traditional, rational and charismatic authority and the ideal types they characterise are not necessarily as distinct as outlined by Weber. The various types of authority coexist and intersect (ibid.: 59). The point about seeing charisma as a social process rather than something that characterises a person fits well with my approach to pastorship and becoming a ‘big man’ as a social process. In the literature that deals with the prophets of the Ghanaian spiritual churches (Baëta, [1962] 2004) or Pentecostal pastors as ‘big men’ (Gifford, 2004) the notion of charisma is often thought of as an attribute, or something that someone possesses, and it does not go into exploring how one comes to possess, claim and legitimise charisma or how charisma is transferred from one pastor to another in situations of succession.

17 Weber distinguished between priests and prophets in the sense that a priest belongs to an established hierarchical office that confers legitimate authority, whereas the prophet claims authority on personal revelation and charisma (Weber, 1978: 440). In the case of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors there are traits of both ways to claim authority, however, with a strong significance on the personal call and the claim to spiritual gifts.
METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This thesis is an analysis of religion and politics as expressed in the construction and meaning of pastorship in and around Kumasi. This analysis presents one perspective on neo-Pentecostalism and religious leadership among others. The findings provide insights into the social processes around pastorship that applies to those churches and pastors that were studied. Based on readings of other scholarly work on neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa, newspaper articles and conversations with a number of Ghanaians from within and without neo-Pentecostal churches I would also claim that the findings apply more broadly to pastors of the same kind of churches in a larger Ghanaian context. The findings express more general trends of change within religious office and renewed roles of religious leaders that are profoundly embedded in the social surroundings and in the past. The trajectories and cases presented in the thesis are therefore to be perceived of as ‘diagnostic events’ in that they represent larger social processes at stake (Moore, 1987).

The initial idea of the project was to study the relations between Ghanaian members of neo-Pentecostal churches in Denmark and their home communities, and in particular the influence of religious adherence on these relations. The planned fieldwork was in consequence transnational in scope. I began fieldwork in Denmark in the summer 2004 and interviewed pastors of Ghanaian founded churches, as well as leaders of Ghanaian associations in Denmark in order to get a broader introduction to the Ghanaian community. These first contacts, especially that of pastor James Commey of International Harvest Christian Centre, and pastor Emmanuel Appiah and pastor Chris Oduro of Alive Bible Congregation (ABC) in Copenhagen were central entry points to my later fieldwork in Kumasi.

During my first stay in Kumasi I visited and talked to the pastors in the branch of ABC, which pastor Oduro had just set up, and I stayed in the house of a member of ABC (Copenhagen), who was visiting Kumasi at the same time as I. During this and later periods of fieldwork I came to realise that the initial research question was not a feasible one to explore. First, because it was methodologically difficult to establish a causal link between
people’s religious adherence and their relations to family and home, and secondly because people (especially the Ghanaians I met in Denmark) were reluctant to speak about family members at home and their situation as migrants. This experience, as well as my observations in Kumasi of the multitude of young pastors and their eagerness to establish their own churches, subsequently changed my research focus and the organisation of fieldwork. However, the initial phase of fieldwork in Copenhagen came to constitute the point of departure for the fieldwork that followed suite.

**Sites**

Apart from the fieldwork that was carried out in Copenhagen, I did the major part of my work in Kumasi, which is the capital of the Ashanti region in Ghana. As I studied pastors and not churches per se I did not concentrate on one particular area of Kumasi or on one particular church. I went wherever the pastors were living and preaching. I did a few interviews in Accra mainly with church members and pastors I got connected to through Ghanaians in Denmark, as well as with scholars working on Ghanaian Pentecostalism. Moreover, part of my material was collected in Sunyani and Techiman, both in the Brong-Ahafo region of Ghana. The ties to Techiman came through a Ghanaian pastor, who had been in Copenhagen and had returned. He had formerly been working in Kumasi and had in Denmark been working in the church (ABC) that had set up a branch in Kumasi, which he was indirectly involved in. The work I did in Sunyani consisted mainly of participating in and observing the funeral of an important bishop of one of Ghana’s bigger neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches. Although the case was not directly linked to Kumasi it was a unique occasion not to miss. I see it as representing some of the same traits as the churches and pastors I worked with in Kumasi. Sunyani and Techiman are included in what was labelled Greater Asante in pre-colonial times.

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18 This might be due to irregular paper situations, but also due to the reason that there were not any particular matter that was of great concern to people with regard to church attendance and the influence of this on their links to home.

19 In the thesis I merely refer to Asante. Asante is a pre-colonial Akan kingdom. Today part of the geographical region is administratively called the Ashanti region and other parts are included in the Brong-Ahafo region. For further explanations see chapter two, footnote two.
Following pastors

One of the principles along which I organised my work in the field was to ‘follow the people’ (Marcus, 1995: 106). Concretely I tried to follow the social ties of neo-Pentecostal pastors. After having met a pastor I tried to follow this person’s social ties and then interview colleagues, former colleagues, mentors, friends, family members and church members. To give an example: Through James Commey, who is a church leader in Copenhagen, I met his former colleagues and friends in Accra. Through these people I got introduced to one of their pastors in Kumasi. Moreover James Commey had a good friend in Kumasi (Victor Osei), who was leading one of the city’s largest neo-Pentecostal churches, and whom I interviewed several times. Victor had a junior pastor (Francis Afrifa), who had been to Denmark and who later established a church on his own. Through Francis I got to know Nicolas Asare, who was also leading a church and a Bible school, as well as members of Francis family in Apenkra outside Kumasi. This strategy was decisive for the organisation of my fieldwork and furthermore for the scope of my analysis.

By implication the study revolves around the question of how pastors build up status, wealth and power by focusing on how pastors operate within and between different platforms. I look into how they construct and construe pastorship by analysing the outcomes and the meaning of this in a broader social context. In other words the focus is on people rather than institutions (Hagberg, 2006), and on how crucial decisions in their lives are taken and made sense of (Rathbone, 1996: 2). This offers perhaps the most useful way of piecing together the particular and contingent nature of what is involved in becoming bigger. This approach has the limitation that one does not get an in depth understanding of one particular church, for instance the relations between leaders and members, or financial issues. However, the advantage of the approach is that it goes beyond viewing the construction of pastorship as confined to the institution of the church.

As I am not only interested in the social practice of pastors, but also their thoughts and ideas about becoming pastors, I have followed certain ideas or metaphors that occurred as central during fieldwork (Marcus, 1995: 108). One such metaphor is ‘God’s calling’, which was a central point in the pastors’ account on how and why they became pastors. Another and
supplementary way of organising my interviews with pastors has been to focus on their biographies and careers.

*Studying Pentecostalism*

Neo-Pentecostalism as overlooked in social scientists’ analysis of Africa can be understood in terms of Christianity representing a form of cultural ‘other’ in the academic community. Yet Christianity does not represent the ‘other’ in the same way as for instance Islam. As noted by Robbins:

> “Christians are too similar by virtue of drawing on the same broad cultural tradition as anthropologists, and too meaningfully different by virtue of drawing on a part of that tradition that in many respects has arisen in critical dialogue with the modernist ideas on which anthropology is founded” (Robbins, 2003: 192).

That is part of the dilemma when studying Christianity. Many forms of Christianity are found to be threatening because they challenge “liberal versions of modernity of the kind most anthropologists subscribe to” (ibid.: 193). Hence, the dilemma is that neo-Pentecostal/charismatic Christians are too similar and at the same time constitute ‘repugnant cultural others’ that are “opponents of modernity, progress, enlightenment, truth, and reason” (Harding, 1991: 375). As Robbins (2003: 193) has pointed out it is the similarities as much as the difference, and the relation between the two, that make Christianity a challenge to study: “It is the closeness of Christianity that makes its otherness to potent [...] Neither real others nor real comrades”.

Moreover, studying neo-Pentecostal churches and pastors can be a challenging experience (Maxwell, 2006a: 11) in the sense that the necessary empathy often is in conflict with ideas about freedom and tolerance. One of the ambitions of this project has been to understand pastors on their own terms and in their own rights. This, among other things, meant taking their thoughts about their pastoral calling and their expressed ideas about their lives and aspirations seriously. In the analysis, I combine this perspective with a more sociological analysis of their practices, so that the focus is on what they are doing, for what reason, as well as how they explain what they are doing.
As for my own experience, especially the churches’ attachment to American white evangelists travelling in Africa as well as some pastors’ eagerness to proselytise, was difficult to engage with in an open-minded way. At times the exercise became a challenge to personal pride and prejudice. One way of overcoming these dilemmas was that I always made clear that I was not there as a missionary or a church member and did not intend to become one. Instead I insisted on my role as a researcher. When attending church services I participated (in politeness) by singing, praying and giving offerings, but did not become actively involved in any church activities. I always declined to preach, which I was asked on several occasions, but instead proposed to sing a Christian song.20

The material

The empirical material on which the analysis of the thesis is based consists of 87 interviews, participation in 32 church services and events in 14 different churches, collection of audio-visual material (videos and cassettes) from church services, religious booklets and magazines, newspaper articles, questionnaires, archival files, as well as numerous conversations with pastors and their families. The material was collected during 2004 and 2005. I stayed in Ghana for a total of five months.

I initially made use of a questionnaire in the Ghanaian founded churches in Copenhagen. The aim of this was to get introduced to church members and get basic information on their church membership and how they maintained relations to home. I collected 24 completed questionnaires and used this as an occasion to make arrangements for interviewing church members. The work presented in this thesis is not based on this material, but it has permitted me to get some understanding of the constitution of congregations in the Ghanaian founded churches abroad. Similarly, I elaborated a questionnaire for my fieldwork in Ghana, of which I collected only 13 completed copies. It had a relatively broad purpose (the role of churches in Ghana, see appendix D) and served as a way to get knowledge on the motivation for people to be church members and in particular their view of their pastors.

20 I am not necessarily a supporter of including the personal experiences of the self (the author) too much in the analysis. However, in this case it is relevant to specify one’s position as either an outsider or insider, as this has influence on the kind of material one gets access to.
This material equally served as background information and as indication of what themes to pursue in interviews. I moreover looked through files at the Ghana National Archives, Kumasi as well as the in the archives of the Manhyia Palace. Most of the material related to the colonial period (e.g. conflict between chiefs and missionaries) and some also to the work of Pentecostal churches in the 1960s and 1970s. The material has not been used directly in the thesis.

The interviews were organised as semi-structured interviews that were following questions and themes defined beforehand (see examples in appendices B and C). However, most interviews were adjusted to the particular situation and to the knowledge I had of the person. I interviewed a few pastors on more than one occasion, which permitted me to go more into depth with histories. The interviews were structured in different themes. I was asking pastors, as well as church members about their background (e.g. family relations, education, ancestral home), what their role was in the family and how it had changed over time, and in particular after they had become pastors. I was interested in how they became born-again and pastors. When talking about pastoral careers, I was interested in both the concrete steps they had been through, but also how they saw their own trajectory in relation to the fulfilment of their aspirations. I was also asking about their work as pastors and what tasks they were performing. Moreover, we talked more generally about the role of pastors in Ghanaian society. Some of the pastors I interviewed acted more as representatives of the churches, and provided me with information on the organisation of the church and how relations to pastors who were working abroad were handled. At the first stage of my fieldwork I contacted family members to Ghanaians I had met in Copenhagen. These interviews were sometimes rather awkward as people felt uncomfortable talking to an unknown person about a relative abroad. When I was realising that my project had moved from studying migrants relations to home and instead studying pastors, I stopped conducting these interviews. Most pastors I talked to were very eager to talk about their church and themselves as pastors, but more reluctant to talk about their family and background, as this was not part of the official image of the pastor.
STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The second chapter of the thesis is dedicated to history and background. It discusses two sets of related questions: 1. how Asante society has been and is structured socially, economically, and politically in terms of status, wealth and power, how the meaning of these categories has changed over time, and 2. how religious ideas, practices, and institutions have been constituted and how they have changed over time. The chapter moreover seeks to analyse how religious and political power have been interlinked. The chapter is organised around two figures: that of the ‘big man’ (širempɔn) and that of the religious expert (ɔkɔmfɔ). The argument of the chapter is that religious and political institutions and ideas around status, wealth and power have been linked historically in Asante. In order to understand the contemporary phenomenon of the emergence of neo-Pentecostal pastors we therefore need to build our understanding on how the above mentioned figures have changed meaning and significance over time.

Chapter three discusses how neo-Pentecostal doctrine is attractive for both pastors and church members. I deal in particular with how doctrine relate to wealth and success. I discuss how religious doctrine enables certain economic and social processes. I argue that the doctrine appeals both to entrepreneurship among individual church members as well as among pastors, and thus operates at two levels at the same time. There is therefore a double driving force, which makes it particular dynamic. The religious can enforce certain socio-economic conditions. I go into the questions of how doctrine has developed in the various stages of the movement and how that has been translated in church practices/acts/ceremonies.

Chapter four is concerned with the internal dynamics of pastorship. It analyses how one becomes a pastor and how status, wealth and power is achieved in this process. The chapter analyses various facets of becoming a pastors such as the pastoral calling, training and Bible schools as well as the work of pastors. The craft of pastorship is approached not only from the perspective of the church, but as being performed, unfolded and made sense of on several platforms simultaneously. The chapter is therefore also dealing with the social structures around pastorship (such as family relations), yet the focus is on how the individual
pastor navigates and relates to the different platforms. I argue that successful pastors operate within more than one platform (the church) and that those who can play in the field in between these platforms are the most successful ones. Moreover, in order to build up and legitimise a position as a pastor, the pastor has to show that he has access to the spiritual realm, hence spiritual power. This is done for example through display of wealth and abilities to heal and perform miracles.

Three pastoral trajectories are explored in chapter five. This chapter discusses pastorship as it takes form and is played out among younger as well as more established pastors in Kumasi and proposes an analysis of pastoral trajectories seen as a career or a path in life. The argument of the chapter is that the process of becoming a pastor involves apprenticeship as well as entrepreneurship. Apprenticeship involves learning how to act and perform as a pastor. Furthermore, being in an apprentice-mentor relationship allows a young pastor to draw on the credibility and spiritual power of a senior pastor. Up-coming pastors also undertake entrepreneurship and innovation, as complementary (and linked) modus operandi, when establishing themselves as pastors. They seek relationships that, on the one hand, provide protection and legitimacy and, on the other hand, permit them to grow in terms of gaining and exercising authority.

Chapter six is about the funeral of a bishop from a Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal/charismatic church. The chapter seeks to describe and discuss the funeral ceremony of an influential church founder and leader. I approach the funeral as an arena for mobilisation and contestation of power. There are three issues at stake in this case: 1. Contestation over the site of burial, 2. struggle to control the ceremony and 3. Struggle to become the heir of the bishop and rule the organisation (succession). An analysis of these contestations gives insights into the mechanisms and processes of becoming and being a big ‘man of God’. The funeral of this church leader is moreover an exposure of the relations and interdependence between church, family and the surrounding community. The overall argument of the chapter is that church, family, and home-community compete and intertwine in their claim to the dead and the rule of the church. Chapter seven proposes a final and overall discussion and conclusion of the thesis.
CHAPTER TWO
WEALTH AND WORTH IN ASANTE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses two sets of related questions. First, it explores the socio-economic and political structures of Asante society and how status, wealth and power were achieved and how these categories have changed meaning over time. How did one become a ‘big man’ and what were the processes of social promotion and achieving social status in pre-colonial, colonial and independent Ghana? Second, the chapter examines how religious ideas, practices and institutions have been constituted and have changed over time. What was and is the role of religious specialists and leaders? How was (and is) religious or spiritual power constituted and achieved and how have the relations between the religious and the mundane been understood? The focus of the chapter is specifically on up-coming and aspiring groups who can be seen as being both entrepreneurial and as aiming at being recognised as people with status and power according to established norms. The chapter is organised around two particular social groups; ‘big men’ (abirempon) and religious leaders (akwaso). I discuss the circumstances that enable these groups to change and the circumstances that produce continuities. Ultimately the chapter seeks to look at the historical resonances of the Pentecostal movement in terms of being a ‘big man’ and a religious leader. The argument of this thesis is that contemporary pastors of the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic movement become pastors as a way to achieve social status and wealth. In order to understand the social principles around these concepts, we need to understand the particular expression and importance of social promotion, titles and becoming a ‘big man’ in pre-colonial Asante.

Furthermore the aim is to link the two sets of related questions by asking 1. How religious leaders and functionaries draw upon and tap into systems of social stratification and 2. By analysing how the two kinds of offices and types of figures (the religious and political)

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1 I use the term Asante throughout this text, whenever possible, because it alludes to the broader understanding of the historic polity, and for reason of readability. When referring to specifically colonial or postcolonial administrative regions or titles I use Ashanti (Boone, 2003: 146, fn. 5). See Rathbone (1991: 335) for a comment on defining Asante.
innovate and reproduce cultural norms. To what extent do the figures of *shirempom* and *akwemfo* represent present day political and religious figures? How have these figures changed over time? This chapter argues that contemporary religious figures do not constitute an isolated social category. They draw on a broader repertoire of norms and ideas that are not limited to the religious. One could therefore ask whether and to what extent the religious office has become less religious over time and/or whether priesthood has become more consolidated over time, and finally, whether there are stronger similarities between political office and religious office now than before.

From the above it follows that the religious and the political function as organising devices for the chapter. I will begin by briefly describing the historical background of the two types of figures and elaborate on how changing contexts influence political and religious office as well as the meaning of and ways to achieve status, wealth and power. The chapter is not concerned with a causal relation between past and present (explaining today by means of the past), but rather with tracing changes and continuities. It is about understanding how neo-Pentecostalism resonates with the past and how the past provides a frame for making sense of new religious ideologies. In this sense the past is both part of and shapes those enabling circumstances that make it worthwhile, meaningful and attractive to engage in pastorship. Still, when context change, people also change their ways of going about things, and we need to trace these changes to understand how aspiring political and religious figures achieve and maintain positions of power.

The first part of the chapter covers pre-colonial times and mainly the period around the establishment of the Asante state until British occupation at the end of the nineteenth century. It revolves around the social organisation of society, focusing on the accumulation and display of wealth. Moreover, it describes religious specialists, ideas and institutions of that time. The second part of the chapter covers the time from colonialism to independence, and explores changes and continuities with regard to social stratification and wealth. The second part also discusses the introduction of Christianity and the work of missionaries. The spiritual churches (*sunsum sore*) also grew from the beginning of the twentieth century and will be dealt with here, as well as other important religious institutions such as anti-witchcraft cults. The third part of the chapter briefly deals with contemporary Ghanaian society, and
focuses on contemporary religious movements and the links between these and politics. The third part, moreover, discusses ways of achieving status in modern Ghana. The chapter ends with a discussion of the role of history in understanding the present day neo-Pentecostal movement.

WEALTH AND ‘BIG MEN’ IN PRE-COLONIAL ASANTE

In pre-colonial Asante, the accumulation of wealth was strongly linked to the achievement of social status. Hence, achieving social recognition was somehow dependent on one’s ability to accumulate and display wealth. To a large extent, the process of achieving recognition was controlled by the state. The Asante state (Asanteman) and its political power was highly centralised and it was therefore possible, at least in some periods of time, to exercise extensive control. An interesting aspect of the constitution of the Asante state, which will be explored in more detail below, is the relationship between the Asante state, religion and religious specialists (akɔmfo3). This relationship has often been understood as involving opposition between the controllers of the state and the invokers of spiritual power. But the state also depended on religious specialists, as they were supposed to provide order and impede unrest. The tensions around the sources and the distribution of power in Asante have been discussed by, among others, Berry (2001) and Akyeampong and Obeng (1995). Akyeampong and Obeng argue that the notion of power was rooted in Asante cosmos, and that it was accessible to all if they had the knowledge of how to access and use it. Hence, there were cosmological underpinnings to the state and power. This argument points to the possibility that “state power was less concentrated and all-encompassing in precolonial Asante than previous scholarship has suggested” (Berry, 2001: 1).

2 Geographically, pre-colonial Asante covered most of modern Ghana and the eastern parts of the Ivory Coast. This is also referred to as the Asante empire or Greater Asante (Arhin, 1995: 98).
3 The literal meaning of akɔmfo (pl. akɔmfoɔ) is one who is possessed by abosom (pl. abosom, powers of supernatural origin). An akɔmfo is a mediator between the highest spiritual power and the people. The term akɔmfo is often translated as priest or fetish priest (McCaskie, 1995: 290).
The Asante state was founded at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the forest region of Ghana. After the war against, and the defeat of the Denkyira, Osei Tutu who was to become the first Asantehene (1701-1717), founded the Asante state. This state was based on a military coalition between a number of Akan states that, together, defeated the Denkyira. What was at first a military coalition was, after the defeat of the Denkyira, transformed into a polity or a political union with the Asantehene as the supreme political authority (Wilks, 1993: 112). An important figure in relation to the foundation of the kingdom was Komfo Anokye (a priest). He assisted Osei Tutu in founding the kingdom. He helped (by magic) in defeating the Denkyira and participated in the constitution of the state by writing laws. He also mediated in the appearance of the Golden Stool (sika dua), which was both the symbol of political authority and of the soul (sunsum) of Asante (McCaskie, 1986b: 318-319). There is both a religious and political connotation to the Golden Stool. On the one hand, it is the symbol of the highest political authority (the physical symbol of political office) and, on the other hand, it is a symbol of the supernatural (its origin is supernatural and its appearance was facilitated by an ɔkɔmfɔ). The Golden Stool symbolises integration of the supernatural and political authority. As McCaskie writes: “Precolonial Asante had been forged around an ideology that combined the materialism of the state and the religio-spirituality of the Asante people in the superordinate symbol of the Golden Stool” (McCaskie, 1986a: 16).

The early economy was based first and foremost on trade in gold and slave labour. In the eighteenth century, Asante was an expansionist power. Its economy was based on subsistence agriculture and export of captive labour to the transatlantic slave trade. An increasing agricultural production led to socio-economic differentiation and “political

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4 The historiography of the origins of the Asante kingdom is quite extensive, see among others Arhin (1983, 1990), Austin (2005), McCaskie (1983, 1995, 2007b), McLeod (1981), Wilks (1975, 1993: 91-126), and many more. I am aware that this summary does not do justice to the nuances and details of this literature.

5 Denkyira was an Akan state that together with the Adanse, Akyem, Asante, and Asen (Assin) constituted the cradle of the Akan (Wilks, 1993: 91).

6 McCaskie explains the role of the Asantehene and the relation between the Asanteman and the Asantehene. “The Asanteman or nation ‘belongs’ to the Golden Stool. The Asantehene is the custodian of the Golden Stool on behalf of the Asanteman. He was and is charged with the nation’s moral and practical wellbeing, its past and its future, its increase” (McCaskie, 1983: 6).

7 Whether this is merely a myth or whether Komfo Anokye existed as a historical figure has been debated, see among others McLeod, 1981: 65, McCaskie, 1986b: 319).

8 The significance of Komfo Anokye can, according to McCaskie (1986b: 320), be seen as “his cognitive ‘necessity’ as metaphor”, and he thereby distinguishes between his significance as a historical fact in a specific moment in time and as a metaphor that comprises all time.
institutionalisation of that socio-economic differentiation in chiefdoms” (McCaskie, 1995: 25-26). Before colonial times, trade was mainly an activity of the ruling class. The Asantehene did not encourage trade among commoners or non-office holders, as there was a risk “that the command of wealth by the commoners would lead to their competing for power with the hereditary rulers” Arhin (1986: 25). In other words, only the king and great men traded in Asante.9

Increasing food production, led to agricultural industriousness in the villages surrounding Kumasi (McCaskie, 1995: 31). In the early nineteenth century the permanent population of Kumasi was between 20,000 and 25,000, most of whom were involved in government business, in performance of state ceremonies, and in service related functions.10 Those living in the capital did not contribute to the production of food; they were merely demanders of consumer goods, and thus depended on the people living in rural areas to producing food for their consumption. Agricultural production took place in the surrounding villages of Kumasi, villages that later became part of the capital (McCaskie, 2000: 9-10).

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Asante state was a relatively closed system and its power unchallenged. According to Arhin (1990: 525), the Asante state controlled the accumulation of wealth in order to maintain social and political order. The political order was based on a ranking system that was regulated by the state. McCaskie points to two factors that had changed (as compared to before the eighteenth century). First, that participation in state offices became the way to accumulate wealth and secondly that people (subjects) increased their value as objects of accumulation and they “became an indispensable item in the public exhibition of an office holder’s power and prestige” (McCaskie, 1995: 38). The state monopolized accumulation of wealth and access to it, as well as the redistribution of it. Membership of the state was the only certain way to acquire great wealth (McCaskie, 1995: 38). Resources were not individually owned. The state was the proprietor of land and people (Arhin, 1983: 4-5).

9 This has been debated by Austin (1996).
10 According to Arhin (1990: 526) the size of the population of Kumasi in the early nineteenth century was around 12,000-15,000.
McCaskie (1995) argues that the political economy of pre-colonial Asante not only should be understood in economic terms, as wealth and the accumulation of wealth also are based on socio-political and ideological factors. Wealth - as measured in gold, people, land and food - was part of the experience and knowledge of Asantes on how to obtain success and progress, “hence, the accumulation of wealth as imperative and as yardstick, and the deeply resonant meaning of wealth as symbol and as mnemonic, were abiding and central figures of Asante life, history and self-knowledge” (McCaskie, 1995: 37). The possession of subjects and land validated and represented influence, attainment, status and rank (McCaskie, 1995: 56). Rights in land and subjects, and their shifting meaning over time, functioned “as a ready measure of an individual office holder’s wealth, influence and access, and as a highly public indicator of upward and downward mobility” (McCaskie, 1995: 58). Possessing wealth was not only a matter of securing power in a political sense, but also “spilled over into cultural ethics and religious belief” (McCaskie, 1983: 29). As mentioned above, the Golden Stool was both a religious symbol and a symbol of authority and power.

In terms of processes of becoming someone important and of social climbing, accumulation and display of wealth played a central role. Upward social mobility could only be achieved within the state. These processes were controlled and sanctioned by the state as the state also controlled access to and accumulation of wealth (McCaskie, 1995: 52). The state, for instance, controlled the distribution and the outflow of gold. This was necessary because gold was “the supreme embodiment of wealth as well as the measure of authority” (Arhin, 1995: 99, see also Wilks, 1993: 136).

Status was achieved by becoming office holders and eventually, and possibly, through promotion by being awarded the title ɔbirɛmpɔn (‘big man’)11, which was a sign of recognition (McCaskie, 1983, 1995). A symbol of ɔbirɛmpɔn was the mena (elephant tail), which new titleholders were decorated with. McCaskie explains: “To be an ɔbirɛmpɔn – at the level of social thought – was all at once to preside over society and to be responsible for its maintenance and continuity” (McCaskie, 1983: 27). An example of this is the royal nhenkwaa

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11 ɔbirɛmpɔn means a ‘big man’, also implies rule, power and wealth. According to McCaskie “[i]t was a hereditary title held by the heads of territorial chiefdoms, and also conferred upon the very wealthiest accumulators” (McCaskie, 1995: 275).
(sing. *abenkwaa*) (servants of the *Asantehene*). They aspired to become office holders and *abirempɔn*, because it was the “access to wealth, women, land, subjects and making a ‘great name’. Here was the model of success” (McCaskie, 1986a: 11).12

The title predated the creation of the Asante nation and was given to successful individuals as a sign of recognition (McCaskie, 1995: 42); success both in terms of individual entrepreneurship and military achievements. The *abirempɔn* was both a provider and a protector: an entrepreneur, who gathered followers, secured access to gold and established villages. The fact that the accumulated wealth was seen as belonging to the community put certain social restrictions on its use (Austin, 2003: 23-24). McCaskie writes:

> “The possession of the *mena*, and the enormous social prestige of the ‘big man’ that derived from it, were indicators that the individual thus honoured was the benefactor of a collective posterity. Such a person was recognized and acknowledged as having added significantly to the increase of Asante society. Thus, nothing was considered more shaming to the name and to the posthumous reputation of the *abirempɔn* than that he died bankrupt – or, in the very precise Asante locution, that he ‘boiled and ate the elephant tail’ – for such behaviour was disgraceful because it was profoundly and literally anti-social. It was understood as an act of theft from the future wellbeing of Asante society” (McCaskie, 1995: 47).

At the death of an *abirempɔn* his wealth was given to the nation (*Asanteman*). Death duties (*awunyadie*) were the final indication of someone’s contribution to society (McCaskie, 1983: 34).

Only a few people obtained this level of recognition. In order to become an *abirempɔn*, the candidate had to display his wealth in public. It was for the individual aspirant to prove his qualifications. Normally, people would display their wealth only once in their lives in order

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12 Wilks understands *abirempɔn* more as a class of entrepreneurs and developers, who were into agricultural production and exploitation (Wilks, 1993: 96-97). However, for the purpose of this chapter and the questions the thesis seeks to explore, it is of more relevance to approach the social category of *abirempɔn* as a route to social promotion and thus highlight the opportunities of mobility, rather than describe them as a distinct class as such.
to be given the title šibirempɔn. McCaskie discusses the case of Yamoa Ponko (c. 1730-85). When he displayed his wealth and got the mena, he also made the unusual request that the Asantehene should “attend and preside over his funeral custom in person” (McCaskie, 1995: 60). The Asantehene did attend his funeral and this was a strong mark of recognition:

“[I]n receiving the mena and in having the Asantehene as his principal mourner, Yamoa Ponko in effect had asserted his achievement and status, at the highest and most public level, not once but twice” (McCaskie, 1995: 60).

As discussed above, there was a strong link between status, power and wealth in pre-colonial Asante. Participation in government was the route to achieve wealth, and wealth, at the same time, constituted one of the requirements for gaining political influence and political authority (McCaskie, 1983: 31). The meaning of wealth and its accumulation was social rather than individual. Wealth was understood to be of benefit to society rather than the individual. However, the individual achieved social recognition through titles (of which the ultimate was šibirempɔn) (McCaskie, 1983). To achieve a position of authority also meant social recognition; social ranking was an aspect of political ranking. Additionally, holding a political position opened up the opportunities to accumulate wealth. So status, wealth and power were closely linked (Arhin, 1983: 5).

The end of the system
The strong control of the state began to be questioned during the reign of Asantehene Kwaku Dua Panin (1834-67). After 1831, new opportunities for trading with the Fante on the coast emerged, and this also meant new possibilities of obtaining wealth. This trade permitted non-office holders to accumulate, and therefore the accumulation of wealth was not, to the same degree as before, dominated by the state (McCaskie, 1983: 35). The influence of the coast is important in understanding the changes that took place in Asante from the mid-nineteenth century as it provided new and alternative views of the world: “This was the intensely competitive, free-market and highly individualistic (Christian) capitalism of the area of the southern Gold Coast presided over by the British” (McCaskie, 1983: 36).
During the reigns of the Asantehene Kofi Kakari (1867-74) and Mensa Bonsu (1874-83) Asante as a closed system ended. This was caused by a combination of the external influences and the failure of the system itself. The state functioned increasingly by force and less by consensus. This, for instance, found expression in the extent to which taxes were being collected, and subjects were being punished. The increasingly authoritarian nature of the state and its use of force to, for example, collect taxes led many to flee from Asante to the Gold Coast Colony, and some of these people came to represent a challenge to the established system and holders of power. At the end of the nineteenth century, some were involved in the production of rubber and their profits were used for cocoa production in Asante. Such entrepreneurial individualism led to a change in the conception and the role of the ɔbirempɔn and to the ideas and consensus around accumulation and wealth (McCaskie, 1983: 38-40; McCaskie, 1986a: 4; McCaskie, 1995: 65, 68).

In 1901, many refugees returned to Asante as businessmen (with the British annexation). The colonisers viewed them as progressive. As a group, they (or those coming after) later became known as akonkofoɔ (McCaskie, 1986a: 7). They had taken up and adapted ideas from the Fante on the coast, who were in close contact with the colonial system (Arhin, 1983: 13). Among the Fante, education played a much more important role in achieving status, whereas among the Asante an office holder had more status than someone with education (Arhin, 1983: 2). In the Fante system, it was easier for non-office holders (for instance traders) to achieve wealth and to gain power. There was a mercantile class that fostered an entrepreneurial spirit, and which, according to Arhin, was influenced by the European presence (Arhin, 1983: 15).

RELIGION IN PRE-COLONIAL ASANTE

The Asante believed in the existence of a God creator (Onyame) and a number of smaller gods or supernaterual powers beneath the Onyame. These smaller gods or supernatural powers were called abosom (sing. ɔbosom), and “the essence of an ɔbosom was tumi (power) that
emanated from *onyame*” (McCaskie, 1995: 276). One category of *abosom* was *atano*.\(^{13}\) *Abosom* came into contact with humans by possession. Below this level were the fetishes (*asuman*), items believed to have spiritual power. As noticed by McLeod, spiritual powers occupied different levels in a hierarchy (McLeod, 1981: 57).

The God creator is a withdrawn God, and there is a division between man and God. People would worship the gods; consult them for advice and healing, and for offerings. The gods communicate by possessing people. Sometimes possession of a person was understood as a sign that the person was to become a priest (*ɔkwɔmfɔ*). An *ɔkwɔmfɔ* means one who is possessed by an *abosom*. The *abosom* used the *ɔkwɔmfɔ* to communicate with the Asante; he was understood to be a mediator, a channel of communication between the highest spiritual power and the people. According to McCaskie (1995) *ɔkwɔmfɔ* is usually translated as fetish priest, but this is misleading. Rather, “an *ɔkwɔmfɔ* was also *ɔsɔfo* […] an *ɔkwɔmfɔ* might conduce manifestation of an *abosom*, but he could not command it” (McCaskie, 1995: 290). The term *ɔsɔfo* is widely employed also in a Christian context and is for instance employed for Pentecostal pastors.

The training of an *ɔkwɔmfɔ* took seven years, and during this time he/she was living with an established *ɔkwɔmfɔ*. The training consisted of learning to control the state of possession, dance in order to become possessed, and herbal treatment. After the period of training the *ɔkwɔmfɔ* had to become possessed at a ritual attended by his mentor and other priests. This ritual was a test (McLeod, 1981: 59-60). McLeod notices that “[t]oday this training is usually paid for by the priest’s matrilineal kin, and large thanks-offerings may be made to the instructing priest. The family will expect to profit later from the money the god brings” (McLeod, 1981: 60). This is important to keep in mind, as it shows the relation between family and priest, and especially how the family helps financing the priest’s training and later expects to get something in return. As we shall see later, a similar relation of reciprocity exists to some extent between neo-Pentecostal pastors, their family and their congregation (as it does no doubt also within other religions). This is also the case when pastor and family belong to different churches or branches of Christianity.

\(^{13}\) Named after the river Tano. A category of *abosom* that is said to originate in water (McCaskie, 1995: 314).
The functions of the *akɔmfoɔ* were located in the “cognitive flux between order and anxiety” and they were expected to bridge this flux (McCaskie, 1986b: 333-34). It was their role to give advice, to find the causes of illness and misfortune, and to help with protection and healing (McLeod, 1981: 61). Priests were believed to be assisted by creatures living in the forest or bush (*mmoaatio*). These creatures were unpredictable and could attack people or help them. Priests lived outside society, somewhat isolated, let their hair grew and walked barefoot when they were possessed (as McLeod remarks this was in opposition to chiefs, who were never to walk barefooted) (McLeod, 1981: 64). The power and prestige of each god depended on the abilities of their priests to perform in terms of advice giving and divination. The congregations changed as people would move around until they found a god who could solve their problems: “Each God therefore had a shifting congregation as well as a central core of local people owing a more enduring allegiance” (McLeod, 1981: 66).

Regarding the political aspects of priesthood, the *akɔmfoɔ* have been perceived as being in opposition to the state since their power, which originated in the supernatural realm, was the inverse of the secular power of the state (McCaskie, 1995: 333-34). According to McLeod, some chiefs tried to control the *akɔmfoɔ*, by testing their skills in making prophecies and by exercising control over new gods. At the end of the nineteenth century (and Asante independence) some people used the priesthood to oppose to the rule of *Asantehene* Mensa Bonsu by claiming to be incarnations of Komfo Anokye (the priest who assisted the first *Asantehene*). As McLeod remarks:

“The incident is obscure, but it appears that those involved were declaring their complete separation from the usual political process and appealing to a different view of the Asante state. The use of the names of famous priests for this purpose seems, therefore, to indicate a pre-existing tension between state and priesthood” (McLeod, 1981: 65).

Even though *akɔmfoɔ* mediated strong powers this did not necessarily equate with secular influence (McCaskie, 1995: 123). There was no consolidated priesthood, and the priests seemed to be functioning rather independently of each other (ibid.; McLeod, 1981: 64). This fragmentation of the priesthood could have been caused by the control of the state and at
the same time because this was a highly competitive market (McCaskie, 1995: 124). An awɔmfo was in some ways seen as a threat to the state and the office holders, as he was speaking on behalf of, and with the powers of, a hidden authority. Chiefs also had a religious role as they were seen as being the link between people and their ancestors. In the Akan worldview the chief is seen as the mediator between the living and the dead (the ancestors) (Adubofour, 1994; Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005b; Busia, 1951). Busia (1951: 26) argues that a chief constitutes the link between “his royal ancestors and the tribe”. When a chief is enstooled “his person becomes sacred” (ibid.: 26). He acts as the medium through which people can get power from God (Onyame) or be protected from evil spirits.

Akyeampong and Obeng (1995: 482) have written on the cultural notions on which power in Asante was built and have stressed “the relevance of the metaphysical in Asante conceptions of power and authority”. They argue that power originated in the spiritual realm in pre-colonial Asante, and that to acquire this power one needed knowledge. This also meant that is was available to anyone “who knew how to make use of Onyame’s powerful universe for good or evil” (ibid.: 483). They distinguish between authority (political power) and tumi (the ability to bring about change). The first is the monopolization of power, whereas access to tumi originates in the spiritual world and is available to anyone who had knowledge.

In the literature on Ghanaian Pentecostalism, religious ideas and institutions that pre-date the introduction of Christianity, are looked upon as a cosmology of traditional religion (Adubofour, 1994) or as pre-Christian religion (Gifford, 2004: 83-84). My argument in this chapter is that we should not only perceive already existing religious ideas and institutions as ‘traditional’ or as a coherent system of thoughts of the past. It is more fruitful to approach religious ideas as ideas that both existed and still co-exist with other religious traditions. Hence a historical perspective does not only imply looking into what religion was before Christianity, but also how these ideas and forms of organisation have influenced and been transformed and adapted by later and contemporary religious institutions and ideas.
WEALTH, STATUS AND POWER:
ASANTE COLONISED, c. 1900 – 1950s

The British exiled the *Asantehene* in 1896 and made Asante a protectorate. But it was not until after the Yaa Asantewa War of 1900-1901 that Asante effectively and formally settled under colonial rule as a Crown Colony (Arhin, 1995: 102; Berry, 2001: 2, McCaskie, 2000: 10). Asante was reorganised under a chief commissioner and provincial and district commissioners. The chiefs occupied central positions in the political system of the colony. They were members of the legislative and provincial councils (Boone, 2003: 148). The colonial administration established the Council of Chiefs in Kumase to take care of customary matters. The council was under the supervision of the Chief Commissioner of Ashanti. The *Asantehene* Prempeh I returned from exile in the Seychelles in 1924 and was installed as *Kumasihene* in 1926. In 1935 the Ashanti Confederacy Council was established by the colonial authorities, and the *Kumasihene* was reinstated to the former position as *Asantehene* (Arhin, 1976/77: 462; Arhin, 1995: 104; McCaskie, 2007a: 151). The British built on the political system of Asante to implement indirect rule. In the 1930s the British constructed Native Authorities that were built on, and recognised “precolonial jurisdiction (including states), centralized power in paramount chieftaincies, cemented chains of command between chiefs and their political subordinates” (Boone, 2003: 147).

It has been debated to what extent colonial rule and the changing socio-economic landscape led to more opportunity for social mobility and individual accumulation of wealth. Some argue that the capitalisation of the economy led to new opportunities of acquiring cash and consuming in a way that escaped certain social bonds of obligation. This change also led to the emergence of new and up-coming social groups of businessmen and educated clerks. Others again have argued that the resources of the new economy were controlled by those who were in power in pre-colonial times. Thus, the elite (mainly chiefs and office holders) had the capital to invest in, for instance, cocoa production and this wealth was therefore kept for those already possessing it. Consequently, social mobility related to the change in the economy is understood as being less important than the retention of wealth and power.

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14 Colonial Ashanti comprised the Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo regions of modern Ghana. The term Ashanti is also used for the present day Ashanti region. See map 1.
among the traditional elite. Colonial rule was, moreover, the time when Christian missionaries got a foothold in Asante and people began to convert. The introduction of Christianity meant exposure to new ideas and worldviews.

This section revolves around the emerging social groups in colonial Asante as well as the changing form and expression of religious entrepreneurship. In this way, the focus is on the changes in social and religious constellations, as well as on the ways in which these draw on the repertoires of the past.

*Capitalisation, cash and cocoa*

Concurrent to the implementation of colonial rule, changes in the economy and the agricultural production took place, and new possibilities for social mobility occurred. There was an increasing degree of individual accumulation of capital and wealth. New social groups and leaders emerged who were less bound to traditional leaders (Arhin, 1976/77: 457). The British introduced a uniform currency, which made it easier to measure wealth in the form of cash, and there was less restraint on money-making (Arhin 1976/77: 455). The colonial regime permitted “a regime of commoner enterprise and competition with the *ahene* [chief] for wealth”, as well as individual wealth seeking (Arhin, 1976/77: 458). The forms of wealth changed; it was no longer slaves, gold and ornaments, but savings in the bank, the construction of big houses and cars. That said there were unsuccessful attempts by the Council of Chiefs (1908) and later by the *Kumasihene* (1930) to control accumulation of wealth by proposing a reintroduction of death duties. The failure to control accumulation of wealth instead led the Ashanti Confederacy Council to control consumption in areas of symbolic significance such as expenditures on marriage payments and funeral rites (Arhin, 1995: 104, 107).

The boom in rubber production at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries marked the start of cocoa farming in Asante (Berry, 2001: 5). Cocoa

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15 In pre-colonial Asante, three modes of currencies existed: first pieces of iron, and later (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) cowries and gold dust. The last two forms co-existed (Arhin, 1995: 98-99).

production started at the turn of the century and forty years later Asante was the leading cocoa producing region in Ghana, which at that time was the world’s largest producer of cocoa beans (Austin, 2003: 2). According to Austin, economic behaviour at the beginning of the twentieth century focused more on accumulation of wealth than it did on survival. There were no severe food shortages as cocoa farming mostly was combined with food crop production (Austin, 2003: 4). Also scarcity of land and labour was seldom a problem, whereas capital and credit were in short supply. This led to extended money-lending (Austin, 2003: 5) and a situation with ‘pressure of cash’ (Arhin (1976/77) (see also McCaskie, 2000).

The success of cash crop production of cocoa between 1900 and 1930 entailed a widespread use of cash. There was a need for cash because of a high demand for imported goods and the increasing monetisation of land and labour. This capitalisation of the economy also influenced social life. It changed certain social obligations; gifts, marriage obligations, and funeral rites were monetized (Arhin, 1976/77: 460). Austin notes that the production of cocoa was an individual enterprise and it therefore altered extended family relations; “it was the individual and the conjugal family, not the matrilineal segment, that was the basic work unit whether in agriculture or outside” (Austin, 2003: 24). In the same vein, Busia (1951) quotes a farmer saying “Cocoa See abusua, paapae mogya mu”, meaning “Cocoa destroys kinship, and divides blood relations” (Busia cited in Arhin, 1976/77: 459-460, fn. 32).

With the decline of slavery and pawnimg at the beginning of the twentieth century, non-wage labour became scarce (Austin, 1987: 263). Wage labour was increasingly used, as other forms of non-wage labour were limited. People tended to work on their own farms rather than comply with family or stool obligations (Austin, 1987: 266). There was a growth in regular wage labour, and also commercialisation of land use. By 1938 many of these wage labourers were the so-called cocoa migrants who came from the north and from the surrounding French colonies (Arhin, 1995: 103). The pressure of cash led to political unrest:

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17 In 1911 Ghana was the world’s biggest exporter of cocoa (Austin, 1997: x), and between 1910 and 1925 the national annual production of cocoa rose from 21,000 tons to 206,000 tons (Austin, 2003: 19-20).
18 Austin argues that the introduction of cocoa farming did not entain drastic forms of social mobility, as those who engaged in cocoa production were those who had already accumulated some wealth (Austin, 2003: 21). See also Boone (2003: 149-152) who argues that cocoa production in the 1930s was predominantly based on the abusua.
19 Slavery and pawnimg were officially banned in Asante in 1908.
“Political turmoil in Asante in the colonial period was due in large measure to the pressure of cash and the response of both the traditional authorities and their subjects to that pressure” (Arhin, 1976/77: 466-68). There were, for instance, several collective protests by cocoa-farmers against low cocoa prices; the so-called cocoa hold-ups (see Austin, 1988).

**Emerging social groups: the akonkofo**

One of the new social groups was the *akonkofo* that formed as a group in 1896-1930. The *akonkofo* became a distinct social group in the colonial period, after the exile of Prempeh I and under protection of the British colonial administration (Arhin, 1986: 25). Before Asante came under colonial rule many of the *akonkofo* had been to the coast as rubber and gold traders (Arhin, 1986: 26). As mentioned above, many fled from Asante during the civil wars of the 1880s. Upon their return to Asante, they introduced and practised new ideas of accumulation and wealth. McCaskie (1986a: 7) describes this group as the new and progressive Asantes, who defended the “individual's right to accumulate and to dispose capital”. He further argues that they had broken with the past in the sense that they had escaped the moral constraints embedded in ideas of wealth and accumulation. At the same time, though, they were still drawing on the social norms of the nineteenth century and behaved like 'big men', like *abirmpɔn*. The *akonkofo* signified a new development in Asante, and “[c]entral to the view of the *akonkofo* was the absolute non-negotiability of the individual’s right to accumulate and to dispose of wealth” (McCaskie, 1986a: 9). This group of men represented a “very confused 'individualism'; an embedding in Asante society of a sense of capitalist enterprise and of a ‘business’ or petit-bourgeois element” (1986a: 9). This new group represented a new type of *sbirmpɔn* and “a businessman with diversified interests and modern methods; an accumulator in the cash economy, with absolute rights of disposition and a determination to pay minimum tax” (McCaskie, 1986a: 12). Many *akonkofo* converted to Christianity “some doubtless as believers, many as a mark of ‘modernity’” (McCaskie, 1986a: 12).

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20 *Akonkofo* is a term used about Asante businessmen from the beginning of the twentieth century. The term carries “implications of wealth, of capitalist individualism, and of ‘modernity’” (McCaskie, 1995: 71). See also McCaskie (1995: 291).
The akonkofo were mostly seen as being against the power of the Golden Stool. A key element in the opposition to the former system was the rejection of death duties and later on hostility towards the re-imposition of these duties. They rejected the title šbirampsɔn, but still behaved like ‘big men’ (McCaskie, 1995: 71). They were in favour of colonial rule because it had brought with it material and spiritual progress that was not possible before. Colonial power was seen as bringing both progress and Christianity, and had in addition permitted the akonkofo to pursue their careers as merchants, traders and men of properties. Furthermore, to some extent their business interests matched those of the colonial administration. In some instances their interests were met by the colonial administration. Thus, some of the akonkofo were selected for the Kumase Council of Chiefs (McCaskie, 1986a: 10). They viewed British rule as protecting their private property against the chiefs and as guaranteeing material progress (Arhin, 1986: 27).

The akonkofo formed an association and had common positions on matters of public concern. Despite their opposition to traditional authority and the Golden Stool, they agitated for the return of Prempeh I from exile, who on his return listened to their views. Their favourable attitude to colonial rule was limited to matters of wealth and the protection of individual enterprise and property. Likewise their criticism of traditional authority was limited to the issue of personal accumulation of wealth (Arhin, 1986: 28). Most akonkofo could not read, but were “purveyors of new ideas” (ibid.: 29). They can be seen as being the forerunners of the Asante Kotoko Society (the latter claimed distinction on the basis of literacy, whereas the former on signs of wealth) (ibid.: 29). Another group seeking social mobility was the royal nhenkwaa (servants of Asantehene). The akonkofo and this group can be seen as somewhat overlapping and both could be seen as new models of šbirampsɔn (McCaskie, 1986a: 10-12).

By the 1930s both the nhenkwaa and the akonkofo had broken with the state’s monopoly to amass and redistribute wealth, but “only the core had gone, leaving behind it an inevitable sense of cultural norms” (McCaskie, 1986a: 13). Even though there were restrictions on the wealth of the šbirampsɔn in the nineteenth century (e.g. death duties and social restrictions on spending and distribution), a ‘big man’ had to display his wealth publicly. This idea persisted into the twentieth century, but without the earlier limitations on consumption; “[m]ost of the
new business class deployed a great deal of their substance in the – now unfettered – consumption and display that was historically and culturally the mark of the ‘big man’ (McCaskie, 1986a: 13). There were attempts to control consumption and Arhin (1995) argues that it was because of the unsuccessful attempt to control their accumulation of wealth that the authorities tried to curb consumption.

**Money and mobility**

Individuality and individual accumulation of wealth was becoming the norm: “Money, and there could never be enough of it at the cognitive level, was the key to individual success” (McCaskie, 1986a: 15). The new lifestyle of the *akonkofo* was according to Arhin inspired by the colonies on the coast; “[t]he *akonkofo* believed that they had, and were believed to have, acquired a complex of ideas of *anibue*, ‘being civilised’, from the coast. At the core of this complex of ideas was belief in the coastal version of the British way of life…” (Arhin, 1986: 26). The coast was seen as elite. Many of the *akonkofo* had their children continue their education on the coast. There was a general reluctance in Asante to send children to school, because it was seen as a revolt against traditional authorities and as compliance with the way in which Europeans acted and behaved.

As mentioned above, new possibilities of making money and social mobility came in the colonial period. New possibilities of accumulation arose with the expansion of wage labour in, for instance, cocoa plantations and railways (McCaskie, 2000: 124-127). Moreover, with the rise of western-type education and the creation of a new civil administration other types of employment emerged; such as civil servants, white collars, teachers, lawyers, pastors, and journalists.21 People engaged both in spatial and social forms of mobility.

People went to work in cocoa farms, they went to work at the newly establish railways and road that were to connect Asante with the coast. This was a way to enter the “[c]olonial regimes of mobility and money” (McCaskie, 2000: 124). These types of work permitted people to earn money for individual accumulation and consumption. As these types of work

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21 See Miescher (2005: 84-114) for an analysis of the *akrakyefoo* (clerk, scholars) as up-coming, middle figures in the 1930s – 1950s. These people were neither part of the traditional elites, nor the lawyer-merchant class (elite intelligentsia). Still, they had social, political and economic aspirations. Often they were Standard VII school leavers and worked as clerks, cocoa brokers, storekeepers, teachers and pastors.
often entailed being away from one’s home town or village, it also meant getting away from control of the elder generation and discovering new ways of life. In his historical work on Asante lives in the twentieth century McCaskie portrays young people who express an ambivalent attitude towards the new regime of money and mobility. On the one hand there was the attraction towards consumption of “the sweet things of life” and, on the other hand, there was a view that the “unrestrained pursuit of the money needed to acquire them was a social evil that destroyed lives, families and communities” (McCaskie, 2000: 126).

The point is that this was a time of rapid social change. Ideas about community, authority, religion and wealth were challenged. New ideas were introduced around progress, individuality and money. The introduction of the cash economy both signified a change in material conditions, but also a change in ideas about wealth, money and consumption. These ideas of wealth drew upon pre-colonial conceptions that were “reconfigured and mobilised to join with innovation in meeting the challenges posed by colonial capitalism” (McCaskie, 2000: 132-33).

Austin draws attention to the significant continuity in Asante history with regard to attitudes towards accumulation and wealth. In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries the goal was not only to strive but more importantly to achieve:

“Riches were celebrated, but what was admired [-] rewarded by the state, praised by the powerful and the powerless, hallowed posthumously [-] was the self-acquisition of wealth: materially successful endeavour. It was, precisely, a moral economy of accumulation” (Austin, 2003: 23).

Moreover, as argued by McCaskie, consumption and disposal of wealth is “historically and culturally the mark of the ‘big man’” (1986a: 13). Status is demonstrated in one’s capacity to consume. I argue in this thesis that this interpretation or conception can be transferred to neo-Pentecostal pastors, to how they change the previously hegemonic ideology and still base their behaviour on the idea of the ‘big man’.
RELIGION AND COLONIALISM: INSTITUTIONS AND INNOVATORS

The period from the introduction of colonial rule until independence was marked by the appearance of new religious institutions as well as religious entrepreneurs and innovators.

Christianity

As mentioned before and pointed out by McCaskie (1995) pre-colonial Asante was a relatively closed ideological and social system and influence from outside was controlled by the state and avoided: “this was a system closed to the access of unmediated external knowledge” (McCaskie, 1995: 100). Hence the first missionaries had difficulties in obtaining permission to work in Asante and it was not until Asante came under British rule that the missionaries were able to built mission stations and people started to convert to Christianity. There is a temporal overlap between colonial rule and Christian mission.

Christian missionaries first arrived in Kumasi in 1839 and established a Wesleyan-Methodist mission. These were met with suspicion by the Asante state because of association with the colonial regime and because they were seen as seeking “[i]deological access to Asante social formation” (McCaskie, 1995: 136). Christian education was feared as it was thought to provide this ideological access. The Wesleyans were permitted to set up a mission station, but not a school and they only made very few converts (Akyeampong, 1999: 281). According to McCaskie the combination of a strict doctrine and focus on personal salvation posed a major challenge to the advancement of Christianity in pre-colonial and colonial Asante. He puts it this way:

“The insurmountable stumbling block to Wesleyan-Methodist progress in Asante was the mission’s espousal of an inflexible doctrine that married together the concepts of a grace and salvation personally achieved through faith, and an emancipation and advancement socially inculcated through education. In Christian terms, the pursuit and the attainment of these goals implied a referential separation of conscience and aspiration from any precedent habit of allegiance, and an absolutely inviolable priority of the claims of the former over the obligations of the latter” (McCaskie, 1995: 137).
The introduction of Christianity mainly took place under the reign of the *Asantehene* Agyeman Prempeh I, who himself converted to Christianity in 1904, while in exile in the Seychelles islands (Akyeampong, 1999). It was not until 1896 (with British colonisation) that the missions became more permanently installed in Asante (first the Basel mission, followed by the Wesleyans), and only after 1908 that people converted to Christianity in significant numbers. In the beginning it was mainly non-Asantes who converted (migrants to Kumasi). An obstacle to ‘winning souls’ was the chiefs’ reluctance to allow missionary activity. There were cases of chiefs complaining that their wives had converted without their consent, and that they were losing authority when their subordinates converted to Christianity. The Asantes were, according to Allman and Tashjian (2000: 26-34), in many cases converting to escape the power of their chiefs or to obtain “worldly gain”, which produced a tense relationship between Christians and chiefs. Many also, through their Christian conversion developed a new view of the world (McCaskie, 1995: 101).

In their studies on how Christian missions have influenced social values in colonial Asante, Allman and Tashjian (2000: 205-206) focus especially on welfare and educational programmes, as well as on the promotion of the Christian ideal of family, motherhood and marriage. They give the example of a young woman who went to a Methodist school for the training of young Asante women. She married a catechist, they had two children and lived together, “and [she] relied on none of her matrikin, male or female, in the raising of her children” (ibid.: 199). However, in other cases, the pattern was not as radical, and converts would for instance never live with a husband, but would instead stay in the matrilineal family house (ibid.: 200).22

Another factor that was of importance to the spread of Christianity in Ghana was the prophet movement, with Prophet Sampson Opong and others who worked for the Christian missions (Allman & Parker, 2005: 135-136). This can also be linked to the threat of witchcraft, and as a way to escape traditional authority.

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22 This point highlights the importance of studying the context when trying to understand how religious values and ideas are translated and transformed in peoples’ everyday lives. This, in my view, also applies to studies of neo-Pentecostal churches today, where the emphasis on ‘breaking with the past’ and the radicalism of the movement has been in the forefront.
**Anti-witchcraft movements**

Two contributions by Austin (2003) and Allman and Parker (2005) debate the significance and reasons for the rise of anti-witchcraft movements in colonial Asante and in the Northern Territories of Ghana. Common to both is that they discuss the relation between social change and the rise in witchcraft accusations. Austin discusses whether it was the rich who used witchcraft or those who were not wealthy. He situates this religious innovation in the new context of cocoa-farming and the altered social relations this led to. Allman and Parker (2005: 142) argue that the anxieties stemming from tensions in kinship and gender relations - by the new context of cocoa-farming and by the increasing individualism shaped by capitalism and Christianity “were increasingly being expressed in the idiom of bayi [witchcraft]”. They hereby hint at a view of this new form of religion as a sort of modernity of witchcraft. This suggestion has been continuous within the literature. The historical data they present allows for a focus on the individual people involved in moving shrines across regions. This perspective provides a valuable insight into the religious innovators of that time.

The early literature on anti-witchcraft movements in colonial Asante (and more generally in the Akan region) was also concerned with the question of whether accusations of witchcraft was a religious response to rapid social change and to anxieties brought about by colonialism and the subsequent economic changes (for a discussion of this literature see Allman and Parker, 2005: 115; McLeod, 1975: 107). Some have argued that anti-witchcraft cults emerged primarily after the implementation of colonial rule, and therefore to some extent were a response to the changes brought about in this period (Field, 1968; Ward, 1956). Others, like Goody have argued that the coming of colonialism did not mean a rise in either the practice of witchcraft, nor in the number and significance of anti-witchcraft cults. He challenges the causal link between social change, social malaise and increase in religious activity. He writes:

“Clearly there is a situation of rapid change. But to view this process, as sociologists have tended to do, as leading to anomie (normlessness) is in fact to make a value judgement regarding the course of that change on what would appear to be inadequate evidence” (Goody, 1957: 362).
The anti-witchcraft cults were rather a continuation of earlier religious forms. Likewise, Austin questions the assumptions of earlier works that “this nervous individualism was necessarily a novelty of the cocoa era” (Austin, 2003: 20).

Apart from his contributions to the above discussion Goody has two points that are relevant for this thesis. First, Goody mentions the sometimes diffuse and transient character of some of the shrines: “they are constantly coming into being … whether such creations [new shrines] become widely employed, and enter into the circulation of shrines, is quite another matter. These shrines are always waxing and waning in importance” (Goody, 1957: 359). Goody explains this partly by people’s pragmatic and eclectic attitude vis-à-vis the shrines: “If one shrine appears to be effective, they take it up. If it fails them, they drop it. The next man’s shrines, whatever ‘faith’ he may profess, are as good as one’s own; better, if they are more successful” (Goody, 1957: 359). Interesting here is Goody’s inclusion of shrines that do not last in the discussion, as well as his attempt to explain their failure (for a similar point on spiritual churches, see Baëta, [1962] 2004). Second, Goody points to the relation between wealth and religious innovation: “the increase in religious activity may be partly accounted for by the increased wealth available” (Goody, 1957: 361). Likewise, Allman and Parker (2005: 133) emphasise “a complex dialogue between supply and demand” as constitutive for the rise in these new religious activities, and not merely a question of successful marketing.

Many of the anti-witchcraft shrines were established at the same time as the first cocoa boom (1910-1925) (Austin, 2003; Allman & Parker, 2005). Austin argues that most envy and conflict arose over profits and the inheritance of cocoa-farms. Cocoa production was based on individual entrepreneurship and there were no traditional social obligation attached to the money gained from this production. This created some room for individual accumulation relieved of kinship solidarity and obligation (Austin, 2003: 19-20; 2005: 38-39, 45). Cocoa

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23 For a discussion of this aspect of Goody’s argument see Allman & Parker (2005: 116). This debate relates to the larger and more recent debate on whether religious mobilisation can be explained and understood merely as reactions to social change and in particular social instability. The argument is current in studies of Pentecostalism, as has been discussed in the previous chapter, as well as in the more recent literature on the ‘modernity of witchcraft’ (Geshiere, 1997). It is interesting to note that this discussion, at least in a Ghanaian context, has been part of academic debate since the writings of Field (1940), Goody (1957) and Baëta ([1962] 2004) in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s that focussed both on anti-witchcraft cults and spiritual churches.
farmers paid for protection against witchcraft because they felt vulnerable to the envy and jealousy of their family members.

With regard to the relation between accumulation of wealth and witchcraft, Austin points out that “the acquisition of wealth can only be seen at the expense of others” (Austin, 2003: 18-19). He refers to Olsen, who argues that it “was commonly assumed that the rich person had connections to the occult. It was this association that made him or her wealthy” (Olsen, 2002: 524, quoted in Austin, 2003: 19). Therefore, witchcraft accusations have been thought of as being made by those who had not gained wealth, and that they were directed against those who had achieved wealth. Austin argues for an understanding of witchcraft accusations in the opposite direction: “by cocoa-farmers against envious people who used witchcraft to destroy their cocoa trees” (Austin, 2003: 19), and hence asserts that “suspicions of witchcraft were mainly directed by those who made money against those who had not done so” (Austin, 2003: 20). Moreover, he argues that the reasons for the alleged rise in witchcraft accusations in the early twentieth century was because the owners of cocoa-trees wanted to protect themselves against misfortune (Austin, 2003: 20). As failure was understood to have a cause, “witchfinding was big business”, and it has been documented that accusations were at times put forward by the witch-finding priests themselves “keen to fine the rich simply because they had money” (Austin, 2003: 21).

Allman and Parker discuss different anti-witchcraft movements from the 1870s to the 1920s. In their account of the Sakrabundi movement we hear about one man, Osei Kwaku, who spread the movement from Gyaman to other parts of Ghana. They designate him as a ‘religious entrepreneur’, and argue that he emerged as

“the first in a long line of enterprising individuals responsible for the dissemination of new anti-witchcraft movements in the colonial Gold Coast […] he appears to have possessed a certain degree of charismatic leadership in his ability to attract supplicants to the new healing shrines” (Allman & Parker, 2005: 129).
**Spiritual churches**

Spiritual churches (Sunsum sorè), or what are sometimes known as African Independent Churches (such as Aladura churches or Zionist churches) were also widespread in Ghana. They are called spiritual churches because they invoke the Holy Spirit. The movement has often been labelled a prophet movement, because of the centrality of the works of the prophet (Baëta, [1962] 2004: 6). An important point made by Baëta is the idea of the ‘cult of the person’. Central to the spiritual churches was also a search for ‘practical salvation’ and not only spiritual salvation, expressed for instance in finding solutions to practical problems in everyday life (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2004).

Baëta described the leaders of the spiritual churches as kings. They were often dressed like kings, and in some churches the titles of the traditional chieftaincy system were applied. In one case the founder and leader was called the king and his wife the queen mother ([1962] 2004: 39, 57). The leader was also seen as the bearer of a ‘call’. He sees the spiritual churches as drawing both from Methodism and Catholicism, on the one hand, and from the Akan chieftaincy system on the other ([1962] 2004: 57).

Although, I do not see neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches as merely ‘new wine in old skins’, there are certain similarities with other religious movements that are worth noticing. The above mentioned focus on the person or the leader seems to be a feature that overlaps several of these movements. I argue in this thesis that there are parallels between the idea of prophetism and the ways in which neo-Pentecostal pastors construe and construct pastorship. Moreover, the entrepreneurial side to being a religious leader is a widespread phenomenon and not something distinctive to neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors.

**INDEPENDENCE AND POLITICAL CHANGE**

The 1950s and 1960s were marked by Ghana’s independence and the nationalist movement in Asante. Ghana became independent in March 1957, and the British colony of the Gold Coast changed its name to Ghana. The changes and continuities in Asante at that time are well studied through the history of the National Liberation Movement.
Asante nationalism and the nkwankwaa

In 1954 the National Liberation Movement (NLM) was founded. The NLM was in opposition to Nkrumah and the Convention People’s Party (CPP). Some of the founders of the NLM were the so-called youngmen (nkwankwaa). They were the enterprising young ones and have been seen as the first mass politicised generation (Allman, 1990). They were not literally young, but in “subordination to elder or chiefly authority” (ibid.: 268). The nkwankwaa most often came from elite and well-established families, but did not have expectations of social promotion or aspire to political office (Wilks, 1975: 535-543).24

The nkwankwaa had positions in the new colonial bureaucracy such as clerks, teachers, journalists, and accountants. However, the goal of political power was pursued through participation in the NLM, not chiefly office. Through political power they also aimed to achieve economic power (Allman, 1990: 271). The NLM defended the Asantehene and were in opposition to Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP. They looked to the Asante chiefs for legitimisation and support. They believed that supporting the chiefs would also give them the support “of the spirits and ancestors of the entire nation” (ibid.: 272). The chiefs were in favour of supporting the nkwankwaa and the NLM, as they feared that their power would be limited under the new government of Nkrumah (ibid.: 273). The nkwankwaa were the only group who could mobilise people and form an opposition:

“They were the only class capable of articulating their specific aspirations for political and economic advancement – aspirations which had been historically thwarted by the pre-colonial Asante state, by the structure of indirect rule and now by the bureaucratization and centralization of the CPP – as general Asante aspirations” (Allman, 1990: 274).

McCaskie (1986a: 17-18) asserts that the NLM used the Asantehene and the idea of the Asante nation to promote the interests “of the new model of sbirempoon and the business class against the presumed ‘socialism’ of Nkrumah”.

24 See also Rathbone (1973).
However, the support of the chiefs also had a price, as the *nkwankwaa* “had turned to those very powers who had historically thwarted their bid for political power within Asante” (Allman, 1990: 276). The chiefs and the Asante elite gradually took over the leadership of the NLM and, in 1956, transformed the movement into a parliamentary political party. Allman writes: “Social and economic hegemony continues to be the preserve of those chiefs and political intellectuals, who, since gaining control of the NLM, have held securely the reins of power in Asante” (ibid.: 279). The *nkwankwaa* (also called the verandah boys) joined the CPP. Eventually, the CPP defeated the NLM and this was “organised at grassroots by Asante themselves” (McCaskie, 1986a: 17-18). The Asante members of the CPP combined features of 19th and 20th centuries *birempɔn*. Some of the successful ones became “the very model of a new model *birempɔn*” (ibid.). McCaskie gives the example of Krobo Edusei, who was a member of CPP and Minister of Interior. He was popular in Asante. He had risked, achieved and accumulated wealth.

There are parallels between the *nkwankwaa* and the neo-Pentecostal pastors in the sense that they both represent groups of upcoming aspiring individuals, that for instance build up their positions and achieve legitimacy through the accumulation and distribution of wealth, though in different guises. However, the public support of neo-Pentecostal pastors is not unanimous, but is much debated and contested as will be discussed in chapter three.

**RELIGION AND POLITICS: 1950s – present**

The aim of the two following sections is not to provide a full historical analysis of religion and politics in Ghana from the 1950s to the present. The aim is rather to indicate how moments in the post-independence period illustrate the broader argument of the thesis about the relationship between religion and politics. Moreover, the subsequent chapters focus more on the details of the post-independence period through looking at the cases and trajectories of pastors.

In 1957 Ghana became independent with Nkrumah as President (1957-66). Although the ideology of Nkrumah and the CPP was socialist and he had a strong pan-Africanist vision.
The rhetoric was influenced by Christianity as was Ghanaian society in general, in for instance the use of Christian metaphors (Gifford, 1998: 58). Iijima (1998: 171) asserts that Nkrumah had a particular charismatic style of leadership, which resembled the leadership of prophets in the spiritual churches. Also General Acheampong (1972-78) made reference to religion during his political office. According to Pobee (1987:58) Acheampong used religion both to mobilise supporters and to legitimise his own position as head of the country when he came to power after a military coup in 1972. During the 1960s and 1970s both religious language and religious movements played a role in national politics. Organisations such as the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the Ghana Bishop’s Conference of the Roman Catholic Church played a mediating role in conflicts between the government and students, university teachers and nurses (Pobee, 1987: 59; Gifford, 1998: 70). As Pobee (1992: 6) argues, “religion has been a factor of Ghanaian traditional politics and that it is still a factor of modern and contemporary politics”.

In the early 1980s the Ghanaian economy was in a critical state; a situation which was further aggravated by the Nigerian expulsion of undocumented migrants of which many were Ghanaians, and also by drought and the ensuing famine that hit the region in 1983/84. This situation created, according to Adubofour, “a national spiritual awareness which caused many to seek God’s blessing for themselves and Ghana as a whole” (1994: 349). Moreover, many thought that the problems of Ghana were due to “that God had withdrawn his blessings from Ghana” (McCaskie, 2008b: 323) Rawlings came to power (by a coup d’état) on the 31 December 1981 and with him came a time of revolution and attacks on the elite and those who had hitherto been holders of power. However, after 1983, Rawlings and the PNDC turned towards the IMF and the World Bank, which entailed structural adjustment programmes with cut backs in the public sector and privatisation (Gifford, 1998: 59). In 1992 presidential elections were held, and Rawlings was elected president of the country. Relations between the mainline churches and the PNDC were tense. In 1989 the government issued a law (Religious Bodies Registration Law/PNDC Law 221) that obliged all churches to register with the Ministry of the Interior, “so as to make them accountable to the government” (Gifford, 1998: 69). The mainline churches refused to sign. The CCG and the Catholic Bishops took part in the political debate on various issues through pastoral letters and joint memoranda e.g. a memorandum to the PNDC in 1992 against the violation
of human rights and for the release of political prisoners (Gifford, 1998: 68, see also Nugent, 1995: 187-189). The relationship between the PNDC and the mainline churches should, as noted by Gifford (1998: 70), be understood in the light of the elite/populist divide in Ghanaian politics. Rawlings presented himself as a populist and disdained those belonging to the elite, such as doctors, lawyers, and journalists. The leaders of the mainline churches also belonged to this elite. The PNDC was also initially critical vis-à-vis the new churches (of a Pentecostalist/charismatic orientation) that came from the United States. These churches were seen as dismissing African culture and not obeying political authority and, as a result, the activities of the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses were banned (Nugent, 1995: 188).

It was the neo-Pentecostal churches that later contributed to the legitimisation of Rawlings’ political power. After Rawlings was elected president in 1992 he asked the Christian churches to organise a thanksgiving service. The mainline churches refused, but the Pentecostal churches agreed and prayed for Rawlings (Gifford, 1998: 86). In the 2000 elections the position of the neo-Pentecostal churches was equivocal. Some, like Duncan-Williams and Agyin Asare supported the NDC. However, after the defeat of the NDC candidate (Mills), Agyin Asare turned to the winner of the presidential elections, Kufuor, and prayed at his thanksgiving service (Gifford, 2004: 179).

**SOCIAL CHANGE AND WAYS OF BECOMING**

Economic decline, structural adjustment and political instability in the 1980s also changed the conditions for becoming ‘big’ in Ghana. New criteria for achieving status and success emerged. The rising groups of the 1950s such as university professors, teachers and civil servants, who had a stable income and status “saw the ground shift beneath their feet as a result of the economic crisis” (Nugent, 1995: 4). They became the ‘respectable poor’ and tried to find a new balance between their status and decreased income (ibid.: 27). In particular, Rawlings’ hostile attitude towards the elite and their wealth meant that “‘big men’ who had grown used to flaunting their wealth woke up to discover that conspicuous consumption attracted hostile scrutiny rather than admiration” (ibid.: 58). However, as the political regime changed in the 1990s, so did the attitude towards possessing wealth, and it
was “possible to distinguish a stratum of nouveaux riches – people whose wealth had been acquired over a matter of years rather than decades” (ibid.: 204). As Nugent also notes it was again possible to display wealth without the discontent of the government; the ‘sociability of wealth’ had been restored. What mattered was to show that wealth was acquired in a legitimate way, and that taxes were paid (ibid.: 204). Moreover, new channels of accumulations occurred, and this attracted new aspiring businessmen to the PNDC. Throughout the last two decades the social aspirations of young and up-coming Ghanaians have been to migrate, to engage in business, and to become neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors and establish churches.

DISCUSSION: HISTORY AND PENTECOSTALISM

In this thesis I argue that the pastors of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches build both on the category of akɔmfoɔ and on the category of abirɛmpɔn, as well as later religious leaders such as prophets and newer version of ‘big men’, when becoming pastors. In order to analyse how and why pastors become pastors I draw on Asante history with regard to social mobility and status, accumulation and distribution of wealth as well as conceptions of power. In this chapter I have provided an account of how ideas about status and wealth were constituted historically and how they have changed over time. A central point has been to show how accumulation, distribution and display of wealth was and still is linked to social status and to becoming a ‘big man’. When the circumstance under which someone became a ‘big man’ changed, especially around the turn of the last century, so did the possibilities of social ascension. The groups of young people with social and political aspirations, such as the akɔnkɔfoɔ, for instance challenged existing ideas around wealth and distribution. It became common to accumulate wealth for the individual, and wealth was no longer seen as exclusively belonging to the community. They represented a new type of abirɛmpɔn. The central point is that although times have changed, people who seek to achieve power and accumulate wealth still refer to and build on the category of abirɛmpɔn. Moreover, I have pointed out that the concept of power in Asante both had a religious and a political significance and that possessing power was linked with having access to the spiritual world.
Neo-Pentecostal pastors draw on these historical repertoires of cultural norms and meaning. In this way, both the religious and socio-political aspects of pastorship are illuminated.

With regard to the study of Pentecostalism and history more generally there are three points I would want to raise in conclusion. First, I offer an approach to the study of religious change that is historically based. When studying religion and the links to the social world, it is fruitful to approach the historical background more broadly than merely the history of one particular religion. I find it useful not to distinguish too sharply between religions and the related sets of ideas and practices, but rather to look for the similarities, continuities and differences in terms of ideas and social practice. Also, drawing on history does not mean that existing and former practices and ideas are only something of the past. Allman and Parker (2005: 8) argue that African religion is historical, but is all too often portrayed as timeless. It is seen as inherently traditional. This point is not only valid with regard to studies of African religion, but also to religions such as Christianity and Islam. In the case of Christianity, and its Pentecostal sub-branches, religion is seen as a modernity marker, as bringing about change, and as an inherently modern phenomenon (Engelke, 2004; Gifford, 2004; Meyer, 1998a). This view implies that for instance the neo-Pentecostal movement in some ways is seen as timeless or a-historical in the sense that broader historical resonances are overlooked (see Maxwell, 2006b). The literature often presents the historical repertoire that these churches draw on as merely religious history (e.g. Akan cosmology, spiritual churches, the prophet movement, earlier Christian churches) (Adubofour, 1994; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a, 2005b; Larbi, 2001). It is important not only to look at the history of churches or Pentecostalism, but to analyse and understand the development of these churches in relation to other factors. As pointed out by Gilbert (1988: 291) we need to understand change in religious faith and affiliation as much as part of a historical process as part of a social process.

Secondly, including history in the analysis also implies integrating both material and cultural aspects. What is central here is that it is not only the social practices of people that need to be scrutinised from a historical perspective, but also the cultural and ideological baggage (McCaskie, 1995: 20). In his work in accumulation, wealth and belief in Asante, McCaskie (1986a: 19) analyses “significant moments and areas in which the ideological wheel of accumulation, wealth and belief turned”. Likewise, I see this chapter as providing, not an
extensive history of Asante or religious change in Asante, but a descriptive analysis of significant moments and significant figures. These movements and figures illustrate how ideas and practices of status, wealth and power were established and changed throughout the last two centuries in Asante. This perspective alludes to the importance of the “power of continuity, the cultural and intellectual baggage of the past” (McCaskie, 1986a: 19). This raises the question of how to integrate history and historical information. For instance Gifford (2004) and Meyer (1998b) attempt to integrate history in their analysis of Ghanaian Pentecostalism. However, they do this merely by means of an historical account and there are not many attempts to analyse the continuities and changes of, for instance, pre-colonial ideas and practices of wealth and power (see however Meyer, 1999). So the criticism is twofold. First, that the reliance on historical material is too superficial and that this material is treated mainly as information, not as narrative or as categories in an analytical way. Secondly, these attempts rarely involve more than ‘traditional religion’. By so doing, these studies fail to see how contemporary religious ideas, institutions and practices not only build on former religious ideas of, for instance, the existence of the supernatural, but also have resonance with more social and political ideas about status, wealth, and power (e.g. the importance of the display of wealth).

This leads to the third point, which is about history and context, and draws on Douglas’ (1986) point that there need to be resonance, resemblance and similarity between new institutions and the society in which they arise or enter. New things need to be build on something in order for it to make sense for people at a given place. Douglas (1986: 45) has argued that “[t]o acquire legitimacy, every kind of institution needs a formula that founds its rightness in reason and in nature”. This partly a cognitive and partly a social process. As mentioned in chapter one, new institutions need a stabilising principle. The following quote from Douglas takes us back to the first point about understanding the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches and pastors in relation to their broader socio-historical context:

“Many of the philosopher’s problems about the social origins of religious belief come from treating religion as something that goes on in church. The parallel mistake would be to isolate the ancestor cult from the whole social complex” (Douglas, 1986: 50).
Therefore in the chapters that follow I do not approach pastorship as something that is only build up and unfolded in church; rather pastorship is seen as being constructed and as being made sense of more broadly in society.
CHAPTER THREE
THE ETHICS OF NEO-PENTECOSTALISM
—THE MOVEMENT AND DOCTRINE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the question of how neo-Pentecostal doctrine relates to wealth and prosperity. I deal in particular with how the religious doctrine is conducive for both pastors and church members, and how doctrine is related to certain economic, social and political processes. The chapter argues that neo-Pentecostal ideas of wealth appeal to pastors as well as to church members. On the one hand, such ideas are conducive to a certain form of entrepreneurship and on the other hand, they relate to more established ideas of social mobility and status in Asante. These ideas of wealth are attractive to both pastors and members, which is what makes these churches dynamic. Thus there is a dual driving force to the ethics of neo-Pentecostal doctrine.¹

Max Weber was interested in the relationship between religion (ideas, practices, institutions, and forms of authority) and social and economic processes. He explored “the way certain religious formulations and class or status positions within particular socio-political orders have an affinity with one another such that their conjunction forms the basis for transformative social action” and “what a given religious formulation establishes as ethical and practical outlooks for its adherents” (Lambek, 2002: 51). These ideas were first...

¹ Some question the relevance of looking at African religious thought as a fixed system of beliefs (doctrine). Brenner (1989), for instance, argues that African religiosity is more about ‘religious participation’ than about ‘religious knowledge’. Asamoah-Gyadu adds that African Christians are more concerned with “experienced participation in ritual through performance”, than they are with theory or ‘doctrinal systematisation’, hence the prominence of the spoken word and oral forms of communication such as prayer and music (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a: 52). I can follow the argument that neo-Pentecostal doctrine is not a fixed system of belief that church members subscribe to. Nevertheless, I question the idea that African Christians are more interested in religious practice or experience than in religious doctrine or ideas. One could say that religious participation and experience is an expression of religious ideas. I am interested in religious ideas (here defined as a neo-Pentecostal ethic), not because I think people adhere to an entire system of belief, but because the ideas people are exposed to and adapt, say something about what matters in that particular context. In the case of neo-Pentecostalism in particular, the word of God and the Bible are of a great significance. Knowledge of God and spirituality are linked to the written word. Moreover, these ideas are not defined once and for all but they are subject to debate and redefinition.
developed in ‘The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism’, where Weber argued that the rise of capitalism in Europe was related to a specific Protestant ethos. In short, his thesis was that the Protestant ethic (in particular Calvinism and Puritanism) required an ascetic way of life, which led to accumulation of wealth. Not for the sake of pleasure or enjoyment, but because it was a call (beruf). This ethos worked in conjunction with the rise of a rational form of capitalism (Weber, [1930] 2001). Weber emphasised the non-mechanical relation between ideas and interests. In his thinking “[t]here is not pre-established correspondence between the content of an idea and the interests of those who follow from first hour” and “[i]deas, selected and reinterpreted from the original doctrine, do gain an affinity with the interests of certain members of special strata; if they do not gain such an affinity, they are abandoned” (Gerth & Wright Mills, [1948] 1991: 63).2

Given Weber’s argument, we can pose the question of “the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history” (Weber, [1930] 2001: 48) and more concretely what the relationship is between a particular neo-Pentecostal ethic and the social and economic processes the adherents of that particular religion engage in. How do religious ideas influence and feed into the practices of pastors and church members? How do they correspond to each other or what are the affinities between the religious ideas and the interests of pastors and church members? Approaching religious ideas or doctrine this way allows for an analysis that brings together religious ideas of, for instance, wealth and the social practices of pastors and church members. What is it about the prosperity gospel as preached in neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches that is attractive to some people and does it ‘fit’ with the interests of these people? Is there affinity between the focus on wealth in neo-Pentecostal/charismatic doctrine and the socio-economic positions and aspirations of its members and leaders?

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2 The work of Weber has inter alia been criticised for ignoring any affinity between Catholicism and entrepreneurial activity and for being based on insufficient empirical material. Moreover, the causal relation he hypothesises between Protestantism and the rise of capitalism has also been called into question. For a summary of the critique, see Giddens (2001: xviii-xxiv). For the purpose of this thesis, however, the key issue is not whether or not this causal relation existed or can be established. What is pivotal is to ask how religious ideas and doctrine work in conjunction with the motives and interests of social actors, and how these ideas shape and are shaped by history.
I start by exemplifying some central points with regard to the neo-Pentecostal message on wealth, as it is expressed in public debate. After this I introduce the history and the background of the movement in Ghana and more particularly in Kumasi. I continue by outlining the content of the religious message, and then go on to discuss how this is reflected in what the pastors do and how they relate to others within and without the church (social relations and social networks). The doctrine is discussed within a single thematic frame; wealth and prosperity. Within this overall frame I dwell in particular on 1. The principles of giving and receiving, and 2. The refusal to accept poverty. The purpose of this procedure is to analyse ideology in relation to practice in order to capture the constitutive relation between the two e.g. how pastors talk about wealth. How is such talk put into practice with regard to their work - relations to church members for instance - and how is this reflected in the ways in which they build up wealth? The main argument is that the way wealth has been perceived in scholarship is too narrow in the sense that is merely looks upon wealth in terms of money and commodities (monetary and material wealth). I argue (and built up this argument by drawing on pre-existing notions of wealth) that, in the case of pastors, wealth should be seen in a broader way and include such aspects as time, presence of people and social relations. Another point is that the strong symbolic value of money that can be ascribed to Pentecostalism, also represents a longer historical trend of capitalisation and monetisation of Ghanaiian society. The church can therefore be seen as an arena in which to negotiate claims to wealth. I continue by examining how these ideas are acted out in the institutional setting, for instance in church practices and in relations to members.

WEALTH AND NEO-PENTECOSTALISM IN PUBLIC DEBATE

"Charismatic churches exploiting the poor – Dickson’. A renowned Methodist Minister and one time Chairman of the Christian Ghanaian Council of Ghana, the Rt. Rev. Prof. Emeritus Kwesi A. Dickson, has expressed grave concern about the manner some charismatic and upcoming churches in the country are overly exploiting a cross-section of Ghanaians purported to be members of their congregations. He said these so-called churches are causing serious harm and doing the nation a complete disservice by keeping their members all day long in prayer camps, denying them the
opportunity to pursue vital productive economic activities and services that could enhance their livelihood. He noted that these pastors who manage to lure these members from the orthodox churches because of the ‘miracle and prosperity gospel’ they preach to extract a lot of money from the poor without providing any kind of social services to benefit these members in return [...] Prof. Dickson indicated that most of these churches, whose pastors are self-ordained and proclaimed, veer off the normal and true cause of evangelism as they have no laid down regulations to practically guide their conduct and their religious approach to worship [...] He describes them as a machinery for money making; the pastors are barely cheats and a liability to our society”. *The Daily Dispatch* (7 September 2005)

The above quotation is an example of the critique of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches and their pastors that is common in public debate in Ghana. ³ In particular, the debate touches on the churches’ focus on, and display of, money and wealth, as well as their religious foundation, authenticity and lack of order and regulation. The Methodist minister quoted here summarises the controversy of such so-called ‘one-man’ churches by attacking their focus on prosperity and by describing the pastors as self-ordained. Hence, in his view, such churches have no authority and legitimacy. In a booklet entitled ‘Genuine or Counterfeit – Pastor/prophet’, written by two Kumasi-based charismatic pastors ⁴, they respond to the criticism and the negative representation in the media. They distinguish between true and false pastors.⁵ They write:

“We are living in days when the church has experienced a rise in carnality and spiritual disease. There has been highly dramatic, highly publicized moral features among a

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³ One example is the controversy that broke out after the divorce of one of the top neo-Pentecostal church leaders, bishop Duncan-Williams. The divorce obviously conflicted with the Pentecostal message on marriage, and the focus on the nuclear family and faithfulness. *(Daily Guide, 1 September, 2005).*

⁴ These are authors that I study as representative of the neo-Pentecostal pastors and the movement in Kumasi, and not authors that I engage with in a scholarly debate.

⁵ I bought the booklet in a supermarket in Kumasi. The authors are the founders of a Kumasi-based church called ‘Great Expectations Ministries International’ that has branches in Ghana and Great Britain. The authors’ merits as pastors are listed at the back of the book: “They are seasoned international preachers. They have travelled extensively in the United States of America and have ministered in many cities there. They were used tremendously of God in Savannah Georgia to meet spiritual needs of both whites and blacks […] They also preach in Conferences, Seminars, and Churches throughout Ghana, Nigeria, Great Britain and other places. They broadcast on two F.M. Stations Kapital Radio 97.1 and Garden City Radio 92.1 in Kumasi, Ghana”. The booklet contains 100 pages (including page numbers 27, 27a, 27b, 27c, 27f, 27c, and 27d) and deals with various aspects of pastorship.
number of very prominent leaders of churches. Their fall have been amplified by the mass media [...] This brings the work of God’s Minister into disrepute. And many think all pastors are the same, they all fail and fall short of expectation and there is no need to waste time in Church and listen to these blind leaders. However, in reality, all Pastors are not the same. Some are good and some are fake” (Owusu-Ansah, 1999: 2).

Interestingly, they too establish a link between being ‘counterfeit’ and focusing too much on achieving wealth:

“There are many reasons why people enter into the ministry. Some rush into it because of financial gains, they think the work is now very lucrative, so it is good to enter for you will get money quick. … [They] work to please themselves and move heaven and earth to achieve their canal objectives, to get wealth fast. They are counterfeit ministers…” (Owusu-Ansah, 1999: 7).

At the same time, and in accordance with neo-Pentecostal doctrine, they see riches as an award from God, achieved by praying:

“Pray to have financial freedom by giving to God. Many men of God are poor because they don’t give to God … Financial freedom begins with scriptual giving. Luke 6:38 says, “give”, and if we increase our tithe, He will increase our financial reward, it shall be given unto you … Don’t rob God … If you give, you allow God to create employment or secure your job” (Owusu-Ansah, 1999: 32-33).

As will be discussed further on, this is the essence of the prosperity gospel which is one of the characteristics of neo-Pentecostal ideology. Richness is a sign of God’s blessing and one receives richness by giving abundantly.⁶

There are two basic positions in the public debate on religion and wealth. One position hails money and wealth, and perceives it as a sign of God’s blessings and of spiritual power and

⁶ Note also the reference to getting money quickly. Here this is a distinction between ‘quick money’ and ‘slow money’. See for instance Lindhardt (2008).
authority. The other position conceives of the role of religion/Christianity as being to provide a moral code of behaviour, to contribute to the welfare of society and provide social services. Many of the critics of neo-Pentecostalism, of which many belong to mainline churches, claim that adherence to a neo-Pentecostal church makes people individualistic and neglect their familiar obligations. Meanwhile, the message of the neo-Pentecostal churches is construed around a strong focus on the individual; the possibility of personal transformation and individual success. However, the message also contains a persistent demand that members contribute to the church community, both in terms of time and money.

The tendency to become more individualistic cannot solely be ascribed to neo-Pentecostalism. The contradiction between individual and community is constant in Asante experience, however changing the message in form and over time. This reflects a more general dilemma in Asante society as to whether accumulated wealth is to accrue to the individual or to the community (McCaskie, 1995: 78).\(^7\) Let us recall that, historically, ‘big men’ (\(\text{abiremp\ua}\)) in Asante were responsible for the maintenance and continuity of society. Moreover, there were social restrictions on the use of their accumulated wealth that was seen as belonging to the community. In the first half of the twentieth century, a new group (\(\text{akonkofo\ua}\)) of social entrepreneurs emerged; the new and progressive Asantes, who defended the “individual’s right to accumulate and to dispose capital” (McCaskie, 1986a: 7). The contemporary public debate on neo-Pentecostalism and wealth is a reflection of this dilemma. The neo-Pentecostal pastors seek to strike a balance between promoting the individual (not least themselves) and contributing to the wellbeing of society. One example of this was a convention organised by Pastor Joshua Kas-Vorsah in Daban, Kumasi. The theme of the convention was to fight armed robbery, corruption and road accidents through prayer; issues that were perceived as being impediments to the wellbeing of society (see figure 1 below).

\(^7\) See chapter two for a historical account of this dilemma.
There are many other examples where pastors promote themselves as helpers of the community e.g. by setting up vocational schools or the like. McCaskie (2008a) also writes about a neo-traditionalist priest (ɔkɔmfɔ) in Kumasi who is highly critical of the neo-Pentecostal churches, for the reasons mentioned above. He also stresses and proves his own commitment to the development of the community he operates in e.g. by funding small self-help projects. This debate on accumulation and distribution of wealth and the changing positions within it, can be traced throughout the development of the Pentecostal movement in Southern Ghana.

THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT

If we move away from the Ghanaian scene, Pentecostalism is, according to Robbins (2004: 119), rooted in “the Protestant evangelic tradition that grew out of the eighteenth-century, Anglo-American revival movement known as the Great Awakening”. The focus of early evangelical Christianity was on personal conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit (see also Maxwell, 2006a: 17-21). The beginning of Pentecostalism is generally understood to be the Azuza Street revival that took place in Los Angeles in 1906. Here the African American preacher, William Seymour, started a church and his preaching led to a big revival, which had particular emphasis on speaking in tongues as a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit (Robbins,
The Pentecostal movement spread rapidly to many parts of the world, and missionaries were sent to Africa and Europe.

There are, according to Asamoah-Gyadu (2005a: 18-29), three waves of Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana. The first wave, the *Sunsun sorè*, or spiritual churches, was born out of the activities of a number of West African/Ghanaian prophets in the beginning of the 20th century. The Liberian prophet William Wadé Harris is probably the best known of these prophets. The second wave consists of the so called classical Pentecostal churches such as the Assemblies of God and the Church of Pentecost. Foreign missionaries introduced these churches. The classical Pentecostal churches consist of churches such as the Assemblies of God, the Church of Pentecost, the Apostolic Church and the Christ Apostolic Church. The early Pentecostal movement was a break with the more established Christian churches in the ways they were organised and in their emphasis on healing and the role of the Holy Spirit.

The evangelical/charismatic movement in Ghana rose significantly in the 1960s. The rise mainly took place in parachurch evangelical associations, such as fellowships, prayer groups, and music teams. An example of a tremendously powerful and influential fellowship is the Scripture Union (SU). SU operates in educational institutions and organises, for instance, Sunday school and youth work. Significant numbers of neo-Pentecostal pastors have had high positions in SU. This institution provides opportunities for young pastors to practice and to test their leadership ambitions. The third wave, which is the focus of this thesis, is the neo-Pentecostal movement. To a large extent, this movement came from the fellowships mentioned above. According to Asamoah-Gyadu (2005a), the neo-Pentecostal movement has manifested itself in three different ways: in new indigenous or independent churches or ‘ministries’, in trans-denominational fellowships and in groups within mission churches (the charismatic renewal movement). This thesis deals with the pastors of the new indigenous charismatic churches within the neo-Pentecostal movement.

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8 The equivalent of the Aladura churches of Nigeria or the Zionist churches of South Africa. In the literature, these churches are also called African Independent Churches (AIC).
9 The SU was established in Ghana by a UK-based branch. It celebrated its hundred years of existence in Ghana in 1990. SU was regarded as a conservative evangelical movement (see Adubofuor, 1994: 58-92; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a: 103-105 for more information on SU in Ghana).
In order to get a fuller picture of the Christian landscape of southern Ghana, the charismatic movement within the mainline Christian churches should be mentioned. The Catholic Church is the biggest single church in Ghana (Gifford, 2004: 20). It has been involved in development and humanitarian aid, and moreover has a long tradition for providing services in terms of education and health. The Catholic Church has been relatively outspoken for instance via pastoral letters, especially under Rawlings (Gifford, 1998: 64-65). Within the Catholic Church the charismatic movement is organised in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Already in 1972 a ‘Centre for Spiritual Renewal’ was established in Kumasi. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal movement organised various National Leaders Conferences (e.g. in 1986 and 1992), which were attended by up to 2,500 participants. (Larbi, 2001: 84-87).

The Protestant mainline churches include, among others, the Methodist church, the Presbyterian Church and the Anglican Church. These were for the main part founded by foreign missionaries. They are organised in the Christian Council. The charismatic movement in Ghana has also influenced the Catholic Church and the Protestant mainline churches. According to Larbi it was not until the 1970s that this influence became significant and this was mainly in the mainline Protestant denominations such as the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (Larbi, 2001: 81).

The neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches have grown significantly in Ghana since the 1980s and they are now among the biggest Christian churches in the country. The 1980s was a decade marked by difficult living conditions for many Ghanaians, hardship in the economy and by political repression. The churches are mainly founded by Ghanaians and have an international orientation. They are mainly located in the southern part of Ghana in urban areas such as Accra and Kumasi, and have additionally been founded among Ghanaian migrants in Europe and the United States. Churches such as Bethel Prayer Ministry International, Word Miracle Church International, Family Chapel International, and Calvary

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10 For an analysis of Catholicism in Asante see Obeng (1996).
11 According to ter Haar successful missionary enterprise began in 1828 in the then Gold Coast. Missionaries had been present long before, since the fifteenth century, but not with much impact. The Catholic Church was founded in 1880 (ter Haar, 1994: 222-224). The literature on mainline churches and their history in Ghana is vast, see among other Bartels, 1965; Gifford, 1998; Parsons, 1963; Sanneh, 1983.
Charismatic Centre have branches in Ghana, in other African countries, in Europe and some in the United States (Gifford, 2004; Van Dijk, 1997; Ter Haar, 1994, 1998).

Being an international church is part of the trademark of neo-Pentecostal churches in Ghana. When asked about why ‘International’ was added to the church name one pastor explained:

“I have the mission to reach the entire world. The gospel has no parameters and it should be spread everywhere. With a church like ours where people are constantly travelling we need to make sure that they are within what they have to be within to avoid temptations […] We have about 50 members in London who began to cry for a church because they felt uncomfortable with one or two churches which they attended”.12

Victor started a branch of Family Chapel International in London in November 2004 and three months later they had 20 church members in that branch.

The neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches are in many cases the offspring of the classical Pentecostal churches such as the ‘Church of Pentecost’ and the ‘Assemblies of God’. The neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches preach success, health and wealth and as Gifford puts it: “[t]his contextualised Christianity claims that it has the answers to the marginalisation of Ghanaians, and can remedy the lack, the poverty, the desperation; it will change you from a nobody into a somebody” (2004: 195). This is one of the aspects where they differ from the classical Pentecostal churches, as well as the mainline churches.

The classical Pentecostal churches have a rather rigorist code of morality with regard to issues such as sexuality and marriage, consumption of alcohol and tobacco, dress code (women cannot wear trousers and have to cover their heads in church), tithing, and loyalty towards the church (Larbi, 2001: 245). The main purposes of church services and other gatherings in the classical Pentecostal churches are to spread the gospel and to obtain spiritual maturity. Although the classical Pentecostals practice tithing, there is not the same attention on material richness as in the neo-Pentecostal churches. The good Christian has to

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12 Interview with Victor Osei, Kumasi, 3 February 2005.
stay away from material abundance, which is perceived as sinful. So is also political engagement, which is seen as something of ‘this world’ hence not ‘of God’. There is also a strong focus on the afterlife and the aim of praying and being a good Christian is to secure oneself a place in paradise. This is not the case with the neo-Pentecostal churches that are more concerned with achieving success in this world and in this life, and thus link material wealth and spiritual wealth (Maxwell, 2006a: 9; Strandsbjerg, 2007).

There are various ways of categorising the neo-Pentecostal churches. Broadly, one can distinguish between prosperity churches, healing churches and churches that focus more on teaching and prayers. Gifford distinguishes four waves of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity in Ghana: The first wave started in 1979 by Duncan-Williams with a strong focus on faith or prosperity gospel. The second wave is defined as focussing on teaching and exemplified by Mensa Otabil. The third wave is characterised as the healing wave and introduced by, inter alia, Agyin Asare of Word Miracle Church International and Paul Owusu-Tabiri of Bethel Prayer Ministry International. The fourth wave is designated the prophetic wave and “the stress is on the demonic causality for all ills, and the remedy is the gifts of [the prophet] himself” (Gifford, 2004: 26). These categories are not clear cut and many churches include elements from all four waves. That said, there is great variety and difference between these churches according to for instance size and locality. A pastor from a Baptist charismatic church in Kumasi distinguished between the more established churches and ‘one-man churches’. In the first category he would include Pentecostal churches and churches that are well-established and recognised by the government (he also included the mainline churches) and called them ‘genuine’. ‘One-man churches’ were not genuine. He explained “but with the one-man churches he [the pastor] does things on his own, he doesn’t account to anybody and he is in control of the tithes and offerings”. 13 Many of the neo-Pentecostal churches do not call themselves neo-Pentecostal or charismatic churches. Some would for, instance, call themselves non-denominational, inter-denominational or bible believing. The term neo-Pentecostal is an appellation for a trend, rather than an expression of how the churches define themselves.

13 Interview with CK Asamoah, Kumasi, 23 February 2005.
The biggest neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches are led by well-known pastors, belonging to the neo-Pentecostal executive elite, such as Nicholas Duncan-Williams, Mensa Otobil, Charles Agyin Asare, and Dag Heward-Mills, and those are the ones that have received most attention in the literature on neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana (Gifford, 2004; de Witte, 2003b; Larbi, 2001). As mentioned earlier, this study takes a different perspective in that it is concerned with the smaller up-coming churches and their leaders. Focusing on this level permits us to study how churches are established, what makes them succeed and what makes them fail. Moreover, the specific focus of this study is on the growing neo-Pentecostal sector in Kumasi, whereas the major part of other studies has focused on Accra.

KUMASI—“THE SPIRITUAL CAPITAL OF GHANA”

“In the 1960s Kumasi was home to long-established Christian denominations. Most Christian were Methodists, Roman Catholic or Anglican and sometimes shifted from one to another during a life time. Christian observance then was embedded in the easy sociability of modified tradition, a round of weekly Sunday services punctuated by church meetings, festivals, christenings, confirmations, weddings and funerals. Today, however, even the most casual observer can sense the ways in which Christianity has become more salient in Kumasi life. It is too and undeniably a different Christianity” (McCaskie, 2008a: 57-58).

As has been described in detail by Adubofuor (1994), the charismatic movement in Kumasi started in the 1950s with the proliferation of Scripture Union within educational institutions (mostly secondary and tertiary school). Later on in the 1960s, Town Fellowships and other para-church movements emerged. Initially the fellowships were joined by well-educated people, but with the Town Fellowships the “educationally underprivileged and non-professional literates” would also take part (Adubofuor, 1994: 81). The foreign influence derived from international evangelists such as Benson Idahosa from Nigeria and Morris Cerullo from the USA (ibid.: 318). During the 1960s and 1970s Kumasi witnessed a growth and transformation of the charismatic movement; ‘Kumasi emerged as a “spiritual Capital” – the epicentre of charismatic activity in Ghana’ (ibid.: 318-319). In the 1980s, the number of crusades, conventions, and other events grew significantly (ibid.: 348). The first of the neo-
Pentecostal churches in Kumasi was founded in the 1980s and, in many cases, such churches were offspring of the classical Pentecostal churches such as the Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God.14

An example of such a church is Family Chapel International with its head branch in Kumasi. The church was founded in 1992, with less than 20 members, by a former Assemblies of God pastor. He founded the church mainly because of rivalry in the church leadership in the Assemblies of God branch to which he belonged. The church he broke away from is today the Calvary Charismatic Centre led by Ransford Obeng, and which used to be the English speaking branch of the Assemblies of God. Today Family Chapel International has grown to become one of Kumasi’s biggest neo-Pentecostal churches with a large church building at Susanso. There are about 1,000 people attending a Sunday service and the church has branches in the area around Kumasi, in Accra, in Cape Coast and in the UK. The pastor, Victor Osei, claims Duncan-Williams as his spiritual father, and Family Chapel International can be said to be a largely prosperity-oriented church. Victor Osei comes from an elite Kumasi family. His father was a well known business man in Kumasi and development counsellor to the Asantehene (king of Asante). Moreover, he has a wide web of international pastoral relations (see chapter five for an account and analysis of the career of Victor Osei).

The presence of the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Kumasi can be observed on at least two levels. On the one level, there are large and well-established churches such as Calvary Charismatic Centre and Family Chapel International. These churches, which both come out of the Assemblies of God, have large church buildings and various branches around Ghana and abroad. In these churches there are two or three services on a Sunday that attract between 1,000 and 2,000 people. The general picture is one of a rather detailed and hierarchical organisational set-up, with well-defined roles for each participant and heavily centered on the founder and leader of the church. Calvary Charismatic Centre has launched a specific Sunday service for students. For this purpose it operates a bus service from the university campus, as well as other educational institutions, to provide means of

14 Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to recognise the role Muslims play in the history of the region. Most Muslims were located in the Zongo and were not originally from Kumasi. Many originated from the North and were involved in trade. The Zongo was to a large extent dominated by Hausa and this created some tensions. See Schildkrot (1974) for a history of the political role of Muslims in Kumasi.
transportation for the students. In this church, every church member has a registration number and at each service one has to fill out a card with name and number.

Figure 2 & 3. Registration cards from Calvary Charismatic Centre, Kumasi

One afternoon in September 2005 I waited for quite a while for an interview with the founder of the church (Ransford Obeng) in an armchair outside his office. There were numerous people sitting in sofas and armchairs waiting to see him. One could read American Pentecostal magazines and Ghanaian newspapers made available on small tables. The secretary was busy looking after a Ghanaian pastor based in the US who had come with his wife for a three-day visit to the Calvary Charismatic Centre. In between receiving his visitors, Ransford Obeng asked the secretary for phone numbers of his travel agency and his lawyer. This short account illustrates both the importance of the founding pastor and the difference between these bigger churches and the smaller churches. Ransford Obeng is a busy man. He can permit himself to make people wait outside his office, and he has authority. At the same time, he has the physical infrastructure to back up this image; a well-equipped office, a secretary, and a room for people to wait.

On another scale, there are the many small churches that meet on Sundays in school buildings, canteens, storerooms or under canvas roofs. Typically, they are established more recently and gather from around 100 down to 10 churchgoers on a Sunday. Many of these

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15 These small-scale churches are not particular to the religious landscape of Kumasi, but can be found in other cities in Southern Ghana as well.
churches meet in school buildings and there might be no less than five churches worshipping next to each other. The pastors take along drums, tambourines and large banners to indicate to their members in which of the many classrooms they worship. The classrooms are decorated with artificial flowers, white lace curtains and in some cases a pulpit from which the pastor can preach. The pastors of these many small churches could either come from one of the bigger churches, out of one of the Bible schools or simply just start a church themselves.

Figure 4. Churches in school building, Kwadaso, Kumasi

There is a notable difference between the Kumasi based neo-Pentecostal churches and those based on, and planted there by headquarters in, for instance, Accra. The former group of churches is seemingly the more successful in terms of attracting members and constructing large church buildings. The pastors from the Kumasi-based churches are well known locally and have local influence. According to Samuel Brefo Adubofuor, the success of the locally-founded churches should be seen in the light of earlier pastoral networks within, for example, the ‘Faith Convention’. The ‘Faith Convention’ was founded in Kumasi in 1981 with the aim of coordinating the many activities of the new charismatic fellowships and ministries (Adubofuor, 1994: 345-348). This created a platform whereby the churches could promote

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themselves, put on joint events and from where their leaders could exercise influence. The movement was managed by a group of people, including Gregory Ola Akin of Harvestors Evangelistic Ministry, Alfred Nyamekey of House of Faith, and Ransford Obeng of the Calvary Charismatic Centre. All of these are today important and influential neo-Pentecostal church leaders in Kumasi (Adubofuor, 1994: 347). This means that the churches in Kumasi represent a different layer of churches than those normally focused upon in the literature. The movement in Kumasi is not a mere subdivision of the Accra-based churches, but is a separate category. This movement has its own history. Some of their founders are from the Kumasi elite, whereas others are from other regions of Ghana.

DOCTRINE & IDEAS

Pentecostalism is based on four main theological ideas (Robbins, 2004: 121). The first idea was that of personal salvation and “the belief that forgiveness follows an act of repentance in the light of God’s grace” (Maxwell, 2006a: 7). The second is the idea of sanctification and the idea that conversion is followed by baptism in the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues/glossolalia is a sign if this. A third key idea is the belief in divine healing. The fourth idea is the return of Christ (Maxwell, 2006a: 8; Robbins, 2004: 121). Other crucial features are the personal experience of being born-again, evangelism and a strict reading of the Bible. Within the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic strand there is, moreover, a focus on wealth and material success (the prosperity gospel). There is also a focus on active involvement in society; a focus that was condemned in the classical Pentecostal churches. The following deals in particular with the neo-Pentecostal message on prosperity and with how wealth is achieved.\(^\text{17}\) The message is disseminated by a range of media; such as the church services,

\(^{17}\) Admittedly this is a very selective approach to the study of neo-Pentecostal doctrine as aspects such as for instance healing and deliverance are equally prominent ideas (e.g. the understanding of the devil as analysed substantially in the works of Meyer (1992, 1999)). One could, moreover, say that the ability to heal and perform miracles are central elements when becoming a pastor. Providing spiritual protection gives the pastor a privileged position, as this protection is often seen as a prerequisite for success. Although the focus in this chapter is on prosperity and wealth, I do not find it fruitful to work with a very sharp distinction between prosperity oriented churches and miracle-deliverance oriented churches. These elements work together and should be seen in a holistic way. This means that I approach the prosperity gospel and the building up of wealth as involving pastors’ abilities to heal and provide spiritual protection. However, as the focus of the thesis is pastorship as a process of becoming and achieving “bigness” (of which wealth is a central element), I do not go into the ideas and practices of healing and protection.
radio and TV programmes, books and cassettes. The following is mainly based on my attendance at church services in neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Kumasi (see appendix 1).

**Prosperity – Wealth**

Prosperity gospel (or faith gospel/health and wealth) is, in brief, about seeing wealth and richness as a sign of God’s blessings (Gifford, 2001: 62-65; Meyer, 1998c). In Gifford’s words: “A believer has a right to the blessings of health and wealth won by Christ, and he or she can obtain these blessings merely by a positive confession of faith” (Gifford, 1998: 39). A common way of explaining the appeal of neo-Pentecostal churches is that people come to church to seek success in life - such as in business, marriage, education, to get a visa and travel - and to “switch from low status to high status religious groups […] establish social and economic connections as well as meet people of similar moral or religious conviction […] [that] brings along certain degree of religious distinctiveness” (Ukah, 2005: 268). The focus on success and prosperity is, in other words, what makes neo-Pentecostalism attractive to many (Meyer, 1998c: 762). The emphasis on prosperity, wealth and success should be understood in relation to the message of the mainline churches and the classical Pentecostal churches, where material wealth was not talked about as something to strive for, quite the contrary.

I shall elaborate later on and discuss two central ideas of the neo-Pentecostal message on prosperity; namely the idea of ‘giving and receiving’ (sowing and reaping) and the idea of refusal of poverty (‘you don’t need to be poor’). Before doing that I will look at how the literature on neo-Pentecostalism in Africa has approached wealth. Studies of wealth and neo-Pentecostalism have mainly focused on that part of the message that touches upon money and commodities: monetary and material wealth, gift giving and the symbolic function of wealth in the sense that money is not actually being distributed, but that money serves as a

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18 It should be noted that I employ the term prosperity in the sense of a particular variant of neo-Pentecostal doctrine (the prosperity gospel) and hence refer to a set of ideas that are rather strictly related to the movement. I use the notion of wealth in a broader and more context-related way.

19 The origins of the faith gospel are ascribed to American evangelists such as Kenneth Copeland, Oral Roberts and T. S. Osborn (Gifford, 2001: 62-63).

20 See Ukah (2005) for a thorough analysis of how this ideological change has taken place within the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria.
symbol of success (Gifford, 2004; Meyer, 1998b, 1998c; van Dijk, 1999). This is a narrow perception of wealth in that it does not take into account other less material aspects of wealth. I attempt to broaden the understanding of wealth to also include aspects such as people, institutions, and relations. This way of approaching wealth is based on the works of Guyer (1995), McCaskie (1983, 1986a, 1995), Lonsdale (1992) and Berry (1995) among others, and suggests that wealth is more than things and money. The church is understood as an arena for negotiating claims to wealth, and one’s success as a pastor depends on mobilising supporters and establishing a congregation (Berry, 1995: 307). In other words, wealth is also in people, in social relations and, moreover, has a cultural meaning that changes over time. Wealth is closely linked to social identity and to the making of social relations since wealth is also about displaying it, claiming it, and recognising it.21 Besides, it is particularly interesting to study wealth in the specific historical context of Asante in relation to how wealth is being interpreted and presented in the neo-Pentecostal doctrine and practice. At first glance, one could say that the two fit well. However, we should not forget that prosperity gospel, as it is understood and practiced in Kumasi, is a local interpretation of a more global religious ideology. It is through this work of interpretation that prosperity in the neo-Pentecostal sense has resonance in an Asante context. Gifford (2004) has equally argued for the resonance between neo-Pentecostal ideology and institutional setting vis-à-vis a Ghanaian traditional religious frame of reference. However, he does not relate this to a wider socio-political and historical context. Moreover, he does not discuss or show how the doctrine is manifested in practice or the social mechanisms for building up wealth. Relating the prosperity gospel to the local context is not only about seeing continuities in traditional religion, but also in terms of the ways social relations and social identities are claimed and negotiated.

21 This is not a definitional exercise as such, but an attempt to include other than material and monetary wealth. Another way of approaching the importance of access to social relations and other resources could be through the concept of social capital. Neo-Pentecostal church members and pastors can be understood as investing in and getting access to social capital through their membership of a church. This membership provides resources (for example when migrating) through contacts in the neo-Pentecostal network. It is not networks themselves that are interesting, but rather the creation, access and use of them and thus the production of social capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1996: 84, 105).
**Principle of giving and receiving**

The principle of giving and receiving is referred to again and again by pastors as the underlying rationale behind receiving the blessings of God: the more one gives in church the more one receives from God. Pastors teach church members how to learn to give freely and spontaneously. One pastor said:

> “God gives in the first place and we give back and it comes back multiplied. Then it becomes easy to give … We surrender things to God, submit our entire life and possessions to the Lord and it comes back to us multiplied. People who spend more time with the Lord, they get more time back to work”.

This principle builds on the unique relation between man and God (you give as an individual person and God gives back to you as an individual). All that members give in church is seen as something they give to God, which means that giving to the church or the pastor is the same as giving to God. This relation is what Ukah (2005: 261) terms “an economic transaction between believers and God” mediated by the religious leadership. However, it is worth noticing that receiving the blessings of God (although this might be imaginary) would not necessarily come through the church or pastor. So the exchange is not reciprocal (at least not in an ideological sense). The language used to explain the principles of giving and receiving is often an economic (neo-liberal) language. Giving is talked about as an investment and receiving as the fruits that investment might bring. However, this exchange is not depersonalised, as van Dijk notes “it remains highly identifiable and personal” (van Dijk, 1999: 80).

Church members were not only asked by pastors to give money to God and they not only expected to get things in return. They were also asked to give their time and to give their loyalty. As one pastor instructed: We have to give “our life, our time, our talents and abilities, our possessions: monies, clothes, cars, houses”. Francis Afrifa, a young pastor in Kumasi said the following about giving:

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22 On the theological background of this principle see Asamoah-Gyadu (2005a). On giving see also Maxwell (2006a: 149).
“Noah offered. What have you given to this church? Since we started this building, how much have you given? Noah gave an offering, and God was moved. God took away curse […] Its time you spend time with God. Give time. Give money, give, give, give, give. Who gave food to the pastor at Christmas? The pastor’s gift is to understand the principles of giving and receiving […] You are not travelling because you have not sown financially. You have died spiritually because you haven’t spent time with God […] Give, give, give, give your time, money, sika, and resources. Be blessed and lifted up. He is about to favour you. Who wants to buy cement for the church? It’s an opportunity to be blessed”.

After the sermon people got up, stood in the front of the church and pledged how many cement bags they would give. They were then prayed for and blessed by the pastor. This event cannot only be understood as a pastor collecting for himself and the church. In this case, Francis Afrifa was not preaching in his own church, but was making a so-called programme in a branch of Family Chapel International. I suggest that the incentive for him to get people to give is not so much about him getting richer in a material sense, but rather to show that by invoking the word and the power of God he was able to make people give. By proving his ability to collect, he also shows that he is a powerful preacher, he can control people, and that is how he builds up a position as a powerful ‘man of God’.

Time and presence can be seen as something to give as resources; in the same way as money and other commodities. Clearly, money plays a significant role, both as a powerful symbol of wealth and as necessary to run a church. For instance, at a Sunday service at Family Chapel International, church members and leaders gave money to the musicians. They put notes on the musicians’ foreheads or in a basket. At the end of one service, the head pastor rose from his big chair at the side of the stage and threw a bunch of cedi notes at the musicians.

The focus on money cannot only be ascribed to faith gospel or prosperity as preached in neo-Pentecostal churches, but represents a longer historical trend of capitalisation and

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26 Family Chapel International, Sunday service, 21 August 2005. This is not unique to churches, but a common practice in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa.
monetisation in Ghanaian society, where cash was required for consumption (McCaskie, 2000: 132-133). That said, control over people and over institutions also seems to play a role in the ways in which pastors build up and display wealth. Ukah (2005: 258) also refers to members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God being asked to “increase their expenditure, time, conviction and commitment in the cause of the church”. Moreover, there is within neo-Pentecostal ideology a connection between material richness and spiritual richness. The display of wealth is also a way to prove one’s spiritual capabilities e.g. to perform miracles. The church and religious ideology can be understood as an arena for negotiating claims to wealth, where one’s success is dependent on the ability to mobilise supporters. This is in line with former ways of claiming wealth (Berry, 1995: 307). Berry argues that, historically, access to wealth or resources was linked to social identity and therefore “the valuation of goods and services was inextricably bound up with the negotiation of social identities and allegiances” (Berry, 1995: 308).

Refusal of poverty

The idea of ‘refusal of poverty’ is that one is not destined to be poor, but by being with the right people and ‘claiming what belongs to you’ one can escape poverty (see also Gifford, 2001). Victor Osei, founder and leader of Family Chapel International, said at a church programme entitled ‘Break in, Break free, break through’: “To break in, is to take everything that belongs to you. You need to take it, you need to do something actively”. On another occasion he talked about the problem of having the wrong ‘spirit’. He shouted:

“I can do all things, I can do all things, I can do all things. I can do, because you are ‘I can do’ person. The problem with many Christians is, that they depend on lack. Most people are programmed to fail in life. You are programmed to fail and your friends, they will cause you more failure. Walk with ‘I can do’ people. Move from area of lack and change to possibility. Change your mentality. People work for it […] If you sit there you will die. People work hard for money. Success is like a beautiful woman. If you tell her, it won’t change her. You have to convince money to be at your side. Success brings forth success. Richer gets richer and poorer gets poorer.

Make friends with money. Seek it. If you are stupid your money will be taken from you”.28

This quotation shows how getting rich is not only about going to church, but also about one’s mentality and not least being with the right people. The pastor provides instructions on how to get rich (church members can attend classes on how to set up a business). Additionally, being rich is not a sin, and can be thought of as a sign of spiritual power. As mentioned above, there is a strong relation between wealth and the spiritual capabilities of pastors in the sense that showing one’s wealth is a way to prove one’s spiritual capabilities and thereby build up a strong position as pastor.

Another aspect of the ‘refusal of poverty’ is the importance of networks and social relations. A pastor in Kumasi talked about the value of relationships in this way: “I always try to keep relationships because money is a weapon, so is also a relationship, a godly relationship is also a weapon. God can reveal it to one person, who will stand and pray for me”.29 In this way a relation serves as a way to legitimise a pastor’s position. International relations are also seen as crucial when founding a church and when building up a position as a pastor. Another point is that people not only engage in exchange within the church but, as Berry has argued in a different context “people join social clubs, churches or Muslim brotherhoods, cooperatives and political parties, and concurrently maintain ties to kin, affines or members of their ancestral communities” (Berry, 1995: 309). People (members and pastors) are not only members of a neo-Pentecostal church, but they are involved in multiple networks at the same time.

Success is not only a matter of material success but also of spiritual development, which implies ‘getting to know God better’. Many pastors put great emphasis on spiritual growth that, for instance, requires discipline and persistence when it comes to reading the Bible, praying and fasting, worshipping and giving. Attaining spiritual growth is often talked about in a management-inspired language. One pastor, for instance, advised people to set goals and visions for their spiritual life and to have a set calendar for praying and reading the Bible in

29 Interview with Francis Afrifa, Kumasi, 13 September 2005.
order to achieve the set goal. This points both to the importance of knowledge (here knowledge of God) and to a demand for control and discipline with one self, wrapped in a business/management inspired speech. So ‘refusal of poverty’ is presented as a dual process. On the one hand as claiming richness and a change of mentality. On the other hand as a demand for knowledge and control over the one self.\(^\text{30}\)

**INSTITUTIONAL SETTING**

The aim of this section is to provide insight into how the neo-Pentecostal churches are organised internally. The newer churches are less institutionalised and are typically organised around one pastor. In terms of the institutional setting, my argument is that there are two processes taking place at the same time: one of fragmentation and diffusion and one of regulation and routinization. Although the churches are mostly known to be rapidly changing, anti-hierarchical and network-like (as compared to the mainline churches and the classical Pentecostal churches), there are clear tendencies for these churches to build up new organisational forms, to rebuild order and to install regulation. For instance, regulation is installed by establishing criteria for membership and for being a pastor, by collecting tithes, having a constitution, and having regular church programmes and activities. These pastors also set up their own organisational systems through establishing, for example, Bible schools and associations. In order to survive, the churches need regulation. Moreover, regulations serve as a foundation for creating pastoral authority.

An example of how churches are making rules is the practice of collecting tithes. In one of the small and recently established churches (Alive Bible Congregation) I visited in Kumasi, the pastors wanted to install tithing.\(^\text{31}\) The pastors explained the principles of tithing during a church service. They told the church attendants that paying tithes is paying one tenth of what we earn, that it is a way to be accountable to God, and that the money goes to the pastors, orphans, widows and the needy and poor. One pastor explained “tithe is giving back

\(^{30}\) Note the strong focus on the individual and its responsibility for obtaining success. Note also the resemblances with much self-help literature and new management rhetoric that would be interesting to explore further.

\(^{31}\) Church service, Alive Bible Congregation, Kwadaso, Kumasi, 11 September 2005.
ten percent of what God has given to you as a steward. It is re-giving”. After this explanation, there was a long sequence with questions from church members and replies from the pastors. Some members were confused about when to pay tithe:

Question: “Should we pay tithe in case we don’t work but your mother caters for you?”
Reply: “Whatever you are given, you should pay ten percent”

Question: “What does tithe mean? If you don’t work you don’t have to pay tithe?”
Reply: “If someone gives you money because you did something good, you have to pay tithe, not only of work”.

Question: “Should you pay ten percent of full salary or after you have paid your bills?”
Reply: “We pay tithe according to gross income, not net. If you earn 600,000 [cedis], and owe someone 100,000, you should still pay according to the 600,000. We don’t pay on money we borrow. If you use it to work and make profit, then you pay”

Question: “Should you pay at the end of the month or when you get money? Because if you wait then you might have spent the money on food”.
Reply: “Some churches ask for tithes every Sunday. You have to put something aside everyday, otherwise its too difficult”.

The conclusion of the discussion was that “if you pay tithe, God will be faithful and help you and heal your sicknesses”. The interesting thing about the discussion was that no one questioned the practice of paying tithes. All the questions were related to the technicalities of how to pay and about how much money to pay. The discussion is an example of how pastors introduce a regulating mechanism in church. But such regulations also gives rise to questions and uncertainties. The process of regulation and routinization is a two-way process between pastors and congregation. Pastors need to make the members accept and recognise the rules, and they do this by drawing the members into the discussion as to how the new practice works.
Membership

The rules on how to become a church member vary according to church and according to the size and level of institutionalisation of the church. In the case of CCC in Kumasi (which is one of the city's largest neo-Pentecostal churches), there is a clear procedure to follow. First you get invited by someone to attend a church service. After having attended the church for a while you can decide to become a member. When someone wants to become a member of the church he or she has to take two courses. First, a course called discipleship class (or ‘Foundation for Christian living’) and then a course on the history and aims of the church. After that you get a membership card and will be summoned to an interview to find out whether you are committed. Church members get an individual code number, which they use as identification and when they pay tithes.32

There are many variations as to how one becomes a member. Some people are actively involved in church groups and activities, whereas others are less active but still consider themselves as members. Some deliberately try to stay at the margin of the church and not become too involved because they find it too time-consuming. Members are closely monitored and the leaders seek to keep members engaged in the church.

The members of the neo-Pentecostal churches are typically people with aspirations of material wealth and economic success. Some churches have a large proportion of youth in their congregations, whereas in others it is mostly middle-aged women who attend. With regard to the Ewe society, Meyer contends that “[s]ocially speaking, the churches are most attractive to people who are relatively powerless in the male-oriented gerontocratic power structure which still prevails in Ewe society, and who attempt to move upward economically, mainly by business and trade” (Meyer, 1998c: 759). I would argue that this observation is valid for other areas of southern Ghana as well. For instance, 60 percent of the members of CCC consist of young people (according to the head pastor).

How to become and define a member of a neo-Pentecostal church is an interesting discussion in itself. First of all one has to distinguish between those who attend a service and those who are full members. To be a full member one has to show commitment, take

32 Interview with Elizabeth Lawson, secretary, CCC, Kumasi, 26 August 2005.
responsibility, and receive spiritual and moral counseling and education etc. But someone who attends a service might not have a personal contact with the church leadership as such.

Activities

The churches have what they call ministries, which are a variety of groups that do different things. In CCC in Kumasi there are eight different ministries: Men’s ministry, Women’s ministry, Joshua generation (young adults), New generation (youth), Children’s ministry, Music ministry, Family Life Ministry and the ushering ministry. In this way the churches seek to involve their members in activities related to their particular age group or need. Many members take up leadership positions within these groups and are promoted and recognised. There are activities, church services and prayer meetings in church at least two or three times a week. Apart from the Sunday service, many churches (including the very small) hold an all night prayer session as well as a prayer meeting during the week. The bigger churches have a range of activities that combine worshipping, counselling and informing church members on issues that are relevant to their daily lives (marriage, health, business). Churches also hold special conventions and programmes that last several days and where pastors from outside the church are invited to preach. Such pastors are often Ghanaians who live abroad. These programmes are advertised publicly and are often thought of as being especially powerful at the spiritual level.

Many churches have activities that aim to assist less privileged people both inside and outside the church. For instance, CCC has Calvary Aid Foundation, where they train young women (a rehabilitation programme for young sex workers). They are trained in, for instance, sewing, tie and dye batik, hair making and catering. When they complete the training programme they get financial assistance to help them set up their own businesses. CCC also has a Calvary Institute of Music and medical outreach in the Northern region.33

International connections

The majority of the churches I studied have branches abroad, and in one case the church was the daughter-church of a church in Copenhagen. In many cases churches have been founded on request by Ghanaians migrants or by Ghanaian churches sending out

missionaries to plant churches. The pastors working for church branches abroad report back home on the progress of the church. It is common for all the pastors to meet in Ghana once a year (or more or less frequent), and that the head pastor visits the branches abroad.

The focus on mobility, expressed as a dream of travelling in neo-Pentecostal discourse, does not necessarily imply that members get access to funds for travelling from their churches. It seems important at this stage to underline the difference when speaking of neo-Pentecostal discourse and when speaking of the everyday lives of churchgoers. This is not to ignore the fact that the insistence on success in neo-Pentecostal discourse is attractive, especially to the urban educated youth, but to point out that it is (in many cases) more a reflection of people's hopes and dreams than a reflection of the reality of their everyday lives. When it comes to church leaders, the picture is somewhat different. Pastors travel in order to visit church branches abroad, visit affiliated churches and other pastors. The pastors from the more established churches travel extensively, and some spend as much time outside Ghana as inside. They would either use their own money, get money from the church or from the churches they are to visit abroad.

**Literacy**

There is great importance attached to literacy among neo-Pentecostal pastors. A way to raise one’s status and standing as a pastor is by writing books, getting them published and disseminating them. As stated by Gifford (2004: 36): “Publication increases the pastor’s status and spreads his name”. Of the pastors I interviewed the ‘biggest’ had published a least one book, and many of the pastors who were on the ascendant, talked about their plans to publish books. In Family Chapel International in Kumasi I met three pastors who had published books, and all gave them to me as a kind of business card. Victor Osei (the leader of the church) had published two books, among which one was entitled ‘Building your spirit man’. The book consists of 56 pages and, in all, five chapters (Importance of Building your Spirit Man, Obtain, Maintain, Abstain, and Sustaining the blessing). The book mostly contained quotes from the Bible combined with advice on how to become a strong and faithful Christian and hence successful in life. The following quote highlights the importance attached to knowledge:
“Obtaining information from the Holy Spirit is the first key to building your spirit man. Information is knowledge. Knowledge helps your spirit to grow. […] Get wisdom, get knowledge; that is what scripture says. Look for it, obtain it, buy it and do not sell it. We are all products of what we know” (Osei, 2005: 17-19).

Other publications provide marriage counselling, advices on achieving success or are public tributes and expositions of pastors themselves (e.g. autobiography).

There are obvious parallels between this practice and Ghanaian popular fiction as discussed by Newell (2000). The authors of popular novels in Ghana in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s were often ‘youngmen’ and school-leavers. Publishing novels was a way to obtain status as “these men probably would have been excluded from the formal status-conferring discourses of their elders” (Newell, 2000: 11). In the same way, neo-Pentecostal pastors receive recognition by publishing books, by speaking the ‘word of God’ and by speaking it publicly for instance when preaching.

What is of particular interest to this study is the practice of public speaking in proverbs: a way to achieve authority and recognition, but which in the past was reserved for the older
generation. In writing novels the young authors might have found “an alternative platform for the public display of ‘proverbial’ quotations” (ibid.: 12). Proverbs function as ‘truths about life’. Bible quotations and the publications of pastors can in some cases be seen as analogous to the advice given in proverbs (see also Newell, 2000: 24-25). In his book, Victor Osei deals with the question of wisdom in relation to age. He writes:

“Wisdom does not come with age. It comes by the knowledge of God. There are many who think they qualify to be called wise by virtue of their age or their status in society. I beg to differ. Wisdom is of the Lord and he gives it to those who serve and obey him” (Osei, 2005: 13).

Moreover, as Barber (2007: 107) has pointed out, the production of texts is a constitutive part of social being and social relations. Therefore the pastors’ publication of books can be seen as part of the social process of building themselves up as pastors.

CHURCH SERVICES—MISE-EN-SCÈNE

This section shows how church services are ways for pastors to stage themselves and to appear as someone with influence. The section analyses the role of the pastor during, before and after church service; how they perform and how they relate to attendants/audience and junior pastors. The main point of the analysis is that church services provide a space for pastors to perform and present certain images of themselves. But these are also moments when members show dedication and legitimise or validate the authority of the pastor. The functions and performances of pastors at church services highlight some of the crucial elements of pastorship such as: guidance and advice giving, being a role model, providing spiritual services and displaying status, wealth and power. Power is shown in two ways. 1. Power over people (or subjects as wealth), the pastor attracts people and thereby also resources and attention. He can get people to do things, which means he has control over people. 2. Spiritual power: The service is the ultimate moment to show spiritual power and links to God. Spiritual power is shown in the way the pastor prays, in how the congregants feel the presence of the Holy Spirit and when the pastor lays his hands on people. In these
ways he demonstrates his direct link to God and, for instance, his ability to heal.\textsuperscript{34} This section also describes the structure of services. It mainly builds on data gathered during participation in approximately 30 church services in Kumasi, Accra and Copenhagen. Moreover, the analysis builds on a number of recorded church services in which I did not participate myself.

There is a whole range of other activities taking place in neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches during the week. But the Sunday service is usually attended by the largest number of people. It is an occasion to see the pastor perform, speak and sing. And it is an opportunity par excellence to be mise-en-scène. Often Sunday Services are recorded on video or tapes so people can buy them afterwards and, in some cases, the services are transmitted on the radio. There are a lot of differences in church services having to do with the size of church, it’s location, the reputation of the pastor etc. However, there are common traits with regard to the structure of the service and the way people relate to each other.

Most often church services in neo-Pentecostal churches are divided into four parts: praise and worship (singing), offerings, prayers and sermon. Other activities such as Bible studies, testimonies, alter calls, and announcements also take place to a varying degree.\textsuperscript{35} Although the pastor does not play a central role in all these activities, he is involved in one way or other; as observer or as participant. During the first part of a church service (praise and worship) the pastor is most often not present. This would depend on the size of the church. But it was the norm that the head pastor, the one who would normally preach unless there was a visiting pastor, would come into the church after the church service had already started. In the bigger churches I attended in Kumasi (Family Chapel International and CCC) people would dance during the praise and worship session. Sometimes the head pastor would also dance, throw money at the musicians or acknowledge what they were doing in another way. An associate pastor would lead a prayer session in which everyone participated, and then

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\item[34] See also Maxwell (2006a: 141) on the staging of Ezekiel Guti. This pastor and founder of the ZAOGA in Zimbabwe was the last to enter and the first to leave a church service. He was followed by pastors, and those who wanted to see him were waiting in the corridor outside his office.
\item[35] Gifford (2004: 27) identifies three central parts of church services in neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Ghana, namely ‘praise and worship’, offering and sermon. He pays less attention to praying and healing, and also does not take into consideration the more informal activities going on around a church service (such as meeting the pastor for advice, getting the pastor to lay his hand on you, etc.).
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introduce the head pastor. The pastor would be welcomed or introduced with music and people shouting. In many cases the sermon appeared to be the most important moment of the church service.36

As noted by Gifford (2004: 27), the sermon is not read out from a script. The sermon is a combination of three things: acquiring knowledge from the Bible (to learn), for the pastor to deliver a personal message and instruct people and for the pastor to perform and appear as a ‘big man’. Normally, sermons are delivered in a very energetic way. The pastor talks loudly or shouts, runs and moves a lot and seek to interact with people in the form of asking questions to the audience. They talk to him, give comments, laugh and clap. One example is Victor Osei of Family Chapel International who shouted ‘Hello’, and people would reply ‘Hi’ or ‘talk to us daddy’ during the sermon or a meeting.

After church service, church members often come to see their pastors. In some churches they queue outside the office of the pastor. People come with personal problems, seek advice, ask for a letter of recommendation and for prayers and healing. In some cases I observed church members who would ask for prayers before an exam or for counselling in case of family problems. This shows that the pastor not only presents a message in church, but that he also has a more personal function related to the individual needs of the church members.37

DISCUSSION

This chapter has discussed how neo-Pentecostal pastors build up wealth and status in Kumasi. The argument of the chapter is that neo-Pentecostal ideas of wealth appeal to

36 I follow Mauss in the understanding that prayers (and sermons etc.) are social phenomena. This is not to reject the religious experience of church members or pastors as such, but to discern the social ideas expressed and focus on religious practise as social practice. Mauss wrote: “Alors même que la prière est individuelle et libre, même quand le fidèle choisit à son goût les termes et le moment, il n’y a rien d’autre en ce qu’il dit des phrases consacrées, et il n’y parle que des choses consacrées, c’est-à-dire sociales. Même dans l’oraison mentale où, selon la formule, le chrétien s’abandonne à l’esprit, cet esprit qui le domine c’est celui de l’Église, les idées qu’il agite avec sont celles de la dogmatique de sa secte, les sentiments qu’il domine c’est celui de l’Eglise, les sentiments qui s’y jouent sont ceux de la morale de sa faction […] La prière est sociale non seulement par son contenu, mais encore dans sa forme. Ses formes sont d’origine exclusivement sociale. Elle n’existe pas en dehors d’un rituel” (Mauss [1909] 1968: 19).
37 The work of pastors will be dealt with in more depth in chapter four.
pastors as well as to the members of the church. On the one hand, such ideas encourage a certain kind of entrepreneurship. On the other hand, these ideas relate to more established ideas of social mobility and status in Asante. I also point out that the way wealth has been perceived in scholarship on neo-Pentecostalism is narrow in the sense that it merely looks upon wealth in terms of money and commodities. I argue that, in the case of pastors, wealth should be seen in a broader context and also include such features as time, the presence of people and social relations. By analysing specific cases and events, I have shown how pastors and church members invest in social relations and networks and that this is a way to achieve wealth.

In a neo-Pentecostal understanding wealth is more than money. Wealth is richness in relation to both money and people. It is wealth in relation to control over people, but also as social relations and access to international connections. Furthermore, wealth can be understood in terms of wealth of association, in the sense that one is more likely to obtain wealth by being associated with a wealthy pastor. Meyer argues that in terms of wealth and prosperity the neo-Pentecostal churches merely play a symbolic role. She asserts that the churches’ financial assistance to members is of a symbolic character and therefore concludes that:

“In the sphere of accumulation and distribution the pentecostalist churches also play an important role, although again symbolic, role. By offering protection for a person’s individual business and by cutting symbolically the blood ties connecting a person with his or her family, pentecostalist churches promote economic individualism […] pentecostalism provides an imaginary space in which people may address their longing for a modern, individual and prosperous way of life” (Meyer, 1998c: 763).

If we approach our analysis of neo-Pentecostalism and wealth differently, and not only look upon how churches and pastors assist church members, we get a different and somewhat broader understanding of how the concept of wealth is defined, how wealth is built up within neo-Pentecostal churches, and what relations are involved.
In approaching wealth and Pentecostalism one has to look at how ideas of wealth are attractive and meaningful to both church members and pastors. Members are part of the process, as they provide wealth and they make pastors wealthy, not only by contributing financially, but by their mere presence and time. Leading a church that has many members is a sign of wealth and gives the pastor some form of control over people. Another aspect is the relationships between pastors; they also make each other achieve wealth by inviting one another to do programmes and by promoting each other. This is exemplified by the case described above, where Francis Afrifa got people to buy cement for a church. I argued that it was not about collecting for himself, but about proving that he was able to make people give. Moreover, I would argue that it was also about building up a strong network. If Francis makes the church he visited a strong church, he also becomes a strong and powerful pastor himself. In other words, he invests in social relations and networks by collecting cement bags to construct the church.

Ideas about wealth in the neo-Pentecostal churches which I studied are not only about flamboyant lifestyles or abundant richness. These ideas are also about founding churches, controlling people, having access to international relations etc. Wealth is not only about what is promised in church or the lifestyle of the pastor and some rich church members. It is also about the social relations that are invested in and that are negotiated. It is about the relations between the pastor and the congregation, as well as the pastor’s relation to others outside the church. It is about the possibility of mobility and “opportunities for acquiring wealth through participation in institutions” (Jones, 2005: 41). In the churches, wealth can be measured in money, extravagant goods (cars, clothes), international connections, control over people, and controlling churches and pastors. These are in the local neo-Pentecostal institutional context the public indicators of upward and downward mobility. I think that putting these indicators into a historical frame shows us that wealth has a broader meaning in this particular context than it might have in other contexts.

The neo-Pentecostal doctrine on wealth and prosperity has affinities both to the historical context in Asante and to the development of a society with increased focus on money and circulation of capital; a society where cash has become increasingly important for recognition and social mobility. On the one hand, there is resonance with the perceptions of wealth and
power in Asante. We have seen how a broad conception of wealth is in play in neo-Pentecostal discourse, and also how accumulation and redistribution of wealth, and its public display, are central for the ways in which neo-Pentecostal pastors raise and build themselves up. Displaying your wealth publicly is of paramount important, as was also the case of the pre-colonial ‘big men’ (abirɛmpɔn). This is also the case with neo-Pentecostal pastors. However, displaying your wealth is not merely about showing richness in terms of money, but also about having a large church building, a large and loyal congregation, and for instance showing knowledge of the ‘word of God’ by publishing books. Wealth is displayed and performed publicly, but is also a constant target for public debate and criticism. Whether pastors live up to such moral values of commitment and contribution to the general wellbeing of society is assessed and debated continuously in newspapers and not least in everyday parlance.

On the other hand, the neo-Pentecostal focus on wealth and prosperity can be seen in conjuncture with more recent changes with regard to the relation between wealth and the individual. There is thus ‘conjuncture in time’ between the focus on individual responsibility and possibilities for progress as part and parcel of a broader neo-liberal moral regime. As shown in the chapter, this discourse is to be found in neo-Pentecostal discourse and is, for instance, expressed in such ideas as ‘refusal of poverty’ and ‘I can do people’. There is a strong explicit focus on the ability of the individual to escape poverty, to become rich and successful, which is to be obtained by being a faithful believer. Here, being a faithful believer means knowing the ‘word of God’, but also being in control of oneself, having a vision, a target and a plan. It is up to the individual to achieve success with the assistance of God, and by means of self-control, discipline and self-organisation.

So there is both affinity and resonance with former and more recent ideas on wealth. The central point is that religious doctrine in this case is in conjuncture in time and with the past. But also that there is affinity between the doctrine and the interests of both pastors and church members. Becoming a pastor can be seen as a way to fulfil social and economic aspirations; pastors are engaged in processes of becoming someone and preferably someone important. Therefore the idea that pastors mediate the power of God and also that their wealth is a sign of God’s blessings fits well with their aspirations. At the same time, for
church members the doctrine on prosperity combined with ideas of ‘refusal of poverty’ and ‘I can do it people’ concur with their aspirations to be successful in, for instance, their education, business, political career and family life. Moreover, the broad understanding of wealth (wealth also as time and presence), as well as wealth by association, puts people in a different position than if only money mattered. Being a good Christian and being associated with the pastor, not only depends on the capital resources members can afford to bring in. They can also invest their time and presence. This makes a broad understanding of wealth particularly meaningful in a context where people’s economic resource might be scarce, but where people possesses other resources such as time, presence and talent.

At the same time, the values that neo-Pentecostal discourse exposes are highly contested and debated because they feed into more fundamental tensions about accumulation and redistribution of wealth and individual consumption vis-à-vis the wellbeing of society.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE CRAFT OF PASTORSHIP

INTRODUCTION

Whereas the previous chapter was about the neo-Pentecostal movement and its doctrine, this chapter is concerned with the internal dynamics of pastorship. The chapter analyses how one becomes a pastor and how status, wealth and power is achieved in this process. The craft of pastorship is approached not only from the perspective of the church, but as being performed, unfolded and made sense of on several platforms simultaneously. Hence the chapter also deals with the social structures in which pastorship is embedded.

The argument of the chapter is twofold. First, I argue that pastors become pastors not merely by making careers within the church, but also through relations to e.g. family and kinship. Hence, pastors engage in several social networks and invest in social relations that transgress the church in order to succeed as pastors. Moreover, if a pastor acquires status within one platform his status also rises in other platforms (e.g. family). Second, in order to build up and legitimise a position as a pastor, he has to show that he has access to the spiritual realm, hence spiritual power. This is achieved, for example, through display of wealth and the ability to heal and perform miracles. The idea is that the pastor is a mediator between the spiritual world and people and thus holds specific gifts and powers which give him, a priori, a privileged position. Being a mediator also implies controlling access spiritual powers and having the ability to make things change as a gate-keeper or broker. Claiming access to the spiritual has a specific meaning not only in the church and among church members. It is also recognised and meaningful within other platforms. The importance of being a mediator between the physical world and the spiritual world is to be understood as part of a cognitive matrix that has a broader resonance in Asante society (Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a, 2005b). Consequently, pastors perform and exercise multiple forms of authority; in relation to family, church members and other leaders/colleagues. To take on various forms of authority has a self-reinforcing effect that
boosts pastors’ status in society. However, such authority has to be legitimised and recognised by his social surroundings. Following on from this, the chapter elaborates an idea of the complete pastor as a reflection of a holistic perspective on religion (seen in connection with the social, political, and economic).

Let us elaborate on these two points before turning to the closer analysis of the internal dynamics of the craft of pastorship and the different platforms within which they are unfolded and performed. The analysis of the role of the pastor is built around the understanding that it is the combination of claiming access to divine power and operating within and between different platforms in social networks that is decisive when becoming an important ‘man of God’. To put it a bit schematically, one needs to 1) claim access to the spiritual world and the ability to exercise divine power, 2) be able to gather and control a loyal congregation and group of pastors by inter alia, possessing charisma, 3) have or claim international connections for financial and symbolic functions, and 4) rely on other relations such as family and kinship.

The chapter sets out the structural dimensions of neo-Pentecostal pastorship by analysing the platforms (such as family, politics and transnational connections) pastors operate from and within. Successful pastors not only operate within one of these and not only within the structures of the church, but seek recognition and exert influence in various platforms at the same time. It is when these different sets of structures come into play in one career that he becomes successful in a way that not only gives the pastor influence within the church, but also in a way that confers authority on him more widely e.g. within his family or community. An analysis of these platforms work as a grid for understanding the dynamics at play in the neo-Pentecostalist type of pastorship. This moreover allows for an approach that sees pastorship as a social process of ascending and becoming within these platforms.

In this chapter the analysis of neo-Pentecostal pastorship comprises several layers: their immediate religious environment, their background and their wider social relations. The layer dealing with the immediate religious environment is an analysis of how the pastors operate in the church in relation to other pastors (senior or junior), and in relation to church members/the congregation. How do they legitimise or prove their spiritual power? What
kinds of performances are involved and how do the church members take part in this? The background layer comprises a look at where the pastors come from, their relations to home and extended family, and how they take up new roles, responsibilities, status and privileges after becoming pastors. Pastors are also engaged in wider social networks nationally and transnationally. These relations are often decisive for their work as pastors; from these relations they get inspiration, training, resources. Moreover, these networks provide opportunities to travel and to preach in other churches.

The chapter consists of two parts. First I will outline and discuss various facets and elements of pastorship in terms of the call, training, Bible schools, and the work of pastors. This serves as an introduction to the internal or basic modus operandi of pastoral office that are crucial to think of when seeking to grasp the wider social significance of pastorship. The second part analyses how pastors build up status and are involved in several platforms; such as family, kinship, and chieftaincy. The chapter also examines how neo-Pentecostal pastors are embedded in existing power structures, as well as what their role is and how it is constituted as compared to other types of 'big men'. I finally discuss the attraction of becoming a pastor and the links between pursuing a pastoral career and social ascension.

PART I – PASTORSHIP

PASTORAL CALLING

A divine calling (God’s calling - onyame frecv) is a central element in many of the stories I was told by pastors on how and why they had become pastors. They had all received a calling through either a vision or a dream, through which God talked to them and called them to work for him.¹ Some visions and dreams not only include a call to become a pastor, but also

¹ Note here the differences with the findings of R. W. Wyllie in a study of the careers of pastors and prophets in Winneba, Ghana. Here pastors in Pentecostal churches (classical) entered a pastoral career merely after having been actively involved in church affairs. It was rather leaders of the AICs that entered into ministry after having received a call through a dream or a vision (Wyllie, 1974: 191). If we can draw any conclusions of this comparison it might be that there is an influence on the neo-Pentecostal churches from the AICs (and prophetism in general). Gifford has also noted a trend in neo-Pentecostalism of focusing on the leader more as a prophet than as the head of a religious structure (Gifford, 2004).
let the person know that he would one day become a church leader. ‘God’s calling’ is both an explanation as to why pastors have become pastors (this is never explained by a personal decision or motivation), and by many, it is also seen as an indication of the direction their pastoral career should take.

In this way it is possible to distinguish different types of calling. One type of calling is a ‘global call’. As one pastor explained “I think part of my calling is a global. It’s something that I think that God has given me that in my little way that I can also contribute to the Christian world”. Others explain that they have a call to evangelise among the citizens of a particular nation. Many of these pastors travel a lot, have many contacts to neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in other parts of the world (mainly the US and Europe) and are invited to preach. Another type of calling is a ‘diaspora call’. One example of this is a pastor in Copenhagen who explains that his call from God was a call to gather Ghanaians in Denmark and bring them back to ‘the gospel’.

Defining a call as a ‘teaching call’ (to teach the words of the Bible) is a way for pastors to differentiate themselves from pastors who mostly emphasise prosperity and healing and deliverance. This call is often described as a difficult one, as church members are thought of as being more interested in getting results (obtained through healing and deliverance) than they are in reading the Bible. They want specific results. The call is rather about knowing the Bible and knowing God, and thereby to ‘grow and mature spiritually’. This observation by pastors also indicates that they distinguish peoples’ aims in going to church and that they perceive the majority of members as coming to church in order to achieve something in their lives in terms of health, success or protection. Knowledge of the Bible, in this case, does not seem to have the same status. Bishop Addae of the Shiloh United Church explained how focusing on teaching was seen as a barrier when he first started his church:

“But you know, people like to see miracles and those things, so if you take on Bible teaching lines, it doesn’t go fast, as you know… ahaa. But I wasn’t bothered. I wasn’t

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2 This typology is not exhaustive and more types could be defined on the basis of other pastors’ trajectories and type of pastoral work.
3 Interview with Emmanuel Amoah, Kumasi, 23 August 2005.
worried at all. So by and by, you know, people were joining, but not as fast as you know others”.

The ‘prayer call’ as defined by some pastors is in some ways similar to the ‘teaching call’ described above, in the sense that it is quite contrary to those pastors who want to build up empires and attract many people. These pastors see praying as one of the most central parts of a Christian life. They see it as their main task to get people to pray for issue such as themselves, the church, the nation, health, security, and Ghanaians living overseas. For example, pastor Joshua Kas-Vorsah defined his ministry as “more into prayer and spiritual warfare” and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, he used prayer as a way to participate in society and resolve problems such as crime and road accidents. Such pastors also claim that those pastors and churches that are involved in all sorts of activities and programmes refrain from complying with the need to pray extensively. This can be seen as a way of putting forward a critique of those churches and pastors that are ‘glamorous’ and focus mainly on accumulating wealth. It is also, however, worth noticing that the ways in which these pastors seek distinction is in the fields of knowledge and prayer, which are central terms in an Asante context (McCaskie, 1995). Moreover, categorising these different types of calling points to the multitude of ways to be a neo-Pentecostal pastor, and how the calling fits with the role pastors take up in their careers.

In many cases there is an element of resistance to a pastoral calling. Some pastors said that initially they did not want to become pastors, either because they had other career plans or because they did not like pastors. However, they also explained that they could not defy the will of God and that they eventually had to comply. If someone resists or does not take up the ‘work of God’ it might lead to failure in life. Victor Osei experienced difficulties at the time when he started a church on his own:

“All of my friends, pastors, said ‘look, don’t you think it’s time for you to start something of your own?’ and I said ‘aah, I am not too sure, I think I am okay’. Then things started to go wrong [Rivalries in the church leadership]”.

5 Interview with Joshua Kas-Vorsah, Kumasi, 16 September 2005.
6 Interview with Victor Osei, Kumasi, 3 February 2005.
Many associate the acceptance of the call with an internal struggle. Pastor Francis Afrifa explains how he at first tried to resist a call:

“But initially I wasn’t, you know, opening up to God in order to take the task, because I heard many pastors complaining that it is difficult, it is not easy, the problems you face, so I had not wanted to, you know, engage myself in anything that has got to do with, you know, God. I just decided to go to church and be a normal Christian, an ordinary church member and also go about my normal lifestyle with my business. And yet as God will have it, God just called me, he also confirmed it through many pastors that God has spoken to me, that he wants to use you, that he wants you to be his servant”.

Another young pastor said: “But before that I was a member of Christ Apostolic Church. I felt the calling of God, but I didn’t know what to do because I never dreamt of becoming a pastor”. They refer to the difficulties related to pastoral work or different career plans. Young pastors often face difficult living and working conditions. Trying to resist a call is often associated with failure, which indicates that, as they see it, it is not possible for a human being to resist the will of God. In many narratives there is a time lag between the time of the actual calling (the vision or the dream) and the moment the person takes the step to become a pastor. This time lag is explained as a time of preparation or that the person was not ready to do the ‘work of God’. There are similarities in the life histories of traditional priests (akɔmfo) in that there is an element of resistance to accept a call. McCaskie writes that “[s]uch a life is a narrative of struggle to come to terms with and accept a vocation first revealed, and often frighteningly, in childhood’ (McCaskie, 2008a: 5). Although struggling can be seen as part of the path to become a priest or pastor, refusal is not a possibility. It was widely accepted that not obeying God’s calling would lead to failure in life.

Additionally, the way in which pastoral callings are narrated shows the importance attached to approval of the call by others. Receiving a call is not only an individual or personal experience; other pastors and church leaders often receive the call through dreams and visions

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7 Interview with Francis Afrifa, Kumasi, 17 February 2005
8 Interview with Daniel Darko Kabea, Kumasi, 12 September 2005.
and thereby confirm the call. The confirmation of the call by the social surroundings is a way to legitimise the call, proving its sincerity and showing that it is genuine. At a prayer meeting in Kumasi, a pastoral call of a young man was publicly announced. The young man was summoned by his senior pastor who told the congregation that the young man had had a call from God to become a pastor. All participants at the meeting prayed for the young man and the leading pastor and a visiting guest preacher laid hands on him while praying for his success as a pastor.9 This young man had taken his first step to becoming an ɔsefɔ, which was demonstrated publicly, approved and supported by the leader of the church.

Another example of how a call was confirmed by others is that of pastor Gloria. She explained how her call was foreseen by others:

“The wife of my head pastor had a vision in 1996 about me. I owned a provision shop with things like soap …. People were coming in their numbers. This means I had something good to offer people. After I was told the vision my husband encouraged me to go to the Bible school to know more about God and how to deal with people”.10

In the case of Gloria there is a link between being able to perform materially and being able to perform spiritually, and these two performances are seen as mutually profitable. Her call to serve God was manifested materially and the fact that she was successful in her business is, at the same time, a sign that she will be able to succeed as a pastor.

The confirmation of a call by other religious people points to the fact that becoming a pastor is not only the making of an individual career and is not feasible without the acceptance of his or her surroundings. A young pastor needs the acceptance of established church people of his call, and thereby also the their credibility. Confirming a call does not require it to be done in a official or formalised way, but is done through pastors recounting or narrating who has received a vision or dreamt of the call. Stressing the senior people that have confirmed a religious calling is also a way to establish a genealogy of the people one descends from spiritually and thereby also where one’s spiritual power and charisma derive from.

9 Resurrected Faith in Christ Ministries in Daban, Kumasi, 16 September 2005.
10 Interview with Gloria Mensah Afriyie, Kumasi, 1 September 2005.
Even though the neo-Pentecostalist and charismatic movement has brought with it what has been called “a democratisation of charisma” in the sense that almost anyone can become a pastor and that church members can have a more direct link to God and pray themselves (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a), young pastors still need a certain credibility to show that their call is divine or true. They establish this credibility by referring to senior religious people. There is some ambiguity as to whether pastors claim charisma and spiritual power from other senior pastors. Most pastors would clearly state that spiritual power derives from God and not from other people. At the same time though, many pastors explain their spiritual roots by referring to those they consider their mentors and spiritual fathers, and thereby drawing on the merits of these people.

CHARISMA AND SPIRITUAL GENEALOGY

Joshua Kas-Vorsah, founder of the Resurrection Faith in Christ Ministries in Kumasi, claimed Benson Idahosa from Nigeria as his spiritual mentor. This is not unusual. Many of Ghana’s top neo-Pentecostal pastors, like Duncan-Williams and Charles Agyin Asare, have attended Idahosa’s Bible school in Nigeria and therefore consider him to be their mentor. However, Joshua Kas-Vorsah has not attended Idahosa’s Bible school, but had a dream where Idahosa laid his hands on him and blessed him. This is his account:11

“So when the Archbishop Benson Idahosa died we organized a very big memorial programme for him. I gathered people in the radio and they converged at the place and we did a memorial service for him. So somebody called on the radio and wept and said that he was brought up by Archbishop Idahosa. Actually I never saw Benson Idahosa with my eyes. But after that programme the person said [that] God is going to bless me, and the spirit of Benson Idahosa is going to bless me. […] I had a dream and in the dream, I saw Benson Idahosa, he came in his ceremonial dress. … and there were some ladies there, so they said to me, if you want to go abroad, we can take you abroad and I said, no, no, no, I don’t want to go abroad. I want the grace of that

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11 The following is based on an interview with Joshua Kas-Vorsah, Daban, Kumasi, 16 September 2005.
man. So Benson Idahosa said ‘call me that boy. Kneel down’. So he laid hands on me in the dream and he prayed. After that he said follow me. And I followed him. And then Benson Idahosa said ‘you, whenever you get a platform, don’t promote yourself, if you promote yourself you will go up but you will not last and your enemies will fight you and bring you down because God will not save you because you promoted yourself. But if you get a platform, promote Christ and whosoever Christ exalts nobody can bring down. Go.’ Then I remembered in the dream that this man is dead, then I woke up”.

After this dream Joshua talked to a friend who was an adopted daughter of Idahosa. This woman said that a Reverend Mark Adu Gyamfi from London had heard of Joshua and wanted to talk to him. They met in Accra and:

“when we went he said the last time Archbishop Idahosa came to London, to hold the largest crusade ever was in 1987. And when he finished preaching, the dress he was wearing this African boubou, he removed it and gave it to him [Mark Adu Gyamfi], that, with the sweat in it, gave it to him that he should keep it and then he [Mark Adu Gyamfi] said ‘Papa’, everybody call him papa, ‘what should I use it for?’ He said ‘you keep it, at the right time the owner will come for it’. So he sensed in his spirit that this is the time he wants to gave me the dress of the Archbishop. So I remembered the dream and I remembered how he prayed for me. And he brought the dress. As soon as I saw the dress, goose pimples covered my body so I kept the dress, wore the dress and I prayed ‘God if it is really from you, let your will be done, let the grace come upon my life’ and since then, my life has never been the same”.

Later on, another senior religious person, closely related to Idahosa, confirmed the blessing Joshua received through the dress:

“So a personal assistant of the Archbishop called Dr. Lawrence Obada, came to Ghana, I talked to him and I hosted him in my programme. I invited him for dinner and my wife and I told him about what I’ve just told you. Why I like mentioning Archbishop’s name so much. So he said, he want to look at the dress and said he remembers this dress, that day at the crusade he was there when Archbishop professed over the dress. And he said I and Archbishop has a lot of things in common.
Archbishop was a very bold person. He was somebody who understands the language of prayer. I wasn’t that bold. But since I put on that dress my boldness was increased; now I have confidence and God has increased my faith so much. I’ve not put my trust in that dress, but I’m looking beyond the dress”.

The case of Joshua Kas-Vorsah is an example of how a relationship to a big ‘man of God’ (here established in a dream) is seen as a blessing, and as a way to build up spiritual power and charisma. By establishing a relationship to Idahosa, that includes Idahosa selecting him, he also enables himself to draw on and claim the spiritual power of Idahosa, which is widely recognised in an African neo-Pentecostal context (Kalu, 2007). Likewise, Soothill asserts that “Many key charismatic figures position themselves within the Idahosa “lineage” in order to give weight to their claims of divine favour” (Soothill, 2007: 176). Invoking the spiritual power of Idahosa can also be seen as a way to build up charismatic authority by younger pastors.

Figure 6. Joshua Kas-Vorsah at church premises, Daban, Kumasi
Building up authority and charisma is a dual process. On the one hand, the leader has to claim and prove his access to spiritual power and charisma. On the other hand, the congregation and others have to legitimise this charisma. Charisma should, as mentioned earlier, not be perceived as an attribute, but as something one builds up through social relationships (Barker, 1993: 182). What is particularly interesting about the case of Joshua Kas-Vorsah is the way in which he uses the dress as a token of the transference of charisma. By wearing the dress of Idahosa (with his sweat), Joshua becomes him. He described how he resembled Idahosa more after he received and wore the dress. Although charisma is often seen as a special grace or a personal characteristic, pastors build up their charisma, not only through their congregations recognising it, but also by claiming it from big ‘men of God’.

Moreover, and by doing this, pastors establish their spiritual genealogy. They explicitly refer to who they descend from spiritually for instance who they trained under, who ordained them etc. Soothill raises a similar point and describes the relation as a “‘grandfather-father-grandchildren’ hierarchy […] in which children and grandchildren share in the spiritual or ‘genetic’ heritage of the late Archbishop Idahosa” (Soothill, 2007: 176). Joshua Kas-Vorsah, for instance, was ordained by Bishop Charles Agyin Asare of the World Miracle Church International in Accra the 26 March 2003. He also trained under Idahosa. However, he said that “if the Archbishop Idahosa were to be alive, he would have ordained me”, and he therefore considered himself to be the son rather than the grandson of Idahosa and thereby established a closer link to the source of spiritual power. He also told how he had hosted Matthew Ashimolowo from London in his radio programme and emphasised his ‘bigness’:

“Before the commencement of this ministry I hosted one preacher from London called Matthew Ashimolowo. He has the largest church in Europe¹² and I hosted him. … So he prophesized over me and said God is going to use me, God is going to restore things in my life”.

By establishing links to these powerful ‘men of God’ he draws on their credibility as well as on their status as powerful pastors. Moreover, this way of mapping out one’s spiritual

¹² The Kingsway International Christian Church (KICC) in the UK.
genealogy allows for innovation and flexibility in who one can establish links to, as there are no formal rules to follow and because these links do not need to follow institutional links.

Claiming spiritual heritage is a way to build up a position and a status as pastor, and one sign of this heritage is that there are resemblances between those who are linked. Pastors explained how they became like their spiritual fathers, how they acted and preached like them, and how other people also recognised this.

BIBLE SCHOOLS AND TRAINING

Attending a Bible school is an important step to pursue when building up a career as a pastor. The school gives the up-coming pastor a certificate, a title and an occasion to gather friends, family and colleagues at the graduation ceremony that makes one’s new status public and opens up for financial support. Bible schools are places for the formation and initiation of young pastors. They are an emerging site for education and pastoral training. They are, moreover, a site for creating social bonds; for instance to the head of the Bible school and other students. Many have a special relationship or attachment to the leader of the school and continue to refer to him and participate in seminars after graduation. Furthermore, establishing a Bible school can be seen as a way to build up status as a pastor, it adds to the completeness of being a big pastor.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\) I have only collected a little material on Bible schools (interviews with Bible school leaders, pastors who have attended Bible schools as well as participation in a pastoral seminar). During my research I realised the importance of Bible schools (both the newer ones and the more established schools), and I would have liked, and it would have benefited my study, to have spent more time researching these schools, and to look into, for example, how these relations are build up, what forms of authority the schools leaders claim and have established. Unfortunately, I did no opportunity to explore these schools further (lack of time and also due to the way I had organised my field research. I did not spend a longer period of time in one church, but rather tried to follow the people/pastors).
With regard to the training and formation of neo-Pentecostal pastors, most pastors learn how to become a pastor both from attending Bible school and from working under a senior pastor. Generally speaking, having been to Bible school is not a prerequisite for becoming a pastor or for starting a church and there is no set order with regard to what has to come first: whether one has to attend Bible school before starting a church or the other way round.\textsuperscript{14} Most of the pastors I talked to had been to Bible school for one to three years. Only a few pastors had no theological training. One such was Victor Osei (founder and leader of Family Chapel International). He explained that he had not attended any Bible school because he was an educated man and that he did a lot of reading, therefore he did not feel there was a need for him to go to Bible school. It is widely believed that reading books written by other neo-Pentecostal pastors (American and others) is a way to ameliorate one’s theological knowledge. Many pastors refer to their reading of particular authors when explaining how they were trained. In a similar way, Asamoah-Gyadu (2005b: 99) refers to a Ghanaian charismatic evangelist based in London who describes himself in this way: “I have no

\textsuperscript{14} There is a difference between the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches and the mainline churches. In the first type of churches there are no formal requirements for entering into ministry, whereas with regard to the latter type of churches one needs to go through seminary training to become a pastor (e.g. the Trinity Theological Seminary, which is affiliated with the University of Ghana).
seminary training’ [...] ‘Anytime I visited a seminary, it means I am the one going to do the teaching’”. These kinds of pastors are self-made in the sense that their training mainly consists of working under a senior pastor and creating networks to, and drawing on the credibility of, other successful pastors. The two pastors mentioned above had reached a certain level of that advancement that did not require them to attend school, because this would call into question their status as big ‘men of God’.

Many pastors attend a Bible school at some stage in their career, but not necessarily in the beginning. Often they need to be accepted by a pastor and in a church to get their school fees funded. The aforementioned pastor from Kumasi, Joshua Kas-Vorsah, enrolled in Christian Service College for a diploma in theology. He explained that he needed to refine his teachings, and that this education had changed what he will say in church. He does not think that it will make his preaching more powerful: “Its better, I won’t say more powerful. Its God who gives the power, Bible school doesn’t give you power. But it is more refined, some words I used to say, I say them no more”. 15

The Bible schools which the pastors attended were mostly schools set up by neo-Pentecostal pastors, such as Oasis of Love Bible College at Ahodwo, Kumasi that is founded by Christiana and Kwabena Darko (Kwabena Darko is also the head of one of Ghana’s most successful companies, Darko Farms & Co. Ltd, board member of the Bank of Ghana and a presidential candidate for the 1992 elections), Shiloh Bible Training Centre for Pastors (headed by Bishop Addae), School of the Word (founded by the church House of Faith) and Charisma Bible College, Tafo-Nhyieaso, Kumasi, led by bishop Nicholas Asare. One exception is the Christian Service College in Kumasi, which offers diplomas and BA degrees in theology and business administration. The college is affiliated to the University of Ghana and is an accredited teaching institution. Of the pastors I met, some had been to Bible schools in Kumasi, but others had attended schools in for instance Denmark, New Zealand, Australia and Singapore. Those who attend Bible schools abroad have either been sent by their churches or have gone independently with financial assistance from, for instance, family members. Pastors in Calvary Charismatic Centre (CCC) could go to Singapore for six months, because CCC is related to a church there (Victory Family Centre, formerly also

15 Interview with Joshua Kas-Vorsah, Kumasi, 16 September 2005.
called Calvary Charismatic Centre). Two pastors had been to the Copenhagen Bible Training Centre for a two year-course. This school was founded by Jens Garnfeldt in 1989. He himself was trained at Livets Ord Bible school in Uppsala, Sweden. The cost of attending Bible school ranges between 1,000,000 and 3,000,000 cedis (approx 110 USD – 330 USD).

In August 2005 a pastoral seminar was organised by Bishop Addae of the Shiloh Bible Training Centre for Pastors and took place at Ohwim, Kumasi. Around 600 pastors, mostly younger pastors or pastors who had recently established churches, attended the seminar. Many had attended bishop Addae’s Bible school. The theme of the seminar was ‘Ministerial Excellence’. The programme (see appendix E) consisted mainly of teachings on how to succeed as a pastor, with titles such as: ‘How to keep your gifts of grace’, ‘The moral and spiritual life of a pastor’, ‘Knowing the gifts of your wife’, ‘Pastors and finances of church’, ‘Pastors, church and hypocrisy’, and ‘Accomplishing God’s Given Task’. Some of the subjects were: ‘A good ministry is about having good relationships with people’, ‘No lone ranger will succeed, you can’t succeed alone. You need interpersonal relationship in addition to spirit of excellence’, ‘God has a task for you, you are on divine task. Trust God, you are bound to succeed. Anointing without enough finances is annoying, but God opens doors’, and ‘Generosity is a life style. Giving, the battle is in your mind’. The classes were given by a number of senior pastors from different denominations (including a Methodist minister).

As the titles of the teachings indicate, the preoccupations of the participants and the focus of the seminar were on how to succeed as a pastor. The teachings covered administrative and organisational aspects, how to keep church members, the pastor as a public figure, legitimacy of the pastor, the pastor as God’s messenger, and the spiritual aspects of pastoral work. These themes reflect some of the concerns as well as the struggles of up-coming pastors in Ghana’s neo-Pentecostal and charismatic churches. The themes also covered some of the criteria for of success. Interestingly, having relations and being accountable were emphasised as essential when establishing oneself as a pastor.

Graduation
Graduating from a Bible school is an important event for up-coming pastors. It is an occasion where one can display a new status, and it is a way to formalise this status by
receiving certificates and titles. At the Charisma Bible College they operate with three different certificates: 1. Apprentice in ministry, 2. Fully ordained minister and 3. Senior minister. The new status acquired is moreover recognised by such others as pastors, church members, family and friends who participate in the event. One pastor described the graduation ceremony like this:

“During the graduation a little insight was given about the existence of the school and the status of the graduates. It was made known that we were part of the 8th graduation ceremony. Prizes were subsequently given to members who were always consistent for the entire programme and out of the four presented with the award, I was one of them. The ceremony was interesting. We started in the morning dressed up. We started with prayer. We were later advised to be cautious with what we had learnt, we should not be self centred and focus on how the training was going to help you achieve your individual motive, but rather count it as the grace of God that has brought to this far. … After which we took a lot of photographs with graduates and staff and also with our families. Those whose family members came to support them went to their homes and where celebrations and encouragements were required it was given by family and friends. The certificates were also given to graduates”.16

There is also the expectation that people will give money to the newly graduated pastor. Before the ceremony, the pastor distributed envelopes (see figure 8 & 9) to friends, family, church members and other pastors. This serves both as an invitation to the ceremony and as a request to assist the pastor financially. Pastor Abu was not supported by his church, but from family and friends.

16 Interview with James Abu, Kumasi, 13 February 2005.
Some schools give the students who have graduated a licence, which they pay for and have to renew every year. This is the case with the Shiloh Bible Training Centre for Pastors. A renewal of a licence costs 20 pounds. This is both a way for the Bible school leaders to keep the graduated students attached to them and a way to formalise the graduates’ status as pastors. Some also create pastoral associations and networks, and in this way try to influence and guide their students after they have left school. Some explicitly say that there is a need to frame and guide the young pastors. This refers to the somewhat informal and non-hierarchical set-up of neo-Pentecostal churches but it can also be interpreted as a way to establish and formalise social networks and relations of dependency. In this way, junior pastors relate not only to their senior pastor and spiritual father, but also to the leader of the Bible school they attended. The fact that these also issue licences adds an aspect of authority
building to the relationship between the pastor and his mentor. The leader of the Bible school makes the pastors’ status official by issuing licences and certificates. The graduates confer authority on the leader of the Bible school (who most often is also the founder/leader of a church) by referring to him as a religious leader and by continuing to be under his name.

Having founded a Bible school also adds to one’s status as a ‘big man’. Bishop Addae said:

“but when I came I observed something, that there were a lot of youngsters who were very eager to do the lord’s work. And they were also saying that they had got the call of God. And some were preaching on the streets and at some places, public places”.17

He started a Bible school in 1994 and runs it with four other teachers. Having a Bible school is a way to get young pastors attached to you and to influence them. It also adds an imprimatur of academia to pastors.

Informal training
A young pastor from a small church in Kumasi described his training as a pastor as informal training: “Most of the training was practical. I was always following him [the pastor] for his evangelism in the villages. He used to take along television which we used for our movie shows to win souls”. He continued to talk about the pastor who trained him:

“We had never met before, but he was able to tell me who I was and what was on my mind, so it was some kind of prophecy. So when he told me the purpose of God for my life, I decided to join hands with him to learn from him. Apart from me there were other 20 guys who he was training”.18

Another pastor explained that if you come to a church as a young pastor and say that you have received the calling of God, you cannot be immediately appointed. You have to go through a kind of training in the church:

17 Interview with Samuel Richard Addae, Kumasi, 6 September 2005.
18 Interview with Daniel Darko Kabea, Kumasi, 12 September 2005.
“you go about visiting people […] and also coming to lead prayers in the church and also you will be send around on errands, go and do this, go and do that […] that is the kind of training you go through […] whenever he is praying for people you have to stand at their back, when they are falling you hold them”.19

A pastor and church leader explained the training process in this way:

“When somebody comes to me and tells me he has a calling, I first recommend specific Bible schools for them. After they are trained they are supposed to come and work under me to watch how I do certain things for them to prove to be faithful, then we can set up a branch for him or depending on their skills from time to time. He may also be taken to any of the branches that may lack a pastor or we send him on missionary work”.20

Seen from the perspective of the younger and up-coming pastors, there is not much room for advancement within the older and more well established neo-Pentecostal churches. In fact the widespread attention on the church leader and founder is seen as an obstacle for younger pastors to advance and become recognised. Some would complain that associate pastors are not allowed to preach on Sundays and this points to strict supervision of younger pastors in order to keep them at distance from the power and status of the leading pastor. This is an aspect of hierarchy building within these churches that is often not recognised. The fact that there are often no formalised structures on how one rises in the system, constrains some younger pastors, and they therefore attempt to create their own churches in order to attain more status as a pastor. Often neo-Pentecostal churches have been described as network-like and hence more flexible, egalitarian and less hierarchical than for, instance, mainline churches due to their informal and non-regularised form (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005a; Marshall, 1993). However, the strong focus on the person of the leader renders these churches hierarchical, though in a different way.21 As will be discussed in the next chapter, younger pastors have to go through informal training and submission to their senior pastors in order to rise in the system.

19 Interview with Francis Afrifa, Kumasi, 5 September 2005.
20 Interview with Ransford Obeng, Kumasi, 12 September 2005.
21 For a critical discussion of the potential of democratisation and empowerment of neo-Pentecostal churches, in particular in relation to women see Soothill (2007: 137 ff).
THE WORK OF PASTORS

Neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors work within what they define as the 'five-fold ministry'; that is as pastor, evangelist, prophet, apostle and teacher.\(^{22}\) This five-fold ministry derives from Ephesians 4:11 and, in particular, emphasises the charismatic gifts. According to Adubofour, the concept was introduced by the Morris Cerullo ‘School of Ministry’\(^{23}\) and “gained currency among evangelical Pentecostals in Ghana” (Adubofour, 1994: 341). The title pastor partly depends on the type of calling the person has received and partly on the title given by the church leadership. Moreover, this institutionalisation of a call and a title serves as recognition of the pastor and his work. It also gives some sort of direction to the type of work the pastor will be involved in and hence his role as pastor.

Bishop and archbishop are also used as titles. Some leaders of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches refuse to use these titles. They think it takes the focus away from the work of the pastor and puts more attention on the man as such. So they contest the use of these two titles. Nicholas Asare did not like the inflation in titles, and thought that “your work should prove your office”.\(^{24}\) Others employ them and become consecrated as bishops and archbishops by other church leaders, as a way of recognising their pastoral work and credentials. It was claimed by several that the use of these titles was inspired partly by the Nigerian Benson Idahosa and partly by the Catholic Church. This suggests a desire to introduce more hierarchy into the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches as symbols of status and distinction, in order for some pastors to be promoted and distinguish themselves from others. The use of an Episcopal hat and stick also indicates the influence from the Catholic Church. This practice is criticised both from within the neo-Pentecostal churches and from outside. One church leader in Kumasi said: “If you don’t have the power, you don’t need the form”. He furthermore compared religious leaders who are attracted by titles and symbols, and how they blow themselves up, with Asante traditional leaders. He

\(^{22}\) Personal communication, Sylvia Owusu-Ansah.
\(^{23}\) The Morris Cerullo ‘School of Ministry’ was introduced in Ghana in 1978 (see more in Adubofour, 1994).
\(^{24}\) Interview with Nicholas Asare, Kumasi, 5 September 2005.
explained: “In the family I don’t need to say who I am, they know I am the father, if I did they would wonder, so if you are sure you don’t need to say who you are”. Many call themselves Reverend Doctor, because they have received Honorary Doctoral Degrees, most often from a religious university in the United States, to which they have connections. There is great awareness of the corruption of the system by, for example, position conscious ministers, who want to rise quickly and to be at the top. Some told stories of pastors who went to London to buy their titles.

The work of pastors is manifold. It involves pastoral work in a church-related and liturgical sense, pastoral work in a spiritual sense (invoking spiritual power), and pastoral work in a more mundane sense. In the Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches, the level in the pastoral hierarchy one possesses largely defines the kind of church related work one does. The work consists of preaching, leading prayer sessions, doing Bible studies, singing, simultaneous translation of sermons, and a number of activities in the church during the week (which of course also contains spiritual aspects). The church leader would do the preaching at Sunday services; this would rarely be done by a junior or assisting pastor. Many younger pastors express dissatisfaction with this, as they would then never be able to prove their ability to communicate the ‘word of God’. Junior pastors would often assist a senior pastor, translate sermons, conduct prayers, provide technical assistance, but they would not be at centre stage. Generally, the leaders are often seen as having more power than the junior pastors. When for instance church members fall into a trance during a prayer meeting, they would often ‘wait’ until they had been prayed for and touched by the leading pastor before getting up and back to their seats.

Pastoral work in the spiritual sense is related to healing, blessings, protection, and mediating the power of God. As mentioned before, it is common in a Ghanaian context to rely on spiritual persons when people face problems. As Asamoah-Gyadu writes:

“[…] when difficulties in life acquire a set pattern, it is a sign of the influence of evil powers at work. In such cases, you need one who could truly be called a ‘man of God’,

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that is one who has the anointing to deal with such supernatural interventions’”

A powerful pastor in the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic context is one who is able to perform miracles; “the transcendent realm is a realm of active power, interventions and refuge” (ibid.: 105). The type of pastoral work that is more related to mundane things, such as, for example, problem solving, counselling and giving advice, is also closely related to the pastor’s spiritual power. An illustration of this is how church attendants approach pastors after a service on different matters.

*Female pastors and the role of pastors’ wives*

As compared to the mainline churches, female pastors are accepted within the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches. They are often not able rise as much in the church hierarchy as men. Pastor Gloria had attended Bible school, but is not fully recognised as a pastor in her church. Explaining her situation she said:

> “The pastoral work is hard in Ghana, especially for the women. My church doesn’t accept lady pastors so in my church they just put me in charge of the ladies in all the branches, other than that they don’t give women a permanent place to operate as a pastor. For instance when I travelled recently I had a convention with the ladies in the Brong Ahafo region. It was a three-day convention. So I’ll say that in a way I’m a pastor because to be able to take or lead that amount of women for three days is not easy. For my salary, because I am not stationed as a pastor I don’t really earn any big salary, but God has said that he is our rewarder. I get some income from the programmes we organise … 500,000 cedis [per month, = 56 USD] and I’m alright with it”.26

Gloria did pastoral work outside the church in order for her to function and perform as a pastor. She preached once a week in the information room at the Kejetia market in Kumasi, and that meant that the message was transmitted on loudspeakers all over the market. In other churches female pastors are more accepted, but still women complain that they are not given the same positions as men. Some women have succeeded in establishing their own

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26 Interview with Gloria Mensah Afriyie, Kumasi, 1 September 2005.
churches, as for instance Christie Doe-Tetteh of Solid Rock Chapel International.\textsuperscript{27} Another phenomenon is that of the female pastors that are also wives of leading pastors. In such a case female pastors function as pastors in church and are responsible for women’s activities for instance. However, it is again my impression that their main function is to be wives of pastors and stand behind them (both literally and symbolically).\textsuperscript{28}

As pointed out by Gifford, (2004: 187) the wives of the leading pastors have in many cases been given leadership positions and have been awarded the title ‘apostle’. This is a way to strengthen the power positions of the leaders. The wives are named as co-founders and apostles and this should, according to some, enable them to take over the leadership of the church if the founder dies. I know of one case where the position and role of a bishop’s wife has been written down in the constitution of the church (Word Miracle Church International led by Charles Agyin Asare). However, with regard to the successor of the leader, the

\textsuperscript{27} See Soothill (2007) for an analysis of the ministry of Christie Doe-Tetteh.

\textsuperscript{28} The role of women in churches has not been the focus in my study. It is therefore treated here rather superficially. However, there is no doubt that it is an important element in the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in at least two ways. First, that female pastors are allowed and that women can be church leaders, and second, the role of women as wives of big ‘men of God’.

132
constitution states that the first presiding bishop (founder) should appoint the successor.\(^{29}\) (See also Gifford, 2004: 183-185 and Soothill, 2007).

**Representing the migrant**

At times the neo-Pentecostal pastors serve as a link between Ghanaian migrants and their homes. Pastors keep close contact with some of their members living abroad, and would be contacted by these in specific situations. In certain social situations (such as funerals), the pastor would attend the ceremonies to represent the member who is living abroad. In this way, Ghanaian migrants use the pastors to represent them vis-à-vis their families and moreover to contribute financially (for instance in the case of a funeral). The role of the pastor and the presence of the church community are crucial when someone is living far away and not able to be present physically. This can be exemplified by the story a young Ghanaian women (K) who lived in Norway as a student. Her mother died in February 2005. She then contacted her pastor in Kumasi to inform him and to seek his advice. The pastor prayed with her on the phone, and got the necessary information so as to represent her at the funeral ceremonies. He went to the funeral with several other members of the church and made a small financial contribution on her behalf. After the funeral they would be in touch again to know that everything went fine. K would also be in touch with her family in order to participate in the funeral arrangements and to know whether the pastor had been there, and with how much he contributed.\(^{30}\) Church members living abroad are still seen as part of the church, and therefore it is the task of the pastor to prepare a wedding, participate in a funeral or settle family disputes on their behalf. As one pastor said “[s]he belongs to us, but she is no longer here”.\(^{31}\)


\(^{29}\) “The founders of the church, Bishop and Rev. Mrs. Agyin Asare founded the church on the 29th of March 1987 at Tamale through Brother Charles Gospel Crusades” (Constitution, p. 8) and “(3) She [the wife] shall officially be called ‘MAMA’ by the whole organization. She shall have the same honour and privileges as the Founder. (i) She shall be member of the Executive Council” (Constitution, p. 17).

\(^{30}\) Interview with Simon Ampofo and K’s sister, Kumasi, 15 and 24 February 2005.

\(^{31}\) Interview with Simon Ampofo, Kumasi, 13 December 2004.
Arjun Appadurai and scholars on transnational migration) his approach as being to study “how identities are formed in situations where, as a result of diasporic flows, communities arise that neither seem to have a firm ‘geographical’ anchor nor the means to create the individual as a local, cultural subject” (van Dijk, 2001: 218). This approach celebrates transnationalism as liberating and as freeing the person from constraining social bonds to, for example, family and kin. Van Dijk also analyses how migrants’ engagement in transnational Pentecostal networks influences their relations to home. He asserts that by engagement in a Pentecostal church community abroad migrants become involved in the personal networks of the pastor and this can, when returning to Ghana, “keep oppressive family relations at bay” (van Dijk, 2001: 231). However, my findings suggest that pastors can occupy a position as mediators and linkage between migrants and their families in Ghana, as the case above illustrates. Pastors seek to maintain close ties with the members who have left, but not necessarily to the detriment of their family relations. The relation between pastors and members living abroad leads on to another crucial aspect of the craft of pastorship—the relation between pastors and congregation—which has not received much attention so far in the thesis.

Pastor—congregation

The relationship between pastors and their congregations is important to understand when seeking to analyse the ways in which pastors achieve status, wealth and power. In chapter three I argued that pastors build up wealth partly by people giving their time and presence. This is an example of how there exists a mutual relation between pastor and congregation; a relation that is beneficial to both. Van Dijk describes it well in the following:

“The structuring of leadership involves constant ‘mutational work’ (in Pierre Bourdieu’s phrase) through which the ‘symbolic capital’ of spiritual gifts is turned into positions of authority. […] religious leaders themselves embody these

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32 I would like to emphasise that focusing on neo-Pentecostalism, transnational networks and migration should not entail a decontextualisation of religious institutions, practices and engagements. The point is that transnational religious networks are always situated and that the analysis of such networks contributes to an understanding of the role of neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana. When focusing specifically on migration, a religious perspective might challenge the perceived role of migrants as maintaining relations with a home-town, a chief, or having a particular geographical sense of belonging (Geshiere & Gugler, 1998; Henry & Mohan, 2003; Owusu, 1996). Such a perspective adds to the understanding of negotiations of family relations (obligations, loyalty) in migrant families in Ghana (Lentz, 1994).
Spiritual gifts which they mediate as ‘powers’ to their congregation. These powers heal and deliver the congregation from the dark forces of Satan, and from the sins and transgressions that occur through involvement with these forces […] The church members primarily reciprocate the benevolent powers that are made available to them in immaterial ways: by the show of gratitude, respect and appreciation which is a standard element of all meetings” (van Djik, 1999: 79).

Pastors also provide support and give advice to their members with regard to, for instance, business and investment. One church member (Rosemary) of Family Chapel International in Kumasi had received support from her pastor (Victor Osei) both in relation to a former marriage and when starting her business (three restaurants in Kumasi). She explained: “He has helped me a lot. I had problems from my first marriage but he came in to help me. Even if I had no money, he will give me some. Currently, my children always go to his house after school because of my work, where they are fed and catered for. He has been so nice”. Rosemary had been member of the church since it started and used to be a lead singer in the choir. She can therefore be considered a core member.

Assistance is not available for any church member: You need to be someone. When, for instance, analysing how neo-Pentecostal pastors in Ghana assist their members when they travel, it is possible to distinguish between two levels of attachment. If the person travelling is a member of the church’s core group - that consists of pastors, deacons, or members of various ministries (e.g. a choir, a youth group) - the person is in effect entitled to use the name of the church or head pastor, but only with the approval of the head pastor. This means that the church would provide supportive letters; for instance, to obtain a visa or providing contact with churches abroad. Moreover, regular contact will be maintained and the person travelling can, for instance, use the advice of the pastor when he or she wants to invest at home, or when certain family problems occur and decisions have to be taken. If someone is a recent church member, or someone who has not shown ‘full commitment’, the support would be in terms of advice on how to prepare yourself culturally, how to behave and how to remain strong in your faith. The pastor would, in addition, pray for the person travelling. According to my information, the church members leaving would only in rare

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33 Interview with Rosemary Ababio, Kumasi, 7 February 2005.
cases get financial support from the church. This could, for example, be if the church offers scholarships or offers access to scholarships in, for instance, educational institutions abroad. As expressed by a head pastor from Kumasi, one has to be careful when selecting who to help:

“It all depends on who you are, and if I can trust you, because I have a name to protect. I must know that you meet the requirements because at the end of the day my name will be in the system. For some few people I will recommend”.34

Many of the pastors I have talked to not only perform their pastoral work within the church, but also within the sphere of the extended family, the hometown and friends. They see their status within their families as having changed after they have become ɔsɔfo. The family members require their spiritual services, and they are asked to perform certain tasks (mediators in conflicts, responsible for distribution of land, pray over certain things etc.). This will be discussed in the following section.

PART II

PASTORS AND PLATFORMS

Pastors and family

The Asante kinship structure is organised around the mother’s lineage (abusua) and, by implication, follows the principle of matrilineal descent. The abusua consist of a grandmother and her descendants. Children belong to their mother’s lineage as they are related by blood (the mother passes on mogya (blood) to her children). From their father, children receive ntɔro (spirit)35 which is passed through his sperm, and which provides spiritual protection (Clark, 1999a: 70-71). A lineage has a male head (abusua panin) who is responsible for the wellbeing of the lineage; “[h]e has the power and the duty to settle private disputes between any of his fellow members so that peace and solidarity can prevail in the group” (Fortes,

34 Interview with Victor Osei, Kumasi, 3 February 2005.
35 The notion of ntɔro has been debated in the literature (see Fortes, [1950] 1970: 265; Akwabi-Ameyaw, 1982).
There is also a religious aspect to the social position of lineage head, as the male ancestral stools are in his custody. Moreover, this is a “sign of his status and as sanction of his authority” (Fortes, [1950] 1970: 256). There are various segments of a lineage: The maximal lineage (which can be a village or township) and the yafunu (the children of one womb, the descendants of a grandmother in four or five generations). Witchcraft is believed only to work within the lineage.

As Clark has argued, the Asante family system is characterised by flexibility and elasticity. She writes:

“Remarkable flexibility in the residential and financial arrangements attached to marriage, parenthood and matrilineal kinship has remained a consistent characteristic of the Asante family system throughout this century. Asante cultural norms allowed and actually required a high degree of individual autonomy to anchor the negotiating position of each social adult” (Clark, 1999a: 66).

This flexibility and elasticity also apply to the religious affiliation of family members. The majority of Ghanaians I talked to (both in Denmark and Ghana) were from Christian families, in the sense that at least one of their parents was Christian. A general pattern is that parents had often converted to mainline churches during childhood or early in their adult life. Some have later become born-again and members of the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches. So it was often the case that family members were affiliated to different churches.

The following example illustrates how one, within one family, can belong to different churches. Akosua Yeboah, from the village of Asueyi near Techiman, is the mother of Emmanuel Appiah, who has founded a fellowship and has been a pastor in the House of Faith in Techiman and in ABC in Copenhagen. Akosua has been a member of the Methodist Church since childhood and has given “birth to all my children in the Methodist church”. When asked about her son’s change of church and becoming a pastor she said:

“I still attend the Methodist Church together with my family members and my children except pastor. I trained him in the Methodist Church but as he grew up, he
left the church through the influence of friends [...] He was in Kumasi during that period. All I saw was him telling me that in the course of his visit to his friend, he has decided to attend a different church. I told him I will not understand him, but he told me ‘mother, it is the same one God that we are all worshipping’, which I understood. This is even written in the Bible. I understood him because if your son wants to worship God and will not stay in the house, then it is good. [...] Since he did not abandon church, we are still worshipping one God”.36

This is one among many examples of the plurality in religious adherence in Ghanaian families, and how it is made sense of and accepted.

In many cases, becoming a pastor entails an improvement of one’s position within the family. Many say that they are more respected after they have become pastors than they were before. This is mainly explained by the access they claim to spiritual power. A pastor in Kumasi explained how he had changed his status within his family and how he was responsible for the money of his sister who was living overseas: “Because spiritually they see me on a higher higher plane”.37 David Owusu Ameyaw, who belonged to the Methodist Church but had established a inter-denominational fellowship 38 with Emmanuel Appiah in Techiman explained his family situation and his new position in it:

“I belonged to a poverty stricken family and even ten years after becoming an evangelist I was still having financial problems. It was recently that we discovered and broke that covenant through prayers. [...] According to a story told by our forefathers, this family was very rich, but was a very small family with few members and since in the olden days, human beings were preferred to riches, the members of the family consulted their gods and traded off their riches for human beings and ever since that time they began to multiply whilst their financial position continued to deteriorate. [...] I met with some

36 Interview with Akosua Yeboah, Asueyi (Brong-Ahafo region), 11 February 2005.
37 Interview with Sam Boateng-Sarpong, Kumasi, 26 August 2005.
38 An inter-denominational fellowship is a group of people that meet for e.g. praying and healing sessions. They could all be members of other churches (including mainline churches) and members of a fellowship at the same time. Normally people would pay tithes to their church and not to a fellowship. This was a widespread phenomenon in the 1980s, and was how the neo-Pentecostal movement started to become popular and spread. It is a more informal form of organisation, where lay people can take up leadership positions.
believers and we prayed fervently to God and fortunately for us the covenant was broken and our lives began to improve”.

Positions of trust can be conferred on pastors. David Owusu Ameyaw told about how he had received more respect in his family:

“When members of the family meet, they listen to our views. Moreover, the head of the family has entrusted the family’s land to my care. Thus, I am now the custodian of the family’s property even though I am not the eldest. If one wants to use the land he first has to see the head of the family and then directed to me for my approval. If I also agree we engage the service of surveyors and town and country planning officials to help demarcate the land. I issue receipts to the buyers, give the officials their share of the money and give the rest to the head of the family. [...] They see me as someone who is trustworthy and this is as a result of my Christian background”.

Occupying various roles and playing on several registers is a feature of the constitution of Asante families. It is possible within families to play on different registers at the same time and still be within the same ‘playing field of kinship’. Clark writes:

“Asante social actors openly and consciously negotiate not only their own position and score within the playing field of kinship, but also the rules and even the name of the game. A person can concurrently invoke distinct and contradictory sets of kinship and marriage rules from Akan matriliney, fundamentalist Christianity and Western romantic secularism. Each is widely enough recognised to make an effective bargaining chip, without cancelling out the others” (Clark, 1999a: 70).

Hence when becoming a ‘man of God’, neo-Pentecostal pastors can negotiate new positions within their families; positions that are not necessarily linked to the role of a pastor, but that add to the status and authority they seek to build up.

39 Interview with David Owusu Ameyaw, Techiman, 9 September 2005.
40 Interview with David Owusu Ameyaw, Techiman, 9 September 2005.
In contrast to the above, the literature on Pentecostalism has emphasised rupture, individualisation and escape from the grip of kinship relations (Meyer 1998a, Van Dijk 2001, 2002, Laurent 1999, 2003). This rupture is often linked to church members’ attempts to free themselves from ancestral curses. Van Dijk (2001: 226) explains:

“Even confirmed Born Again believers may still feel haunted by ancestral curses and may therefore encounter the problems, afflictions and misfortunes that result from their past and from the web of social relations and commitments that tie a person to the family … Therefore, a complete break with the past usually implies a complete break with the family”.

In this literature, kinship relations have been presented as rather static and fixed, and the dynamic and flexible nature of these relations has not been in the forefront. Scholars like Berry (2001), Clark (1999a) and Lentz (1994), working on family relations in Ghana (in relation to property, history, gender, and migration), analyse kinship relations as changeable relations, and family ties as “continually in the making...” (Berry, 2001: 150). Both approaches perceive families and kinship relations as important to people, but interestingly enough, in quite different ways: one approach see family relations as obstacles to personal progress and success and the other approach see these relations as ways to negotiate access to resources and to achieve new social positions. In his work among Pentecostals in Chinsapo, Malawi, Englund (2004: 307) discusses the links between Pentecostals and their non-Pentecostal kin. He argues that the township Pentecostals he has studied rely on access to land and other resources to survive, and can therefore not afford to cut off the links that are supposed to provide this access. The point here is that family relations are also used as a platform for promotion.

Religious adherence and relations to stools

One area of kinship relations that is object of contestation is inheritance of stools. Family members who are either pastors or church members in neo-Pentecostal churches refuse to occupy stools because of the religious practices attached to such a position; for instance pouring libation and worshipping ancestors. These practices are not seen as being in accordance with the Christian faith. When refusing a position as ohene or ohemaa, one also
renounces the privileges attached to the positions, such as property, decision-making and status. Or rather these positions are challenged, as pastors seek to build up their status, wealth and power in different ways. This challenge is flexible in the sense that it is not a complete renunciation of these relations; they continue, but in different ways. Pastor Emmanuel Appiah from Techiman comes from a royal family that owns a lot of land (Dwsase Stool). His mother (Akosua Yeboah) was heir to become a queen mother, but he advised her to renounce, because of the traditional religious practices that accompany such a position. According to Emmanuel, they negotiated with the family for six months, inter alia about the possibility of his mother being queen mother without carrying out the actual religious practices. This was not accepted and the position was transferred to her younger sister. Initially, the family was not happy with the situation, but according to Akosua Yeboah, they accepted and their relationship became normal. Akosua explained her refusal by her status as a Christian. However, other Methodists like her would take the double role of chief/queen mother and Christian as, for instance, the queen mother of Techiman, who was also a Christian/Methodist. Instead of ascending the throne Akosua’s son became a pastor, the leader of a fellowship, one who travelled abroad and the owner of a copy machine shop and chicken farm. Moreover, Emmanuel relied on his relations to the stool (both in his ancestral town and in Techiman) when he established his chicken farm. He bought the land from the stool at a favourable price.

Another aspect of not accepting the occupation of a stool is the non-recognition of that authority. Pastor Gloria Mensah Afriyie is from a royal family in Ademse Fomena in the Ashanti region. Her grandmother was the queen mother and after her death her great aunt took over the throne. Gloria’s family is thus eligible to the stool. In 2004 Gloria’s brother (who lived in Denmark) was supposed to be enstooled as chief in the town, but Gloria managed to get him to refuse this: “I was able to talk him out of it. Even my mother as a Methodist wanted him to take the position, but through my advice he refused”. Other Christian family members were happy with the advice she had given to her brother. She said: “they were happy that the pastor says it wasn’t good, why do you think they didn’t give you

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41 Interview with Abrafie Koto (Nana Afia) (queen mother of Techiman), Techiman, 30 August 2005.
42 Interviews with Emmanuel Appiah, Copenhagen, 10 November 2004, and Akosua Yeboah, Asueyi (Brong-Ahafo region), 11 February 2005, as well as numerous conversations with Emmanuel Appiah and his wife during my visit to Techiman in February 2005 and in September 2005.
any problem is because they trust my judgment”. Instead of her brother, her cousin (who lived in Italy) became chief. Apparently, this was more acceptable to Gloria as he was not as closely related to her: “he didn’t need to take my advice, but I also believe that people are entitled to what they want to be so I leave it to them after doing my best”. However, her brother’s refusal to accept the throne is also a rejection of the authority of the elders in the home-town:

“One of the reasons why my brother didn't accept to be enstooled was because he thought it would be waste of money sending money down here to the elders for everything that goes on […] Because the people (elders) cease this opportunity to ask for money for their personal use in the name of something relating to the stool”.

This can be seen as a way for pastors to seek influence in the family and at the same time to escape traditional power hierarchies. However, they do relate to the holders of political office, but encourage those closest to them in their families not to take up such a position. Having a close family member, - such as wife, mother or brother - who holds political office, would call into question the position of the pastor, as the two are seen as incompatible. This can be interpreted as ways to transfer authority from one type of office to another.

**International connections**

Another platform that pastors operate from and within is their international connections. When building up a church and a position as pastor it is important to have international links. Many pastors have connections to both churches and family members living abroad. This enables them to get financial resources to build their churches, get the right equipment and then eventually attract more people. Many of the more established pastors often travel abroad, either to visit branch churches or to visit churches in their more extended religious network. The pastors from the more established churches travel a lot, and some are spending as much time outside Ghana as inside. They would either use their own private money, get money from the church or from the churches they are visiting abroad. Travelling abroad gives status as it is a sign of recognition of one’s pastoral virtues by other religious communities. Often the congregation a pastor is visiting collects money for him, which is

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43 Interview with Gloria Mensah Afriyie, Kumasi, 1 September 2005.
also a sign of appreciation. This aspect will be elaborated further in the next chapter and exemplified by pastoral trajectories.

THE COMPLETE PASTOR—DISCUSSION

“I’m not a presidential entity, I’m not a traditional ruler and I’m not a parliamentarian. I’m just a preacher of the gospel” (Pastor Joshua Kas-Vorsah).

By identifying himself as a preacher of the gospel and not as a politician or a chief, Joshua Kas-Vorsah explained how he saw his role as a pastor in society. He acted as a public figure, he organised prayers for the well-being of the country and he organised prayers in Kumasi before the elections in 2000. Although he did not define himself as someone with political power, he did define his role as a pastor in relation hereto. In this way he perceived a pastor as belonging to the same category of leaders as, for instance, a president, a chief, and a member of parliament. He put himself at the same level of the figures he referred to and, at the same time, he differentiated himself from these figures. He is different in the sense that being a preacher of the gospel implies being a mediator between God and the people, which additionally gives him the ability to intervene and to change things by divine force. This final section aims at rounding up the preceding discussions of the chapter.

As outlined in the introduction, the analysis of this chapter revolves around the internal dynamics and the craft of pastorship and is therefore concerned with the role and the figure of the pastor. I have discussed how pastors build up their authority and how they legitimise their position by referring to their access to the spiritual realm. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005b) discusses the public role of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors in Ghana. He draws parallels to the roles played by prophets in the spiritual churches (Sunsum sorë) and by traditional diviners. He argues that a common feature is the paramount importance of the access to the divine, which enables the religious functionary to provide spiritual services. Similarly, Larbi (2001) and Adubofour (1994) stress the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic movement in Ghana as a re-appropriation and reinvention of African prophetism, in
particular with regard to the centrality of the person. Asamoah-Gyadu (2005b) draws on the work by Baëta ([1962] 2004), who argues that the person or personality is “the basic operative element” in the spiritual churches (Baëta, [1962] 2004: 6). Baëta writes:

“Whether in relation to or independently of events or developments in society, the individual endowed with a striking personality and the ability to impose his own will on others, believing himself, and believed by others to be a special agent of some supernatural being or force, will emerge from time to time and secure a following. Powers traditionally credited to such persons, of healing, of revealing hidden things, predicting the future, cursing and blessing effectually, etc., will be attributed to him whether he claims them or not” (Baëta, [1962] 2004: 6).

Moreover, and as mentioned in chapter two, the chief is, in the Akan worldview, seen as mediating between the living and the dead (Busia, 1951: 26). He is a medium through which people can get access to spiritual power. With regard to how pastors build up power and authority it is relevant to take into consideration cultural notions of power in Asante. As referred to earlier Akyeampong and Obeng (1995: 482) stress the importance of the spiritual realm in Asante ideas of power and authority. They furthermore argue that, in pre-colonial Asante, power originated in the spiritual realm.

I have also argued that becoming a successful pastor involves operating from and between various platforms, so that status achieved within one platform is transferred to other platforms and thereby enhances the pastor’s social position in more than one domain. In this way, the status that follows from being a pastor and leading a church also improves one’s status and respectability within one’s family, in other religious networks, or within the domain of politics and/or chieftaincy. This argument can be extended by stating that the idea of the complete pastor echoes other types of ‘big men’, such as the chief, the fetish priest, the family head and the political leader. The craft of pastorship is performed and functions in terms of overlapping and multiple forms of authority (Lentz, 1998).

44 The focus on continuity and similarities between ‘traditional’ religions and Christianity is widespread in the literature on Christianity in Africa, see among others the work of Sundkler ([1948] 1961) on the Zionist movement in South Africa.

45 See also Gifford (2004) on the prophetic trend and the personal status of the pastor in neo-Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity in Ghana.
Therefore, the social mechanisms involved in pastorship are not exclusive to leadership in neo-Pentecostal churches, but are to be understood as part of more general patterns of how people build up positions of power. As Berry writes:

“Carefully cultivated, social relationships may enhance people’s access to wealth and knowledge. Even if they fail—because conflict or a decline in other people’s fortunes—the presumption of efficacy remains: if one relationship fails, people are more likely to seek new or alternative social ties than attempt to go alone” (Berry, 2001: xxvi).

Hence, to build up wealth, for instance, a pastor has to rely on social ties both to the congregation and to family and kin. To sum up, a pastoral career is not merely about individual self-promotion, but is also an investment in social relationships, which serve as the base from which to operate as a figure of authority in a given community. This is to say, becoming a pastor cannot be reduced to being a question of having a pastoral calling or studying the Bible. It is also very much a question of building and investing in the right social relationships, and of being able to impose oneself as a pastor, play the game of and perform the craft of pastorship.

The point is that to become a pastor is to become a new type of ‘big men’ and could be seen in relation to other typologies of ‘big men’. Pastors have, in some ways, taken over some of the tasks of the lineage head or family head (abusua panin). Pastors are responsible for the well-being of both church and family members. They also act as mediators, go into family matters and settle disputes. Hence they are (by some, not all) seen as contributing to the stability of society. Some would, however, be of the opinion that they create conflict and destabilise family structures. As will be discussed in the next chapter, pastorship is to be thought of as a new or alternative form of career path. But it is more than just a career. Pastors are also new figures of authority that both builds on existing forms of leadership (both religious and political) and introduces new elements into religious leadership: such as a focus on business, easier and different access to leadership positions and a more implicit way of conducting politics and extending one’s sphere of influence beyond the church.
CHAPTER FIVE
BECOMING A PASTOR—TRAJECTORIES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an exploration of three trajectories: the trajectory of a small church started by a Ghanaian pastor from Copenhagen and run by four young pastors, the trajectory of an upcoming pastor, and the trajectory of a well-established and successful pastor. It investigates how small ‘one-man church’ pastors operate to become ‘big’ and explores the career paths of wannabe ‘big men’ within the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Kumasi. It aims at approaching pastorship from a diachronic perspective in that it analyses the processes of becoming a pastor as a career and as a path in life. Whereas the preceding chapter looked at the internal dynamics of pastorship and focused on pastors as a new type of figures of success, this chapter will approach pastorship as trajectories of becoming. This offers a perspective on pastors as actors that allows us to see various steps in their careers. Moreover, the careers that are analysed here include both successful ones and unsuccessful ones. This gives insights into the choices pastors make in an early stage in their careers, the struggles and barriers they face, as well as some of the strategies that apparently did not work in the way they intended.

Becoming a pastor is seen as a career trajectory in the sense of being a choice of profession that constitutes an alternative at a time when other possibilities are less attractive and less accessible (Banégas & Warnier, 2001; Marshall-Fratani, 2001: 26). As pointed out by Marshall-Fratani (2001: 27), becoming a neo-Pentecostal pastor is part of a new strategy of accumulating in a situation with “la faillite des stratégies plus classiques (l’éducation, les diplômes, les liens avec l’administration, les réseaux de parenté et de patronage)”. Yet, becoming a pastor cannot merely be understood as a choice of career or as a way of accumulating. Seen from the pastors’ perspective, becoming a pastor is not a choice of profession like any other, but rather a fulfilment of one’s destiny. They thought about their pastoral careers as a journey in life, which they engaged in upon a divine call. This call could not be refused and the journey not avoided. This is similar to, for instance, traditional priests
Analysing the life history of a priest of a shrine in Kumasi, McCaskie (2008a: 5) shows that becoming a priest is engaging on a ‘path’ or a ‘journey’. This perception is strongly linked to the Asante “ontological idea of shaped destiny or individuated fate (nkraabea)” (McCaskie, 1992: 230) (see also Wiredu, 1980: 16; Gyekye, 1987). Moreover, many pastors perceived the path to become a pastor as a struggle that demands persistence (cf. the ‘tortuous journey into the priesthood’ and to become an akɔmfo (McCaskie 2008a: 5)). This conception of a pastoral career has a spiritual dimension to it, in the sense that it gives pastors access to the spiritual realm, which again adds to the status of being a pastor.

This chapter thus unfolds pastoral trajectories from this double perspective: as career paths and as journeys that are part of one’s destiny. On the one hand, I analyse what pastors are doing and, on the other, how they think about what they are doing. These two perspectives do not necessarily bring about similar interpretations; the pastors’ perception of their own situation might not overlap my conception of what they are doing.

The argument of the chapter is that the processes of becoming a successful pastor and attaining social ascension, involves engagement in international relations, elements of apprenticeship and entrepreneurship, family involvement, as well as opportunities for exercising political and economic influence. One of the main points is that, on the one hand, pastors have to engage in a hierarchical relation with a senior pastor, they have to subdue, serve and learn under this person. On the other hand, pastors must be able to act as entrepreneurs and be innovative in order to grow sufficiently and eventually become church leaders. I show how pastors, at a certain stage in their careers, escape restraining bonds to senior pastors in order to grow further. They draw on various social networks and are innovative in the sense that they set up new churches and establish themselves as leaders by bringing in whatever resources they have at their disposal. It is, however, important to recognise that all pastors operate in situations of uncertainty in the sense that they do not know what the future will bring or what the outcome of their choices and actions will be. In the words of Bendix (1984: 48) “I want to give back to men of the past the unpredictability of the future and the dignity of acting in the face of uncertainty”. Thus, the way I understand it is that each pastor makes his actions based on choices that are sensible in that particular situation, at that particular moment, and from his particular horizon.
Focusing on pastors as entrepreneurs and innovators does not imply that all pastoral careers are successful or that anyone can become a pastor; many fail and give up, or supplement their pastoral work with other activities. This shows that the conditions of a given pastor matter, and also points to the various ways pastors manage their careers. The inclusion of unsuccessful pastors in the analysis sharpens our understanding of what it takes to become a successful pastor. What are the necessary resources and what is in play? The unsuccessful careers demonstrate the efforts of those who failed or were likely to fail. The point is that they did try because they saw certain opportunities to fulfill their aspirations and “if efforts to contest prevailing patterns are ignored or classified as insignificant merely because they may have been unsuccessful, then actual outcomes become endowed with a quality of inevitability, which removes from the historical process its precariousness and multistranded nature” (Lund, 2008: 11).

The first trajectory is the story of four young pastors who started a church (ABC – Alive Bible Congregation) in Kumasi. The church was a branch of a Ghanaian-founded church in Copenhagen. The story is about the young pastors’ struggle for leadership positions in the church, but also the obstacles to fulfilling their aspirations, partly due to the lack of a senior figure. It shows how young pastors attempt to utilise a fragile situation to ascend pastoral hierarchies. The second trajectory is that of Francis Afrifa, who led an independent church (Fountain Life International Christian Centre) in the Bremang area of Kumasi. He worked for and trained under one of Kumasi’s leading neo-Pentecostal pastors (Victor Osei). He had been to Bible school in Denmark and returned to Kumasi to set up his own church. His story illuminates how becoming a pastor involves both processes of entrepreneurship and apprenticeship. One needs to be under the ‘name of someone’ to learn how to perform as a pastor and to prove one’s legitimacy. At the same time, for young pastors to grow they have to break away at some point in their careers, or find ways in which they can grow that are not constrained by their relation to their mentors. The third trajectory is that of Victor Osei, who was the founder and leader of Family Chapel International, one of Kumasi’s largest neo-Pentecostal churches. This example illustrates how someone who has become a ‘big man’ through a pastoral career and how this eventually was a route to political influence. The general point that connects the three stories is that pastorship is a life trajectory or a career
that involves engaging in various social networks, but also demands skilful navigation between being protected and promoted by a senior pastor and making enough space to be able to grow and to become an entrepreneur and innovator. Simultaneously, taking up a pastoral career involves struggle, deception, persistence and hardship.

In order to contextualize and put these career paths into a larger frame I start by outlining the social and educational background of the pastors that are included in this study. The aim of this section is to paint a broader picture of these pastors as a social group.

SOCIAL MAPPING OF PASTORS: BACKGROUND AND ASPIRATIONS

This section provides a social mapping of the pastors dealt with in this study and is an attempt to unravel their socio-economic background. The aim is to discern links between pastors’ educational and professional background, their social aspirations and their engagement in a pastoral career. Generally speaking, pastors constitute a group that includes a wide range of people from different backgrounds, with different levels of education etc. It is therefore not meaningful to talk about pastors as a social group in the sense that they share common traits with regard to their socio-economic background or as a distinct class. The point is that many of the common traits of pastors transgress demarcations based on class and family background. What they have in common is based on their ideas of social aspirations and social mobility. For instance, pastors not only become pastors because it is an employment opportunity and a source of income, but also because there is status and prestige related to being a pastor.

When looking at the trajectories of the pastors it is possible to identify at least two general trajectories: 1) people who had been employed prior to becoming a pastor or 2) people who took up a pastoral career straight after finishing school. Most pastors have had some formal

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1 More precisely, this section is based on interviews, interaction, conversations and debates with 26 pastors. This group of pastors cannot be said in any way to be representative of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic pastors in Ghana in general. But they represent a certain type of pastors or of the pastoral profession that includes both up-coming pastors and more well established ones. What is particular about this specific group is that they are not part of the top-five group of executive neo-Pentecostal church leaders that are usually paid attention to in the literature. They are all established in Kumasi, or Kumasi has played a part in their pastoral careers.
education, both primary and post-primary. Of the pastors I talked to, most had finished secondary school (form V) and about half had been to polytechnic, teacher training college, or university. About a third had left school after the first level of secondary education and can therefore be characterised as school leavers. Within this group, unemployment is high. However, school leavers still have aspirations for further education, employment and the ensuing social recognition (Foster, 1965: 201; Yamada, 2005: 74, 84). It was moreover a common trait that pastors I talked to had been involved in evangelism and prayer activities during their school years in for instance Scripture Union or other fellowships. Some had leading positions within these.

The educational background of the pastors could indicate that they were likely to aspire to a job in the public sector. In Ghana, there has been a general tendency to prefer academic schooling rather than vocational training (Palmer, 2007: 20). Moreover, about half of those leaving school after having completed JSS (junior secondary school) go into the informal economy, which represents about 86 percent of the total work force (Palmer, 2007: 26). Previously, status was related to white collar jobs, the emergent sector of the economy in the years after independence (King & Martin, 2002: 9). Academic education was perceived as the route to employment in the public sector, which was again seen as a way to achieve social and economic mobility (Osei, 2004: 431).

With regard to employment opportunities in the public sector there have been substantial reductions during the structural adjustment period (King & Martin, 2002: 6). There has also been a change in terms of attitude vis-à-vis jobs in the formal sector, as noted by King and Martin:

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2 The educational system in Ghana consists of six years primary school, three years junior secondary school and three years of senior secondary school. After this there is the possibility of training in e.g. universities, polytechnics, and teacher training colleges. This system was put in place in 1987 and replaced a system of six years of primary school, four years of middle school, five years of secondary school (form I – V, O level), two years of secondary school advanced level (form VI, A level) (Foster, 1965: 197). A new reform of the educational system has been implemented in 2007.

3 Foster (1965: 196-197) argues that in colonial times it was merely politics and education that could lead to social mobility. He asserted that politics as a profession would decline in importance. At the same time, and as an alternative to this route, there was an increase in public service employment and hence academic education. Arhin (1994: 317) suggests that social mobility in Ghana can mainly be achieved through “higher education, successful business activities or involvement in politics”.

150
“it was widely felt that the salaries that could accrue from being a government clerk, or a university teacher – let alone a primary school teacher – were not sufficient for more than a part of the month. In other words, it had become even more essential for many so-called formal sector workers to have at least two jobs, and often the second and third were in what has come to be termed the informal economy” (King & Martin, 2002: 13).

Many saw leaving Ghana as the most attractive option. According to King and Martin, the aspirations of students are to be self-employed, to work for government or to work for a private company (King & Martin, 2002: 15). There is not necessarily a link between level of education and vocational aspirations (Foster, 1965: 260), but it is rather the structure of the employment opportunities that influence social aspirations and attitudes towards future employment (Foster, 2002: 27).

About half of the pastors had other professions before becoming a pastor, such as chartered accountant, teacher, mason, and shop owner. One pastor from Techiman was educated as an accountant and did two years of national service at the finance department of the Techiman District Assembly. After that he worked with the Internal Revenue Service for a year, and then became an accountant in the district office of the Ghana Broadcasting Cooperation. He then started a Christian fellowship, left his job and started a printing press. Later he invested in a poultry farm and also envisaged starting a computer shop. He chose to become self-employed because it gave him the flexibility to work as a pastor at the same time, which he would not have had in a public service job where he could, for instance, risk being transferred to another town.4

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4 Interview with Emmanuel Appiah, Techiman, 30 August 2005.
It is worth noting that some pastors included in this study actually had public sector jobs before entering into pastorship. They gave up their employment as civil servants in order to involve themselves in full-time ministry. This observation supports the argument that a pastoral career is more than a way of securing an income in a situation with less public sector jobs and a high level of unemployment. It might rather be the case that pastoral work is becoming more attractive in a situation where one cannot live off a public service salary, as pastoral work permits both diversified sources of income and is associated with more prestige. Pastors have become icons of success.

Another common trait of the pastors dealt with here is that they had been abroad or had aspirations to go abroad. About half of the pastors had been outside Ghana (most for a couple of years) and their travelling was primarily linked to their pastoral work and careers; mainly for attending a Bible school, working as missionaries or for other educational or work-related purposes. Although Pentecostalism is known for its transnational form of organisation and many pastors travel due to their involvement in transnational religious
networks (Corten & Marshall-Fratani, 2001), it is worth keeping in mind that migration and transnational forms of livelihoods are well known features of Ghanaian society. The global outreach of Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal churches is not a characteristic that is confined to these institutions. Rather it is a reflection of a much larger trend and history of migration in Ghana.

Ghanaian migration rose in numbers, in particular from the 1960s and 1970s in a period of economic crisis and political instability (Akyeampong, 2000b: 204). Going to the West has been a strategy to improve living conditions and the main reasons for leaving have been education, work and to join families (Kabki et al., 2004: 88; Twum-Baah, 2005: 63). Most migrants from the Ashanti region migrate to the USA, UK, Germany, Canada, Italy and the Netherlands (Kabki et al., 2004: 89). The relations between migrants and home can be manifold. Having a family member abroad is seen as a security as they will be able to send money back and assist family members at home (Arhinful, 2001). Moreover, migrants invest in more individual projects such as housing construction and business. There is status attached to being a migrant or a return-migrant and, as noted by Kabki et al (2004: 90) “[f]amilies in the Ashanti region talk with great respect about their relatives abroad, especially those who remit. Fulfilling financial requests from the family gives a good name back home, which is culturally important for every Ghanaian”.

It is estimated that remittances from Ghanaians overseas amount to eight percent of Ghana’s GDP (only registered remittances taken into account), or somewhere between one and three billion USD. Most remittances are in the form of cash and the closest family members of a household head are those who remit the largest share of remittances. Around forty percent of households in Ghana receive a remittance every year (Mazzucato et al., 2005: 139, 142-143). With regard to the pastors of this study many only remitted smaller amounts of money, although some came back with goods such as computers and other technical equipment. Some were even dependent on resources from family members or church members, as their primary occupation abroad was education and pastoral work, and not employment. Being abroad was, however, an investment in connection to other Ghanaians abroad (mainly family members or church members) that, in a longer time perspective, could be useful. Among the middle-level pastors there was surprisingly little contact to colleagues.
or pastors they had been working with when being abroad, whereas the pastors that were leading the bigger churches (such as Family Chapel International and Calvary Charismatic Centre) were involved in more fully-fledged transnational religious networks (see also Maxwell, 2000a: 253 on the significance of Ezekiel Guti’s stay in the United States).

**TRAJECTORY I: HOMETOWN CHURCH BUILDING**

Alive Bible Congregation (ABC) is a small neo-Pentecostal church in Kwadaso, Kumasi. The church was established in September 2004 as a branch of a Ghanaian founded church in Copenhagen by pastor Chris Oduro. According to pastor Oduro, who is the head pastor in Copenhagen, he had set up the branch in Kumasi in order to expand his church and for church members in Denmark to have ‘their own’ church to go to when they visited or returned to Ghana (“to remain within the family”). The church in Kumasi was headed by a number of young pastors. The establishment of the branch also reflected the ultimate goal of becoming an international church. The story is interesting because it provides insights into the early phases of setting up a church, and the early phases of pastoral careers. It shows how young pastors navigate in a rather uncertain situation and how this very small church is seen as an opportunity to become someone.

The young pastors in Kumasi did not have much money, nor did they have mobile phones, which meant they could not get in touch with the pastor in Copenhagen. They barely had a congregation other than a few friends and some family members of the leading pastor in Copenhagen and they did not have a church building. What they did have, however, was eight blue plastic chairs, contact with a senior pastor in Denmark, a few instruments and a banner. Why were four young men so eager about setting up this church which had almost nothing: no money and no people?

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5 This section is based on interviews with James Abu (13 December 2004 and 13 February 2005), with Peter Duku (20 February 2005), with Edward Owusu-Ansah (13 December 2004), with Edward Owusu-Ansah, Manfred Tawiah & Felix Addai (13 February 2005), Edward Owusu-Ansah, Daniel Darko Kabea & Manfred Tawiah (12 September 2005), with Emmanuel Appiah (10 November 2004, 30 August 2005), as well as various conversations with Chris Oduro in Copenhagen during 2004 and 2005.

6 The name of the church and its abbreviation alludes to the importance of literacy both in Ghanaian society and within the neo-Pentecostal movement.
The responsibility of setting up the branch was first delegated to pastor Abu based in Kumasi. He was someone who had shifted between different churches since “the head pastors in these churches did not treat [him] fairly”. He had been engaged in cocoa farming to get some income besides his pastoral activities. This income also permitted him to attend Bible school. He received financial support from both friends and family to attend school, but not from any church. Abu lead ABC the first months, but soon some younger pastors also became part of the church leadership. One was presented as the nephew of pastor Oduro in Denmark (not in a biological sense, but they used to live in the same compound, passenger house, meaning different households living in the same house). The nephew and his wife introduced three young pastors to the church. These had, when I first met them in December 2004, never met or spoken to pastor Oduro. Despite their brief membership, the young pastors had been challenging the leadership position of the older pastor Abu. They accused him of keeping all the money sent from the mother church in Denmark and

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7 Interview with James Abu, Kumasi, 13 February 2005.
pocketing it, and they complained of not knowing what the money was used for. Three months after the young pastors had entered the church, the older pastor Abu left the church. He felt that the young pastors did not recognise his position as a senior pastor, but also that pastor Oduro in Denmark did not support him. He said:

“what worries me is the young men who […] I know I have a lot of experience which they don’t have. Their behaviour baffled me a bit and for this reason I wanted to talk to pastor [Oduro] to know what he told them that warranted the actions they put up. But my phone was out of order”.9

Pastor Abu eventually left and went back to his old church. The young pastors complained that pastor Abu was only a part time pastor in ABC, that he did not behave as a leader and that “he couldn’t remain faithful to this church, because of his own church that he was handling, and didn’t have enough time for this church … So we were the boss and we are still the boss”.10

The church was de facto led by the young pastors and the nephew (who was in control of the finances), but later Oduro managed to get an elder from the church in Copenhagen to act as a general overseer of the branch in Kumasi. On my last visit in September 2005, there were (at least) four young pastors, of whom one (Edward Owusu-Ansah) took the leading role. He explained that they all assisted in setting up the church and they also went out to talk to people and to get more people coming to the church.

The church

During the first year of the church’s existence it was located in three different places. First they met in a classroom in a school in Kwadaso, Kumasi, as did many other little new churches. Second, the church moved into a little store room with no windows and third, it moved into a former restaurant; a place that was spacious and where the young pastors

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8 Pastor Oduro had initially sent 200 USD of which 100 was for pastor Abu and the remaining for the church (administered by the nephew). The three young pastors had not received any money. During church offerings they would collect between 8,000 and 25,000 cedis (between approx 1 and 3 USD), which was given to the nephew.
9 Interview with James Abu, Kumasi, 13 February 2005.
10 Interview with the young ABC pastors, Kumasi, 12 September 2005.
could lodge. The church in Copenhagen paid for the rent. This building was very big compared to the other places. Only a quarter of it was used at church services. This permitted the pastors to organise special activities for children during the church service. The only decoration was a clock on the wall and a banner outside the church. Many of the members had joined the church recently, either because of the evangelism of the pastors or during the all night prayer they had every Friday (from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m.) that, according to them, is “very powerful” and attracts a lot of people. A young lady who worshipped and sang had only joined the church three weeks before at an all night prayer.

ABC in Kumasi had a rather small and shifting membership. At the services I attended there were between 10 and 20 people, of which half were children. I got the impression that the church attendants were mainly friends and family of the church leadership, as well as a few outsiders. None of the church members were Ghanaians who had been members of the mother church in Denmark and had returned to Kumasi. Some members of ABC in Copenhagen visited the church. One of them was a Ghanaian woman, who was from Kumasi and had returned for holiday. She attended the church once, and explained that by her accompanying me. She said that she would not have attended the service on her own, because her father was a pastor in another church, and therefore she would rather go there. Even if the ambition was to create a church for migrants returning and visiting their hometown, which would enable them to remain within the same church, this was not what had happened. Some of the Ghanaian members in Denmark were only rarely travelling to Ghana and others would rather go and worship in the churches they belonged to before travelling, or the churches of their parents. A few other members of the church in Denmark had been visiting at a later stage. They were appointed as elders of the church and went there on a regular basis to oversee the church. One person was living in Accra, and came to Kumasi to visit the church once a month. This was the initiative of pastor Oduro, who did not himself have the possibility to travel to Ghana and wanted some more control with the church, and in particular guidance of the young pastors.

The above observations indicate that the opportunities for building up status, wealth and power in this case merely existed for the group of young pastors (at least in the first phase of

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11 The house was rented for eight years at the price of 50,000,000 cedis (approx 5,500 USD).
setting up the church); as leading pastors of the church they were respected and listened to in a different way than before. For instance, at a service, where two elders from the church in Denmark visited, the young pastors were in control and had gained some kind of momentum. The interest of the senior pastor in Copenhagen might be on a long term basis, to create a church in his hometown that he could one day return to. It can be viewed as a kind of hometown investment. However, a kind of investment that is not directed towards family and kin as would most often be the case (see Manuh, 2003). In this case the pastor/migrant has invested in a way that goes beyond the influence of family members, and this can be seen as a new means of achieving status as a migrant.

The young pastors

The leading young pastor (Edward Owusu-Ansah) presented himself as a prophet and expressed that his aspiration was one day to lead the church and move abroad. He had formerly attended the Apostolic Church of Ghana and was member of a prayer fellowship. Edward had a call from God when he was 12 years old; he had been to Bible school and had finished secondary school. He was still living with his parents as he had no financial income. He did not receive any financial support from his parents as “they want me to go and work. You see when I finished the secondary school, one company invited me to be accounts clerk and my parents supported that. But God wants me to do his work and that is that”.  

Another of the young pastors was Daniel Darko Kabea. He said the following about how he became a pastor:

“It all started around 1999. It was then not [with] a church, it was a fellowship with a pastor called Agyemang Duah. The fellowship was called Jesus is the Lord. We started at Edwenase. We started going to the villages to evangelise in 1999 before I went to high school. In the school I teamed up with other boys and we applied for evangelism in Kumasi Chaplaincy Board to be able to go to the registered schools and evangelise, so for the past 2-3 years we worked with the Board and even schools that were not under the board. I was doing this while I was in school. Besides I was the Scripture Union vice president from form 1 to 2. And then from form 2 to form 3 I became the

president. It wasn’t just secondary school; it was training colleges, vocational and technical schools. I was also organising the boys around for evangelism at the market place”.13

Many of the young pastors were friends and some used to be in school together and to live and eat together, and considered each other as mates and brothers. These young pastors are young men with aspirations of becoming big ‘men of God’ and of leading a church. They had not hitherto been able to function as fully acknowledged pastors. Daniel explained:

“The issue is that I didn’t like my church […] My church did not encourage young pastors. They were old fashioned. They weren’t active. At the fellowship I was a pastor, but in my church I was recognised as a member”.14

Constraints and opportunities

From the perspective of the young pastors in Kumasi there were constraints in the sense that they lacked the means to communicate (no mobile phone and no money) with the head pastor in Copenhagen. The transnational organisation of the church was at this stage a hindrance for the young pastors and the growth of the church. Moreover, when they entered the church pastor Oduro refused to talk to them, he did not acknowledge their status as pastors, and accused them of lacking ethics. He did not see them as having any authority, and blamed them of disrespect when they tried to push away the older pastor Abu to whom he delegated the responsibility of leading and building up the church in the first place. They involved themselves in a church with very few members, where they received no money. However, being in this church also represented a number of opportunities for the young pastors. They could operate rather independently without being under the surveillance of a senior pastor. This meant that they at a very early stage in their careers called themselves senior pastors and had the responsibility of preaching and leading a church. They were moreover attached to a church abroad and to church leaders that were return migrants, hence people with potential resources and contacts.

13 Interview with Daniel Darko Kabea, Kumasi, 12 September 2005.
14 Interview with Daniel Darko Kabea, Kumasi, 12 September 2005.
There were a number of obstacles in relation to building up the church, and the head pastor at times doubted the feasibility of the project. The lack of a senior pastor was a limit to the growth and success of the church and members in the church in Copenhagen did not support in any significant way. Pastor Oduro complained that he did not have enough financial resources to construct a church building, and not even to travel to Ghana a few times a year. Still, the symbolic value of having a project of building a church branch in Kumasi should not be neglected. Many of the Ghanaians in the Copenhagen branch were originating from Kumasi, and did sympathise with the project. With time they might expand their attachment to the church on the Ghanaian side as well. Moreover if pastor Oduro succeeds in building up the church he will enter a different league of international Ghanaian Pentecostal pastors, which will enable him not only to be a 'big man' among Ghanaians in Copenhagen, but also back home. One might add that it is more a personal project, than a project of the whole church community.

The project of building a church at home can be seen as part of a larger trend where migrants from Kumasi make their hometown the “center of their transnational activities” (Clark, 2003: 89). As pointed out by Clark (2003: 94) the status migrants receive from their activities abroad need to be confirmed at home for instance by investing in land, housings and funerals. The case in point shows that the arenas for achieving this recognition are expanding, and also include religious forms such as founding a neo-Pentecostal church. Building a church in Kumasi reflects the interest of migrants to increase or maintain their status at home and such “conversions of transnational resources into locally significant arenas thus signalled the continuing primacy of Kumasi, both in symbolic and material terms” (ibid.: 94).

Therefore, this new form of hometown linkage can be compared with other types of migrant associations based on hometown, ethnicity or profession that function as a way for migrants to keep ties to home and as forms of security and social network (Krause, 2008: 238). In 2003 there were about 40 Ghanaian hometown associations in Amsterdam (Mazzucato, 2008: 204), and more than 200 associations of Ghanaian migrants in London (Krause, 2008: 238; see also Akyeampong, 2000b: 210-211). Various forms of hometown associations are means to maintain links with an area of origin, and to attract for instance development projects.
They are often based on principles of reciprocity and obligation and have functioned as ways for urban elites to build up a clientele base (Woods, 1994: 471-472). Along the same line it might add to the status of pastor Oduro that he is setting up a church in Kumasi, which is not only his hometown, but a place where many of the members in Copenhagen originate from. The above observations suggest that although there might not be a direct involvement of the members abroad, the setting up of a hometown church can still enhance the position of the pastor. Moreover, it is a way for him to get leading members of the church attached to him in a more obligating way, as they also become leaders in the Ghanaian branch of the church. Building up a hometown church can thus be seen as an innovative way of maintaining ties to home; a way that differs from more traditional hometown associations as building a church means channelling resources to the church community and not necessarily to family or kin.15

My contention is that this specific form of maintaining ties to home works along some of the same principles of other hometown associations (as ways to build up status and power, and to create a ‘flock’ back home). It also represents a new platform from which pastors who are not from an elite background can operate; an opportunity for upward social mobility. Moreover, the transnational character of the Pentecostal movement makes it a significant platform that one can manoeuvre from abroad as well as at home. Coming home as a ‘man of God’ and a church founder is recognised in the same way as building a house or investing in a business.

Meanwhile, setting up a church and directing resources more towards a church community than towards family and kin does not necessarily entail a disengagement from family relations as suggested by some (Krause, 2008: 247; van Dijk, 2001, 2002). As the next trajectory shows, transnational family relations can play a role when establishing oneself as a pastor.16

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15 There were, however, unsuccessful attempts of the church becoming involved in development projects that were aimed at communities more widely.
16 It should be noted that the case discussed here is somewhat particular as it is a mother church abroad that plants a church in Ghana. Most often it is the other way round. Churches in Ghana establish branches among Ghanaian migrants abroad. See e.g. Jach (2005), ter Haar (1998, 2005), van Dijk (2001, 2002).
Francis was born and bred in Kumasi. When I met him in 2005 he was 31 years old, married with three children, and lived in the house of his aunt (who raised him), and who resided in Italy. His wife was running a small shop. He was from a Christian family, his grandmother was a Methodist and his parents were both pastors in a charismatic church in the Volta region of Ghana. Francis maternal grandfather, the late Joseph Kwasi Sarpong, came from Apenkra (16 miles from Kumasi and the ancestral town of Francis), but moved to Kumasi. He was married to four women and had 28 children. Francis grandmother lived in the family house in Oforikrom in Kumasi, where Francis was born. Of his grandmother’s siblings one was a professor at Legon, one a ship engineer, one was in the cocoa board, and one lived in Italy.

The call

Francis became ‘born-again’ when he was in his early twenties and after that he received his pastoral call. In Francis’ view, God knew, that he would one day become a pastor, and so did many other people. In explaining this, Francis referred to the Bible (Jeremiah 1:5): ‘Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations’. Other people had dreams and visions that he would become a pastor. Especially Francis’ mother had been insisting and praying to God for him to lead her son. She had taken Francis to a pastor that prayed for him, and even though Francis at that time wanted to become a pilot or a businessman and travel abroad, the pastor had seen (after three days of praying and fasting) that Francis would eventually become ‘a servant of God’.

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17 The following is based on interviews with Francis Afrifa (17 February 2005, 5 and 13 September 2005), a visit to his hometown (Apenkra), interviews with the Apenkrahene and the Bamuhene of Apenkra (from Francis’ family) (19 September 2005), as well as participation in church services and prayer meetings led by him. I have also interviewed two of his former ‘senior pastors’ and a colleague. However, the purpose of these interviews was to discuss the careers and work of these people rather than the career of Francis.

18 Explaining the call by God’s will is Francis’ wording and not mine. I have chosen to present it in the text this way to counterbalance the idea that becoming a pastor is a very self-conscious strategic choice. The pastors I talked to would always insist that it was not their choice, but the will of God and keeping the wording is an attempt to reflect their perspective.
At the time that Francis felt God’s calling upon him, he was working as an accountant for his maternal grandfather who was a businessman in Kumasi. When JK Sarpong moved to Kumasi he had set up small businesses. He was, among other things, the first key distributor for Kumasi Brewery Ltd. Throughout his working life, he was able to make money and he built seven houses in Kumasi. Francis’ grandfather was in the process of becoming a townsman. Having seven houses shows that he was a wealthy man and a successful businessman, someone for Francis to be subordinate to and to learn from (McCaskie, 1986a: 7). At a certain stage in his career, however, JK Sarpong faced financial problems. He had problems with a business partner and this, according to Francis, was the beginning of the downfall of his grandfather. Eventually he had to sell five of the seven houses. At this time, Francis’ grandfather asked him to come and work for him. According to Francis, they had a close and ‘mutual’ relationship, because Francis’ mother was the first-born child in the family and so was Francis. Francis stopped working for his grandfather, when he felt some of the family members were jealous. This was especially the case with the children of the grandfather’s other wives, who thought that he ‘was enjoying life over there, [and] was eating the money of their father’. Some of them joined the business and Francis thought it wise to leave.

As to his educational background, Francis finished form V (secondary school), but could not go to form VI (two-year university preparatory course), hence he belonged to the category of school leavers. One can see that Francis has had a long term interest in establishing himself as someone through the fact that he started working for his grandfather. Becoming a businessman offered Francis the possibility of social mobility. Unfortunately, the business did not do well and there was the inevitable envy and jealousy in a family business. So this route to a career did not work out.

Being an apprentice

In the beginning of his pastoral career Francis spent time reading the Bible, other religious books and attending seminars:

“…diligently I was studying the Bible, bla bla bla, flip flap, the whole book of the Bible, I have read it so many times … I engaged myself in the things of God that
Francis explained that in order ‘to establish’ himself, he needed to find the right church, the right kind of people, and the right atmosphere. What is crucial is the way Francis speaks about ‘establishing yourself in the things of God’. For Francis, becoming a pastor means that he has to establish himself in a way that permits him to grow. Establishing himself as a young pastor meant entering an apprentice-mentor relationship with a senior pastor (‘spiritual father’). Training as a young pastor can in this way be thought of as an informal apprenticeship, where good reputation and success influence a prospective pastor’s choice of mentor (see also Miescher, 2005: 49-60; Peil, 1970: 143-144).

After working a few years in Accra with his father, Francis went back to Kumasi: “God also spoke to me that I wanted to be in Family Chapel under Victor Osei, because there are certain things in ministry that I wanted to understudy through Victor Osei”. Victor Osei is the founder and leader of Family Chapel International, one of Kumasi’s biggest neo-Pentecostal churches (his trajectory is recounted in the next section of this chapter). Francis knew Victor Osei from Kumasi, not personally, but from radio programmes and banners around the city and because he had made a name for himself.

Victor Osei was seen as someone who had ‘made a name’; a man of influence, a ‘big man’. By being under his tutelage, young pastors would get credibility, which they would not have otherwise had as a young pastor. A former colleague of Francis, Edward Otu, who headed a branch of Family Chapel International in Kumasi/Atonsu, also wished to work under Victor Osei. Edward endeavoured to resemble Victor Osei because of his ability to heal people and thus manifest the power of God in him. They both referred to how affiliation with Victor Osei made their pastoral work easier, because they could draw on his credibility:

“There are certain things that are above your knowledge, experience and age and you need someone who is well vested in there whereby you relate with him. And also he has made a name for himself, though in the Lord, but that credibility alone makes it easy for you to make inroads into the ministry than to be alone; nobody knows
you, nobody knows your root, credibility and your background and so people can not entrust their lives to you. Because of that we are sort of bonded in the form of a fatherly relationship sort of”. 19

Francis thought of himself as someone who would become an important pastor like Victor Osei and he therefore had to go and learn from him: “if you want to go to a place, you must be able to find somebody and discuss with him, a person who has been there before. So that was the reason why God took me to Family Chapel”. Family Chapel International was the right church for him to ‘be established in the things of God’ and Victor Osei became his mentor and ‘spiritual father’. Francis prayed and fasted for 21 days before he contacted Victor Osei. Seeking to be under Victor Osei was a big step to take and therefore he wanted to be sure that it was the direction of God and not “my emotions trying to lead me astray”. After the 21 days of praying and fasting Francis had “the green light” and went to see Victor Osei personally. Francis explained Victor Osei that God had directed him to Family Chapel and asked Victor to pray for him and to confirm if it is really “of God”. Victor Osei called a church council meeting and Francis was interviewed about his background and motivation for doing the ‘work of God’. Francis was accepted and started working under Victor Osei.

In an Asante historical context, Wilks (1993) describes being trained by a mentor for a particular profession as both a training and a socialising process. To obtain a position in the administrative class (asomfo) in 19th century Asante, one went through a trainee system (Wilks, 1993: 303). This was not a hereditary class, and those under training “acquired not hereditary rights to office, but rather the skills that peculiarly if not uniquely fitted them for it” (ibid., 1993: 304). The trainee system served both as a means to transfer skills and in addition as a selection mechanism of young professionals by their seniors. In some ways, there are parallels to the junior pastor - spiritual father relationship in the neo-Pentecostal churches. Being under a senior pastor is a phase of training, sometimes complemented by Bible school attendance. This involves training in performance, preaching, counselling, pastoral work and ethics, and in relations to the congregation. Moreover, it is a transmission of knowledge and of power (tumi). As argued earlier in the thesis, by claiming someone as a spiritual father, one also claims this person’s access to divine power. The case of Francis shows that pastoral

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19 Interview with Edward Otu, Kumasi, 22 February 2005.
apprenticeship is both about training under someone and about being under someone’s protection and credibility.

Being an apprentice, however, also entails limits and restrictions to one’s social and individual aspirations. In his first year in Family Chapel International Francis worked as an usher. He felt degraded as he had already been doing pastoral work for some years, but also saw this experience as a ‘natural’ step in his ‘work for God’ or as the way to become ‘big’: “...you know in God the way up is the higher way down, if you go down God will raise you up. So I started by being an usher”. By doing so, he had to submit himself to Victor Osei. He showed his loyalty and seriousness by subservience and by being humble. Within the first year, Francis was transferred to the teaching ministry (responsible for Sunday school) and later he was sent to Bible school in Kumasi. Even though both of these steps were promotions, he explained that:

“it was difficult times, but God was faithful, because you know not many pastors take it upon themselves to go to school, all of them want just one day pew... you are an icon of peoples’ admiration. But for you to go and sit down for one good year, going through lectures and then no support, he, you have to believe God for your penge [money].”

Francis received an allowance from the church of 120,000 cedis (13 USD) per month while in Bible school. During his stay at the Bible school Francis was posted to one of the branches of the church in a village outside Kumasi. Francis also saw this as a promotion, but:

“to the eyes of the onlookers, they saw it as a punishment to go to the village, but I saw it as a promotion, because there I was given the opportunity to even stand and preach in the pulpit, so there I had my own church. Even now if you go there, my name is there.”

Financially, it was difficult for him to go to school and to work in the church in Mase at the same time. Family members in Italy, USA and Canada helped out. However, working in a

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20 *Penge* is the Danish word for money. By throwing in a foreign word Francis refers to his knowledge of a foreign language and to his status as a pastor who has been abroad.
rural branch of the church was not the way for Francis to realise his aspirations. After working one and a half year in Mase, Francis got a scholarship and went to Bible school in Denmark. He stayed in Denmark for a year and a half and afterwards went to Italy. While in Denmark he worked in a Ghanaian-founded church (International City Baptist Church, ICBC), went to language school and had small jobs in addition to going to Bible school. He was acting like a pastor in ICBC, but also complained that he was never given the chance to do pastoral work: “I was just there quietly”. He found it very difficult to work among Ghanaian pastors in Denmark, because he felt there was no room for ‘outsiders’. Meanwhile, the pastor Francis worked for in Denmark described Francis as one of those ‘young impatient pastors, who wants to get everything from the beginning, and who does not want to do the hard work’ (to serve under someone). Francis stayed four months in Italy, working in the church of his aunt. Here he was able to make a little money because he worked as a pastor and the congregation paid him.

As Francis was not able to work and establish himself as a pastor in Denmark, this step did not help him move forward in his career. It rather came to represent a number of constraints put on him by his surroundings. He was not able to work and to perform as a pastor, which meant that he was not accepted as a pastor. His credibility as a pastor was not sufficient, and a young pastor would not have an easy road into a well-established church. Moreover, a father-son relationship was not in place; he did not have a ‘big man’ behind him to provide sufficient support and he did not get direct entrance to the pastoral networks of the Ghanaian churches abroad. His experience abroad did not consolidate his career, to the contrary. However, Francis made sense of his stay abroad as a learning experience and as a part of his pastoral career: “You know if God has something big for you, he will cause you to go through all kinds of processes”. Even if going abroad in a Ghanaian context were to be seen as an advancement in a pastoral career, Francis achieved his aspirations in Ghana to a much greater extent than in Denmark.

Breaking bonds

Upon his return to Kumasi, Francis did not go back to Family Chapel International. Instead, he preached in various branches of the main neo-Pentecostal churches in Kumasi, not

21 Interview with Tony Acheampong, Copenhagen, 24 June 2005.
wanting to belong to a specific church. He wanted to work as an evangelist, the American evangelist Benny Hinn being his role model. In a sermon at the Atonsu branch of Family Chapel International Francis proclaimed that he did not believe in denominations, but only in relationships with God. This statement is an indication of a break in the father-son relationship between Francis and Victor Osei. Francis had been reluctant to return because of bad working conditions and lack of recognition and ability to perform as a pastor. He lost Victor Osei’s attention (see Wilks, 1993: 298 on coming to the Asantehene’s attention).

Victor Osei lost control of Francis and tried to get him back in the fold. He informed Francis that if he would not work in the main church he should stop going to the branch churches. Francis decided not to go back, and had a vision that he should start a church of his own. Even though Francis was not a very central figure among the junior pastors, he was not allowed to preach in an uncontrolled manner elsewhere, and Victor managed to keep Francis, who became too independent, away from his territory. Francis no longer wanted to submit, found the constraints too many and left the protection of Victor Osei.

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Francis presented the break in two different ways. First, he described the reason for the break as that Victor Osei regarded him as a threat because people were reporting his good work to Victor. Being a threat to a senior pastor indicates maturity and that you move away from your junior status. Second, Francis presented the break as decided mutually and emphasised that there was no conflict involved in the break. It would be reasonable to suspect that there was more conflict involved in this schism than Francis related. However, the relevant point for the argument of this article is to stress the importance Francis attaches to representing the break as non-conflictual. Since the split with Victor Osei happened on a mutual basis, Francis is able to rest within the ‘comfort zone’ of Victor Osei. He still wishes to draw on the credibility of Victor Osei, by continuously claiming him as his ‘spiritual father’. Although Francis had officially left Family Chapel, he still had to go there for a last service so that the church could send him away in a proper way. I suppose this step had a largely symbolic function, as it was important to show that the departure was not because of conflicts, did not create any splits, and that there still was a cordial relationship between Francis and Victor Osei. Francis still regarded Victor as his spiritual father, as he was trained under him. Francis recognised the merits of being under Victor Osei, not only in terms of training, but also as transference of access to spiritual power:

“I also learned his discipline, he is a disciplinary, and he is also a man of principles, and he is also very conscious of time, he doesn't waste time, he is a disciplinary and his moral character too... And there is also some kind of anointing upon me, the ability to teach from the Bible. God gave it to me from serving under him ... at times I stand in a place preaching, somebody can come and ask me “is your father Victor Osei?” and I will say “Yes, he is my spiritual father”. Some people will say I preach like him, I do things like him”.

Francis acknowledged Victor Osei as his ‘spiritual father’ and saw himself in him. He understood the reason for his own success to be his resemblance to Victor Osei. Even when no longer under his direct protection, Francis still gained prestige from the relationship and from having trained under this ‘big pastor’. Although a formal break had taken place, the father-son relation was maintained in a new form with less protection and obligations. In the case of Francis, breaking bonds with Victor Osei does not entail limiting the social networks
he engages in. As discussed in the following section, Francis manages to become involved in other pastoral relationships, which enables him to fulfil his aspirations of becoming a leader.

**Becoming a ‘big man’ of a small church or being an innovator**

On the 15th of May 2005 Francis founded his own church called Fountain Life International Christian Centre. The first Sunday service took place in his house and was attended by his wife and children. In September 2005, the church had about 50 members, some of them from Francis’ family and others from the neighbourhood. The congregation worshipped in the garage of the house, but the plan was to construct a new church building: “we wanted to build some kind of structure, big, huge structure that can contain about 500 people and we are praying and believing God for the funds”. The structure was to be built on the grounds of the house that belonged to Francis’ aunt in Italy.

![Figure 14. Francis Afrifa in front of his church with some church members, Bremang, Kumasi](image)

Francis sees the church he has started as a response from God to his obedience: “God honours obedience. If you obey his voice and follow, he will supply all the necessary things and he also brings the necessary people that we need in order to work effectively”.
According to Francis, it is Jesus, not he, who brings people to the church. The church is not his, it belongs to Jesus, and he is the one who brings people in and out. None of the members are from his former church Family Chapel International, as he wished to start afresh. He believes that ‘whoever God calls, God also gives the person a proportion of land, and whoever God calls he also gives them a people to lead. Moses, the people of Israel were given to him to lead to the Promised Land, so I believe in that concept’. The role of the pastor is to lead a people.

In order to progress further in his pastoral career, it remained important for Francis to be ‘fathered’. He was introduced by a friend to a Kumasi-based bishop, Nicholas Asare, who ordained Francis as a pastor in March 2005, and henceforth became a new ‘father’ for him. Asare was the leader of a charismatic church and a Bible school in Kumasi. For Francis, becoming ‘bigger’ entails maintaining and engaging in various sorts of relations. Leaving Victor Osei and becoming involved with Asare does not mean replacing one father with another. Rather it means drawing on a new set of relationships that provide a different set of opportunities. When explaining the importance of relationships and how to succeed as a pastor, Francis said that he

“always try to keep relationship, because money is a weapon, so is also a relationship, a godly relationship is also a weapon. God can reveal it to one person, who will stand and pray for me. When I need a counsel, because as a pastor, because every pastor you must also get a superior”.

Francis and Asare worked closely together and Asare made Francis the president of a pastors’ association (The Charisma Family Network) that he created. The idea of the association was to help and support young pastors, both in building up their character as pastors and by providing them with international links and affiliations. Asare made room for Francis to extend his leadership and his influence in a way that would not have been possible as a junior pastor under Victor Osei. By becoming the president of an association, Francis achieved a position where he will initiate and guide young pastors. Within his network and with the protection of Asare, Francis will offer support and protection to these young pastors. He is himself becoming a mentor and a father. He saw his own role as someone
who would build up the new pastors. He referred to pastoral work as a ‘noble profession’ and that it was necessary to build up the young pastors’ character for them to be able to have this profession: “moral wise we are building them up and character wise we are building them up, because character pieces the charisma, the anointing, it is got to do with the gifting… but if you don’t have the character God can never anoint you”.

Francis’ new mentor is less influential and less ‘big’ than the former. However, this relationship has opened up new opportunities for Francis and has permitted him to grow. By being attached to Asare Francis extends his social world and, more importantly, he gets a leadership position and an attachment to a Bible school. I would suggest that in Kumasi, being a middle-level pastor is a plausible way to realise social aspirations by means of Bible schools and by getting younger pastors attached to you: by being a teacher or a mentor. Building up large churches and congregations poses more of a challenge. Within the many small churches, the pastors are just as dependent on social relations to the family and other pastors than on the congregation as such.

Becoming a pastor has also been important for the relationship Francis has to his hometown (Apenkra) and to his family. It has changed his status in the family, and given him a role whereby people will seek his advice. This renewed role also means that Francis has more obligations towards the family and the hometown. Francis’ aunt played a key role in establishing the church. She would send musical instruments from Italy and during a stay just after the church was founded she helped set up the church choir. Francis saw her as part of the church. One could say that the church of Francis became a new form of family enterprise, which may prove to be more successful for his career than that of his grandfather.

The chief of the hometown (Apenkrahene) wanted Francis to become involved in youth projects in the town. Francis planned to do this, but he also felt pressured to bring money to the town. Before he founded a church he was preaching at the annual harvest festival and the Apenkrahene (Nana Dwamena Aktenten II) had “chosen [him] as his mate”. During the annual harvest festival a pastor is invited to preach for the town. Before Francis went to Denmark, he was the one they asked to preach and after his return he has taken up this responsibility again. During the praying ceremony he would pray for the hometown, the
chiefs, the harvest and his services were to secure the well being of the town. Francis comes from a royal family and he is the nephew of the Akwamuhene who is a sub-chief and the linguist’s deputy. This has led the Apenkrabene to say that Francis is his son and that Francis should succeed his uncle (the Akwamuhene) when he dies. The Akwamuhene lives in Italy. Francis’ dilemma vis-à-vis his hometown resembles in many ways that of migrants or people who live in the cities. There is a certain status attached to coming back and being an ɔsɔfo, and at the same time obligations and expectations as to how one can contribute.

Francis also played a role as ‘family pastor’ in relation to the death of his grandfather, whom he ‘liberated’ before he died in June 2004, by making him accept ‘Jesus as his Lord and personal saviour’. The grandfather was in a coma for 21 days, had an encounter with Jesus, and repented afterwards. [Francis: ‘By the grace of God I can do all things’.] In this way, Francis also serves as a pastor of the family and sees his own role as someone who has brought success to the family. He has broken the spell that was put on the family by the ancestors and in this way liberated the family. As the first-born son of a royal family, as the son of pastors and as the grandson of a businessman he has lived up to the expectations of
achieving a certain social standing and of becoming a ‘big man’. The family has invested in his career by providing financial support and by providing the physical infrastructure for setting up a church. The family has permitted Francis to build a career and at the same time to grow within the family. Francis has built his career by tapping into both pastoral and family networks.

**TRAJECTORY III: VICTOR OSEI**23

Victor Emmanuel Akwasi Marfo Osei is the founder and leader of Family Chapel International, one of Kumasi’s biggest neo-Pentecostal churches, with church branches in the major cities of Ghana, in rural areas and with a branch in London. The church is known for its music ministry and the membership consists mainly of students, young people and people involved in business. Victor was born in 1960 and grew up in Kumasi. His mother (Eunice Osei) is a Fante and was a housewife. His father (Emmanuel K. Osei or Nana Nkwantabisa) was from Sepe-Buokrom, and was a businessman (contractor). Moreover, he was the first to hold the title of *Nkɔsɔhene*.24 The younger brother of Victor Osei (Ben Osei) has taken over the title after the death of the father. The mother was a Methodist and the father belonged to the Anglican church. All Victor’s brothers and sisters, except one younger brother, live outside Ghana. One brother (the second) is the High Commissioner to Ghana (he is a Catholic) in the UK and another brother is a Rev. Minister of the Anglican Church. Victor Osei comes from a Kumasi elite family. He lives in the family residence in Kumasi and is married to Veronica with whom he has six children.

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23 The following is based on two interviews with Victor Osei, conversation with pastors working under him, conversations with church members and others attending his church, as well as Odoi (2003).

24 The meaning of *Nkɔsɔhene* is someone who is progressing and someone who sees to the progress of the state. If you are someone who has given a lot to your community and has been active in the progress of the state (Asante), then you can be given this title as a kind of recognition. The title can be given by the *Asantehene* or by a paramount chief. When you are given this title you will also be given a stool and then become part of the chieftaincy system. On the occasion of festivals they will walk in line with the chiefs, which means that they are given full recognition as members of the chieftaincy family. However the *Nkɔsɔhene* is a low rank and it does not qualify you to be a royal. The title of *Nkɔsɔhene* is relatively new. It was created by the former *Asantehene* (Otumfu Opoku Ware II) as a way for people to show their communities what they were giving and a way to make rich people aware that they were recognised for their assistance to their community (Field notes: personal communication, Wilhelmina Donkoh, Kumasi, 8 September 2005, and Steven Owusu Osei, Kumasi, 18 August 2005).
Between 1972 and 1979 Victor was in primary and secondary schools in Achimota (Accra) and at the Adisadel College in Cape Coast (Odoi, 2003). Afterwards he went into business and then went to the Wesley Training College where he was trained as a teacher. Later on he went to the University College of Education in Winneba to study for a degree in Physical Education. It was at this time that he had a call to go into full time ministry, which eventually resulted in him giving up his studies at university. He recounted:

“I had been praying and fasting for about a week and all of a sudden as I lay in my bed at about 7pm, I was in a flat at the time. Someone sat on my bed, and as he began to speak, and it was a clear voice, “if I ask you not to go to school any more what would you say?” Now, what made that encounter so unique and powerful was the fact that I was answering a person whom I believe was Jesus in my mind but was communicating with me in a clear voice within my thought. So I said to him, “well we were over 200 people who took the examination and only 31 of us passed. And I believe God you helped me and I passed and now I am in the university”. So he outlined to me a number of things which would happen to me if I went and I would never feel happy, because the calling upon my life was so heavy. But I would be running to and fro trying to preach and school at the same time. That was what happened to me. After lectures I quickly went to Kumasi to do preaching and try to get back in the evening. And it went on and on I could not take it any more. Now when that voice came I said to God, “Jesus if this is real: Come back again.” He told me “I would be back at 11pm, and when that happened I continued to lie on my bed, I slept some. I got up and I was praying. I heard the clock strike from my hall at 11pm. He was sitting by and he said “I told you that I would come back”, and that blew my mind. I believed in God at that time. I knew God was there. I was a Christian but this encounter really affected my life. Even though I disobeyed and went but I never had my peace. Eventually after the first semester I could not go back [to university] any longer.”

At this time Victor Osei was with the Assemblies of God in Kumasi where he worked under Pastor Ransford Obeng for seven years. Ransford Obeng later broke away and founded Calvary Charismatic Centre (CCC). Victor was responsible for deliverance and evangelism, and would accompany Ransford Obeng when he was travelling in Ghana and to Nigeria. In 1992 Victor left Ransford Obeng and started a church of his own. He explained this by
referring to internal church rivalries: “there were a few people close to the pastor who thought I was a threat”. In his own view he did not have a future in the church so he had to leave.

He established a church of his own because he did not see it as a possibility to enter any of the other Pentecostal or charismatic churches in Kumasi. He referred to his family background, which made it difficult for him to fit in: “at that time it was very traditional society here in Kumasi […] with the kind of message I carried I felt it would be confrontational”. Moreover he added that he had formerly had a vision or a dream of starting his own church, and this came back to his mind when he left CCC and Ransford Obeng. When he started his own church he still continued to go to CCC for six months, and it was only after some time that he told his senior pastor that he had started a church of his own. Three months after he definitively left the church, Ransford Obeng broke with the Assemblies of God, and his church became the Calvary Charismatic Centre.

In the beginning they were only 19 church members and they worshipped in a canteen. After a year they moved to a bigger place and eventually constructed a church at Susanso called Father’s Cathedral. He had about eight pastors working under him in the church, and ten

Figure 16. Flyer announcing a one week programme at FCI with Victor Osei and guest from London
pastors working in other branches. In 2005 the church consisted of around 1,500 members and up to 1,000 people attended Sunday service. The Sunday services were transmitted on radio every Sunday. Victor Osei had a wide web of international connections and he would go abroad to preach or invite guests to preach in his church in Kumasi.

As referred to in the previous chapter, Victor Osei never went to Bible school or had any formal training as a pastor. He described himself as an educated man and said:

“I’m a trained teacher, and I also went to the university. I have a trained mind, so I can read. So I don’t stop learning, so when you come around you will see there are books everywhere that I am reading through, you realize that it has nothing to do with a pastor, but it has”.

In the case of Victor Osei knowledge and displaying that knowledge is important for the way he constructed his role as a pastor. As the above quotation indicates he is not only concerned with knowledge of God or knowledge of the Bible, but with other more everyday issues as well. Although his church and his preaching are mostly about prosperity (and focus on wealth and success), he emphasised his knowledge of things not necessarily related to church. During sermons he could for instance speak of and give advice on investments, the price of petrol, and how to start a business. He would not spend too much time on quotes from the Bible. This is both a reflection of the preoccupation of neo-Pentecostal churches with the material and practical aspects of life and of Victor’s background as a teacher. He is a teacher by training and extends his sphere of influence by not only providing knowledge on God, but also on other matters that are of relevance to people’s everyday lives.

This points to the paramount role of knowledge in relation to power in Asante society. According to Akyeampong (2000a: 105) power in pre-colonial Asante was closely related to knowledge in the sense that knowledge of the spiritual gave access to power that was seen as being rooted in the spiritual realm. The ability to change people’s lives was a sign of possessing knowledge as well as a manifestation of power: “This knowledge that could facilitate transformation in the spiritual or physical realm was an acquired or an innate quality for some individuals” (Akyeampong, 2000a: 105). Hence presenting himself as someone who
has knowledge (of both spiritual and material affairs) is a way for Victor Osei (and other pastors) to display their virtues as a pastor, which also implies showing his possession of power. Another way of showing this is his publication of two books. Publications of religious books is not in any way particular to neo-Pentecostal pastors in Asante or Southern Ghana: But what I am arguing is that it might have a specific meaning and resonance if understood in relation to the primary role of knowledge to the understanding of power in Asante society (see also chapter three).

Another important aspect of Victor Osei’s status as a big ‘man of God’ is the fact that he has trained a lot of young pastors, of whom many regarded him as their spiritual father and role model. Two of them are Francis Afrifa and Edward Otu. They both described themselves as acting, preaching, laughing, and talking like Victor Osei. Edward Otu said:

“About him, in CCC our pastor Ransford was very good but with very Rev Victor there was sometime that I saw in the Bible that he was implementing. That is the power of God. The Bible says Jesus laid hands on the sick and they got healed and demons were cast out. And I saw that vivid in him. So I said I wanted to be like him […] for Rev Victor Osei is such that what ever is in the Bible must manifest now. It should be able to happen now”.25

Edward Otu makes reference to the ability of Victor Osei to heal people and thereby to the manifestation that he possesses the power of God.

For Victor Osei, part of being a ‘big man’ is to strengthen his position by exercising and seeking influence in political affairs. As mentioned in chapter three, this is one of the key characteristics of neo-Pentecostalism as compared to, for instance, the classical Pentecostal churches or mainline churches. In the case of Victor Osei I assert that seeking political influence is not done directly as a politician, but by using the influence and power a pastor has over congregants and others who perceive him as a respectable person. Describing his own role he said: “So I am not a politician, but I politicise”. He referred to a case where he had criticised the moral behaviour of a minister:

“And I spoke about it and a number of radio stations came to me for my comments and there were a lot of people who were worried in high places. I made it look like they were involved in an act that was wrong. I remember I met one of the ministers of state, who made a comment and because of the comment I knew. He said ‘I hear people listen to you in Kumasi’, and I laughed. I knew what he was driving at and then I said ‘oh is that so’, and we all laughed and I know that sometimes when I speak it affects people and people listen’.

In this way he used his position as a ‘man of God’ to enter the political platform. The fact that people ‘in high places’ recognised him and listened to him, aggrandized his position as a pastor. As highlighted elsewhere this is a self-reinforcing process or upward spiral in the sense that gaining status and power on one platform increase one’s status and power on other platforms. Therefore there is a certain dynamic attached to the figure of the neo-Pentecostal pastor and the way he pieces together and builds up status, wealth and power. Victor Osei mentioned another example of how his influence had political effects. This is worth drawing in as it shows how Victor Osei used his political contacts (via his brother who is Ghana’s high commissioner to Britain) to play a role as mediator in the local political scene. His relation to his brother provided access to speak to the holders of power in Accra. The story is about how Victor Osei played a role to maintain order in Kumasi at a time where there were tensions around a former mayor of Kumasi. He explained:

“This is going on when the new government has just set up [2000] and then he [the brother], added it to his memos that he sends to the president’s office and things like that you know. There was a bit of disturbance in this place. Don’t write about it … In Kumasi, and the boys on the streets, who sell, were really angry with the former mayor and they were threatening to strike and march. And I told them [politicians] ‘if you allow this to happen in your stronghold. So whatever it is you better call the mayor to order and talk to him to find out what is going on and sort it out before it’s too late’. And I have all kinds of friends, people who sell newspapers, I like people, so I talk to all kinds of people. One day I was just walking in town … and I stopped and asked them how they were doing in the centre of the town and they said ‘this is what is going on and we don’t like what the guy is doing and so we
are going to take action’. So I told them to take it easy. So I called them [politicians] and said ‘hey, you people have had a whole week to sort out this issue because these boys are really mad’. So they quickly contacted people in certain places. So about a week later, I went there and asked them how things were going. And they were like everything was o.k. But they did not know I was involved in the background. This is the kind of things that we do to keep our city going”.

By involving himself in this issue he reinforced his position as a pastor among people in Kumasi since he contributed to the social stability of the city. Moreover, it was a way for him to manifest his influence and his contacts in the political elite. Another way in which he sought political influence was by advising churchgoers on whom to vote for. Moreover, he ascribes the church a role in the loss of power of the NDC in the 2000 elections “because it [the church] spoke of the things they were doing and told the people not to vote for them. And you know almost every person in Ghana might visit the church … and if my version was not to vote for this person almost everyone will not vote for you”. In addition, for the parliamentary elections in 2004 the NPP candidate in the Oforikrom constituency (Elizabeth Agyeman), came to Family Chapel International and spoke to the congregation one week before the elections: “She came and saw us, she had a word in church and most people voted for her and all our members who were in her particular locality voted for her. And when you look at the margins she won by. If that hadn’t happened, she could have lost”.

Although Victor Osei does not see himself as a politician, he had considered a political career: “I will encourage people to stand for election and get involved in it. Now we need Christians in parliament. I believe if it was not for my wife, I would have stood for parliamentary seat”. This indicates that not only can pastors increase their status by getting involved in other spheres, as for instance politics, business or kinship, but also that there is a tendency that one person follows several paths to become ‘big’, and to become ‘big’ in several spheres at the same time. By being a pastor one can enter into other types of leadership (politics or business) and it seems as if, in some cases, this helps qualifying for obtaining these positions. One can move from one platform to the other, which indicates that these different types of offices and leadership to some extent overlap (see Maxwell, 2000a). The cases I have analysed so far are mainly from the perspective of younger and up-
coming pastor, where being a pastor increases one’s status more widely, but does not necessarily lead to access to leadership positions in others spheres. However, this example of a well-established and successful pastor shows that one is not limited to performing leadership on one platform. One can add on other leadership positions and it seems as if this adding on is a way to enter a higher level of ‘bigness’. There are other examples of this. One is Kwabena Darko from Kumasi, who is a successful businessman (Ghana’s largest producer of poultry), a church founder and a presidential candidate in the 1992 elections. Another example is the former Regional Minister of Ashanti, Sampson Kwaku Boafo (now minister of Chieftaincy and Culture), who is a lawyer of profession and who had also founded a church (City Temple International Church) with branches in London, Accra and Kumasi. He was formerly chairman of the NPP branch in London and founded the NPP branch in Toronto, Canada. He is someone who has been acknowledged for his “meritorious services and contribution to the development of Ashanti” (Ghanaian Chronicle, 9 January 2006). In a weekly newspaper he was called ‘Lawyer-priest-MP, Minister Sampson Kwoku Boafo’ (The Spectator, 14 July 2007). This tendency has, moreover, been reported in a different newspaper article on the possible shift of former Kumasi mayor, Akwasi Agyeman, from NDC to NPP:

"Is Akwasi also contemplating becoming pastor or a priest? Two former officials of the NDC government have decided to take to the pulpit. The former Ashanti Regional Minister Mr. Nuamah Donkor decided to study theology outside the country in preparation for becoming a priest. And just last week the former District Chief Executive of Effigya Sekyere East, Mr. Degraft Safo enrolled at the Christian Service College in Kumasi to study theology and eventually become a priest” (Accra Mail, 30 September 2001).

In summary, Victor Osei has become a ‘big man’ in several ways: he has built up a large neo-Pentecostal church in Kumasi, has many international contacts, is involved in business, and exercises political influence. His formal training as a teacher would not have enabled him to achieve this social standing and to exercise the power that comes with it. Moreover, looking at his family background and the occupations of his siblings, the path he has chosen has

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allowed him to build on and use his assets in his career. Being a teacher would probably not have fulfilled his social aspirations, whereas being a pastor permits him to perform as a ‘big man’.

DISCUSSION

In this chapter I have presented and discussed trajectories of both social and spatial mobility and shown how aspirations of becoming successful and ‘big’ are realised within the progression of a pastoral career. I have moreover pointed to a number of obstacles to that process and stressed that not all pastors are successful in becoming ‘men of God’. The aspiration to work and engage in a pastoral career can be understood as an alternative to employment in the public sector, given the decreasing opportunities of employment in this sector, and as a way of generating income. Pastoral careers should, however, not exclusively be understood as mere professional alternatives or as ways of making money. The point is that they also constitute new modes of achieving social mobility and of ascending social hierarchies that include a spiritual dimension.27

I have also argued that transnational relations can be constitutive in the making of pastoral careers. It is important to underline that transnational relations both represent opportunities and obstacles. As Englund (2001: 238) has noted with regard to transnationalism and Pentecostalism in Malawi:

“blockages are as important to understand as flows and the transnational networks which Pentecostalism appears to support are not always enabling and empowering. They may also generate new social hierarchies and reinforce existing discrepancies in access to wealth and authority”.

Both with regard to the young pastors’ aspirations to lead an international church, and the head pastor in Copenhagen’s aspirations to build a home-town church, there are certain

27 Maxwell (2000a: 250) notes that becoming a church leader is not only about acquiring status, but that it also is a way to attain “social, economic and political influence in contemporary Africa”.
opportunities related to their transnationalism such as close attachment to migrants. But at the same time, these aspirations are not always fulfilled and the transnational character of the churches can be a barrier in terms of lack of access and lack of means of communication.

I have, furthermore, stressed that the process of becoming a successful pastor requires involvement in two kinds of relations. First, becoming a pastor means entering an apprentice-mentor relationship with a senior pastor and, secondly, it means involving in relations that permit and provide the possibilities for innovation. The first relation is a vertical relation between a junior person and an older, established and recognised person, whereas the latter set of relations takes place on both a vertical and horizontal level between the young pastor and other pastors, friends, family and colleagues. The first set of relations lies within the church; the second most often transgresses the platform of the church and involves relations to other senior pastors, colleagues and the extended family.

In order to establish themselves young pastors need to belong to someone. They build up careers through apprenticeship and by engaging in relations with more senior pastors. By being an apprentice, a young pastor draws on the credibility and power of a senior pastor. This gives a certain degree of legitimacy that is necessary when young pastors establish themselves. Writing on social stratification in pre-colonial Asante and Fante, Kwame Arhin (1983: 5) suggests “that there was a distinction of lineages due to the pre-eminence of certain individuals which was extended to their dependants”. In the same vein, I would argue that a young pastor not only enters a relationship with a ‘spiritual father’ to learn, but also to draw on that person’s eminence and in this way to acquire prestige, respect and credibility. The relationship between a young pastor and a ‘spiritual father’ thus serves a double purpose. It is a way to achieve certain skills in relation to performing as a pastor, and it furthermore provides the aspirant with status and credibility.

The junior – senior pastoral relationship is in many ways a father – son relationship (senior pastors are referred to as spiritual fathers, and are called ‘father’, ‘dadda’ or ‘papa’), which implies protection, guidance and provision of opportunities. The apprentice-mentor relation is moreover a two-way relationship. The ‘spiritual father’ conveys credibility and access to spiritual power. In return, the son (or junior pastor) provides services in the form of loyalty,
presence and support (for instance by holding the Bible of the senior pastor when he moves from his car to the church or to a meeting). The authority of a head pastor serves as both protection and recognition, and the loyalty of junior pastors depends on the senior pastor’s ability to build up their status. The authority of the senior pastor is not constant, but continuously constituted by the loyalty of the younger pastors (as well as congregations and other religious authorities).

The relation to a senior pastor is, however, an ambivalent relation. On the one hand, it serves as protection and legitimacy. But, on the other hand, it becomes an obstacle to the younger pastors’ opportunities for advancement. The pastors eventually get mature, and will be inclined to take over or start a church on their own. However, as shown in the case of Francis, the need to be ‘fathered’ remains and pastors therefore have to navigate between seeking protection and being under someone and at the same time have enough room for manoeuvre to advance in their careers.

Concurrently, young and up-coming pastors who aspire to status are entrepreneurial and are involved in multiple networks (congregation, colleagues, and extended family) to realise their aspirations. In the case of Francis, he relied on family members both for material support, for church attendance and for building up his status by giving him special roles in the home community. He was innovative because he managed to escape a junior position within his extended family. He refused to submit to a gerontocratic family structure, left the family business, travelled, returned, created a church, and came to occupy a new position of status and authority. In addition, joining a small church can be a way to start working as a pastor. In Alive Bible Congregation some of the young pastors were not working as pastors in their former churches, but joining ABC gave them the opportunity to do so. One pastor was previously a youth leader in the Baptist church and now refers to himself as a senior pastor. The small churches provide opportunities to rise in the hierarchy relatively quickly, even if the ‘rewards’ in terms of salary is meagre. As Barber points out in a Nigerian context, ‘[t]he creative organizational forms that make possible the rapid assemblage of a huge funeral

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28 The ambivalence (or inherent opposition) of this relationship very much resembles other father - son relationships, e.g. among the Mossi of Burkina Faso as described by Skinner (1961) and discussed by Balandier (1974).
ceremony, the functioning of complex systems of commerce, or multi-layered systems of patronage are also what make possible the operations of the theatre” (Barber, 2000: 10). These creative organisational forms enable young pastors to establish their kingdoms, and to extend the status and authority they gain in this process to relations outside the church. Moreover, van Dijk (1992) describes how young born-again preacher in Malawi act as ‘religious entrepreneurs’ in the sense that they combine pastoral work with their social careers (e.g. doing business and evangelisation at the same time). He argues that they create a new urban space for social mobility and distance themselves from their seniors. I agree with van Dijk’s point on pastorship as new routes for social climbing but, at the same time, I argue that there is a dual process taking place. They distance themselves from some relations with their seniors but, at the same time, engage in new relations that also contain new elements of seniority. Becoming a pastor does not mean becoming free from hierarchical relations.

If we think of apprenticeship and entrepreneurship as organising principles for social relations, we can see that, in the making of pastoral careers, the two principles are at work simultaneously. The two complement each other in the sense that the credibility and training one gets from being in an apprentice-mentor relationship is supplemented by the creation of some sort of independence from the ‘spiritual father’ (by creating an independent branch, church, or fellowship). This independence often appears as a split, ranging from an absolute split to a distancing from the attention of the ‘spiritual father’. However, it does not suffice to become independent. A process of re-inventing and re-installing oneself in the position of pastor follows suit. As argued above, moving beyond restricting social relations entails involvement in new relations (vertical and horizontal), which allow for social ascension, but which also can be a new apprentice-mentor relation. In the case of Francis, he left Victor Osei in order to found a church on his own and, at the same time, he engaged in a bond with Nicholas Asare, who ordained him as a pastor and made him the president of a pastoral association.

As to the process of building a career, becoming ‘big’ involves a chain of transactions (material, symbolic and spiritual) between the apprentice/entrepreneur and his or her environment (Vincent, 1971: 237). Becoming ‘big’ is not only about individual capacities, or
about one’s dedication and participation in social networks. It is also about making sense of one’s place in these networks. It is not something you are, but something you become. Not something you inherit, but something you build up. As Vincent (1971) reminds us, there is an element of contingency about being ‘big’. ‘Big men’ need to maintain the support they get from their social surroundings. As part of his pastoral career, Francis travels abroad, which makes him look important. When returning to Ghana he is expected to join community projects in his ancestral village, and provide religious services, which then gives him a certain social status. This indicates that his career is a dependent career, shaped by those around him and shows the limitations others place on him in certain situations. Moreover, as the trajectory of Victor Osei shows, becoming a successful neo-Pentecostal pastor permits one to exercise political and economic influence in ways that would not have been possible had one not taken up a pastoral career.

The processes described and analysed here are not unique features of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches or religious institutions as such. They are variations of more general social processes involved when becoming ‘big’ and building up status, wealth and power. Moreover, they reflect perceptions of the relation between access to spiritual power and authority that are rooted in Asante society (Akyeampong & Obeng, 1995: 483). More broadly one could say that the careers of neo-Pentecostal pastors illuminate processes of wider social change: pastors are examples of new figures of success and power that transgress the classical division of religion, state and society.

This argument feeds into debates on the political role of neo-Pentecostalism (Gifford, 1998, 2004; Maxwell, 2000a). Maxwell has highlighted how religious and political elites legitimise each other and has pointed out how a new form of politics comes into play that “functions through personal ties between religious and political elites” (Maxwell, 2000a: 263). In a Zimbabwean context he describes how political and religious elites at the national level engage in a process of ‘reciprocal assimilations’. According to Maxwell, the way the religious movement functions is a reproduction of Zimbabwean political culture (e.g. authoritarian styles of leadership). Maxwell builds largely on Bayart’s work on the ‘politics of the belly’ and the ideas of a political culture based on clientelism and neo-patrimonialism. The analysis in

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29 See also Strandsbjerg (2007) on ‘la figure du pasteur-président’ in Benin.
this thesis, and this chapter in particular, is a contribution to this debate, though from a different perspective.

With regard to neo-Pentecostal pastors I have argued that status, wealth and power achieved on one platform can be transferred to other platforms and that this can bring about political and economic influence. However, at the level of the up-coming pastor, the ‘bigness’ I am pointing to is not to be understood as a mere reproduction of political culture and patron-client relations, nor as a legitimisation of a political elite. At this level ‘bigness’ is expressed as influence at the local level that takes place in a more informal way. As I have shown, pastorship and the ‘bigness’ that comes with it can be seen as innovative ways of climbing social hierarchies e.g. creating independent churches, or creating a pastoral association. Although these creative organisational forms are enmeshed in local values and practices, they all represent innovation, agency and transgression of neo-patrimonial forms of organisation. This is, for instance, expressed in the influence pastors have in family matters (e.g. allocation of land, advices and as mediator in conflicts), and their influence on the local political scene.

The move beyond a national elite perspective provides additional knowledge about the social and political significance of neo-Pentecostal pastors. The transfer of ‘bigness’ from one platform to another entails political and economic influence at a different social level, which is among family, kin, neighbours, colleagues and friends. It is the about the influence of an up-coming local elite, rather than that of a national elite. It is ‘bigness’ at a different social level, both in terms of social strata and geographically. Pastors achieve status at the local level and among those that have travelled and live abroad. This observation points to the importance of always situating the analytical concepts deployed such as elite and political culture (see also Lentz, 1994).

There is a certain danger attached to understanding neo-Pentecostal movements in terms of reproductions of a political culture based on neo-patrimonial and clientelistic relations as do Gifford (2004) and Maxwell (2006a). The conceptualisation can become deterministic. These terms must be qualified. Moreover, viewing the functions of religious leaders by using the same criteria as political leadership is in my view somewhat simplistic. Although the analytical focus of both Gifford and Maxwell is closely related to the local context, the
premise that religious leadership built on a neo-patrimonial political culture leaves out the nuances of the processes and social relations involved. In the case of Asante, I would argue that becoming ‘big’ and being legitimate as a neo-Pentecostal pastor, as with other types of leaders, is just as much about finding a balance between accumulation and redistribution between the individual and the community (as discussed in chapter three), and can therefore not be reduced to being about personal interests and rigid patron-client relations. In the case of up-coming pastors in Kumasi they do to some extent achieve their positions by engaging in patron-client relations with, for instance, family members. But, at the same time, these relations have a more open-ended character. Pastors are able to move in and out of relations so that they can continue to grow (e.g. Francis leaving Victor Osei). Therefore, the social relations are more complex and unbound than patron-client relations. Becoming a pastor is a new and innovative way of attaining authority that does not follow rules of for instance gerontocratic family structures. It is noteworthy that there are several parallel ways to attain authority, and that these middle-level people piece together their routes of social ascension by operating on several platforms. The influence exerted by pastors is not clear-cut or formalised, but is more blurred and fuzzy. They do not achieve formal leadership positions in other platforms (although some politicians have a pastoral background), but their status is nevertheless recognised beyond the church. What is important to bear in mind is that pastors both engage in established relations of seniority on the one hand, and, on the other hand, are innovative and capable of moving beyond these relations when they become restrictive. The aspect of agency should not be ignored. It is by focussing on the social processes around pastorship that we learn how new forms of leadership and social ascension function and unfold.
CHAPTER SIX
THE FUNERAL OF A BISHOP

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and analyses the funeral of a bishop and founder of a Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal/charismatic church. The funeral of bishop Paul Owusu-Tabiri took place in Sunyani in the Brong-Ahafo region in August 2005. Paul Owusu-Tabiri was the founder and leader of Bethel Prayer Ministry International; a Ghanaian neo-Pentecostal/charismatic church with branches inside as well as outside Ghana. The funeral lasted three days and was held in three places: the stadium of Sunyani; at the church prayer camp site and in the ancestral village of the late bishop. The official funeral ceremony took place in Sunyani, whereas the burial of the corpse took place in the bishop’s hometown. The funeral was attended by a large group of church members, pastors from Ghana and abroad, family and extended family members, traditional leaders, the press and state officials.

In this chapter I analyse the funeral as a public event, where the social dramas going on inside and outside the church are exposed and take form. The funeral is analysed as an arena for mobilisation, innovation and contestation of power (Parker, 2000: 211). I argue that, at one level, the funeral is a paean to, and symbolic of, the reputation and succession of an influential church leader and, at another deeper level, represents the social processes of achieving and claiming status, wealth and power. These processes of negotiation are conducted with reference to both religious and secular institutions and ideas. The funeral of a church leader can be seen as the exposure of the relations and interdependence between church, family, home community and the wider society. I thus argue that church, family and home-community compete and intertwine in their claims to the dead and on their claim to rule the church. These contestations reflect and reveal wider social processes of friction and fusion, such as gender roles, and traditional and Christian identities and practices. I suggest that a situational analysis of the funeral is useful to illustrate the interrelationships and interdependence of, a priori, distinct social groups.
An analysis of the different sets of tensions that appeared in relation to the funeral provides us with insight into the mechanisms and processes of becoming and being a ‘big man’ of a neo-Pentecostal/charismatic church. The way the funeral is performed indicates how the person was perceived by society, and how this person continues to influence future negotiations about belonging and affiliation within church and family. The late bishop signifies the church, and therefore the pomp and style of his funeral is a testimony of the degree of his greatness and of the importance of the church.

The contestations of the funeral are analysed in three parts: 1) the funeral ceremony 2) the burial site and, 3) the succession of leadership in the church. The way the ceremony was performed is a display of the might of the late bishop and of the church. The contestation over burial site involved the church and the extended family, which both claimed the body of the bishop. I analyse the making of this claim as a way to get access to a symbol of success with both material and spiritual connotations. Moreover, I see the struggle over succession and becoming the heir of the bishop as ways to achieve status, wealth and power. As these threads of analysis indicate, the funeral is as much about the present and the future as it is about the past. While the funeral is an ostentatious celebration of a man, now of the past, the conflicts on site, ceremony and succession all point to the future. So the chapter is more about funerals as arenas for achieving and claiming status, wealth and power in the future and less about ways of understanding changing funeral rites and meanings of death.

Although, this study focuses on the craft and politics of pastorship and not on funerals per se, it is relevant to analyse the funeral of Owusu-Tabiri, as it exposes some of the social and political processes related to pastorship. Both the performance of the funeral and the conflicts related to it inform us about the influence and importance of this particular pastor. The very fact that different groups with diverging interests are involved and make claims show that the deceased is worth claiming. He was a powerful and successful man, not only within the church, but also within his extended family, the wider community and official Ghana. In studies of neo-Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity it is pertinent to study how charisma, authority and spiritual power are transferred from one religious leader to the next, because this illustrates how pastorship is built up and what social processes are involved. What happens in a power vacuum situation, and what are the ways to achieve and
get access to the inheritance of the bishop, not only in a material sense, but also in a spiritual sense? In addition, the funeral of Paul Owusu-Tabiri is an important case to study for the simple reason that, so far, only very few leaders of the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Ghana have died.1 This funeral took place in a different location than most of the other cases referred to in the thesis and it approaches pastorship at a different level in terms of social hierarchies (an elite person). The case is included as it illuminates the features drawn out in the precedent chapters in a condensed form. The ‘bigness’ of Owusu-Tabiri and the politics around his person are an expression of the public role and significance of pastors and the power attached to their position. I see this case in line with what Moore has termed ‘change-in-the-making’. This event “reveal[s] ongoing contests and conflicts and competitions” (Moore, 1987: 730). Moreover, Cohen and Odhiambo (1992: 99) have pointed out (with regard to the burial of the Kenyan lawyer S. M. Otieno), that the conflict related to the burial is not to be seen merely as reflections of an existing system, but “as constitutive itself”.2

The chapter starts by outlining the most important features of Akan funerals. It continues with a description of the funeral of Paul Owusu-Tabiri, and then goes on to the analytical part that is divided into three themes: ceremony, site, and succession. The chapter ends with a summary of the discussion.

APPROACHING FUNERALS

The funeral of bishop Paul Owusu-Tabiri can be seen as a social situation from which we can study, in a broader context, how pastorship is built up as well as what being a pastor signifies socially, politically and economically. Considering the funeral as a social situation is

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1 There is the case of prophet-evangelist Francis Akwasi Amoako from Santaase in Kumasi, founder of the Resurrection Power Evangelistic Ministries, who died in a car accident in 1990. He was known for his critique of the PNDC and its harsh stance towards churches and Christianity (Adubofour, 1994: 359). The prophet and his church have been described by Adubofour (1994: 359, 362-376). Other interesting cases to compare with are the death and funeral of Josiah Akindayomi, founder of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria (see Ukah, 2003b) and that of Benson Idahosa founder of Church of God Mission International also from Nigeria (see Marshall-Fratani, 2001).

2 See also Moore (1987: 729) on events as “ongoing dismantling of structures or of attempts to create new ones” and not necessarily as “the exemplification of an existent symbolic or social order”.

191
inspired by Gluckman ([1940] 1958). It allows for an understanding of the funeral that encompasses a larger social system and where the relations between pastors, congregation, family (both immediate and extended), and other authorities outside the realm of the church are included. This approach demonstrates the interdependence of the religious actors with other actors. The different groups of people and the different places where the funeral took place here represent the various actors and interests at stake. The focus of situational analysis is on social processes rather than social things (Frankenberg, 2002: 60). According to Gluckman, social situations are “the events he [the anthropologist] observes and from them and the inter-relationships in a particular society he abstracts the social structure, relationships, institutions, etc., of that society” (Gluckman, [1940] 1958: 2). This methodology, as developed first by Gluckman and later by van Velsen (1967), was a reaction to structural functionalist approaches of, for example, Radcliffe-Brown (Cocks, 2001).

In his detailed description of the opening of a bridge, Gluckman outlines the different groups of people present at the event. These groups are distinct and separate, in terms of race, social status etc. However, Gluckman ([1940] 1958: 9) argues that the opening of the bridge can be seen as an event that connects these social groups. Their very participation and relationships with each other on that particular occasion make them form some sort of unity; despite their distinctness and separation. They constitute a single field of social relations (Frankenberg, 2002: 60). Along the same lines, I see the different groups that were present at the funeral (pastors, church members, close family, extended family, traditional leaders, and state officials) as forming a unity and a web of relations due to their participation in the event. They relate to each other and depend on each other to achieve what they want from the funeral. In Gluckman’s words, they are “united in celebrating a matter of mutual interest” ([1940] 1958: 12).

One could extend the argument, again following Gluckman, and claim that the way the church leaders and family members relate to each other in this situation is a reflection of broader social structures. With regard to the role of neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana, the contention of this study is that the church is not an institution in which people act in isolation from other social institutions and structures. In the process of becoming a ‘big man’ a pastor acts within certain social structures, and therefore, as argued earlier, his
achieved status is recognised more broadly than within the church. Although different religious movements diverge strongly on doctrine, they do share common traits with regard to the social processes they evoke and the existing ideas and practices they build upon (Larkin & Meyer, 2006: 286). Furthermore, divisions by some groups are often “crossed by ties of kinship, colour, political allegiance and culture” (Gluckman, [1940] 1958: 21). Individuals who are members of several groups, might sometimes be members of opposing groups and therefore “many relationships and interests may intersect in one person” (Gluckman, [1940] 1958: 24). It is the motives and values of a person that determine that person’s membership of a particular group. People can be members of various groups with contradictory interests. Even though family and church, traditional and neo-Pentecostal/charismatic leaders are opposed, they are part of the same overall field of social relations.

The critique of Gluckman’s, work and the Manchester School more broadly, has been that it focused too narrowly on a closed unit, such as the tribe or the community (van Binsbergen, 1981; Frankenberg, 2005: 175) and hence a closed social system was the object of analysis. Moreover, the individuals’ own perceptions of the situations were not taken into account, and also events related to the situation but occurring previously were not given attention (Werbner, 1984: 162). My study of the funeral differs in several ways. First, it is a ritualised event and not a new event (as the opening of the bridge was) and it takes place over several days. As it is a ritualised event, people have certain expectations, and the ways the funeral is performed are of great importance. This adds another dimension to the situation in that it not only illustrates the relations between people, but also says something on how status, wealth and power is built up and challenged. Moreover, the case of the funeral is not limited to informing us about the social relations and structures of a particular community related to a particular place. Rather, the social situation studied here is one where the different parties are only gathered in a particular location momentarily. Hence the situation is more open and encompasses much wider groups of people. This reflects the transnational nature of neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches. However, by approaching the funeral as a social situation there are things that are not captured, such as the ways in which these social relations are played out in an everyday setting, as well as the symbolic meaning of the rituals themselves.
Arhin (1994: 307) views funerals as a ‘total social phenomenon’. He follows Mauss’ concept of ‘total social facts’, and approaches funeral rites not only as religious or sacred, but as encompassing various functions: religious, political, legal, moral and economic. When elaborating on ‘total social facts’ as involving the totality of society, Mauss argues for looking at ‘whole entities’ and not only at phenomena detached from one another. He writes that these phenomena are more than “systems of institutions divided, for example, into religion, law, economy, etc. They are whole ‘entities’, entire social systems” (Mauss, [1924] 1990: 102).

Even though this functionalist approach has its limits, it points to the integration and connectedness of the sacred and the secular. This is particularly relevant when discussing funerals, but also more generally when analysing religion and social change. Returning to the context of Akan funerals, Arhin (1994: 309) argues that, from an historical perspective, it was the interrelations between social, political and religious ideologies “that structured Akan funeral rites”. Funeral rites “were basically religious rites. But they also defined and thus preserved social and political status and relations” (Arhin, 1994: 312). Although changes in rites and performance have occurred during time, this multifunctional characteristic of funerals is still valid and what is interesting is to bring out the dynamics of the material and spiritual. This adds to the situational analysis approach of Gluckman outlined above, as this did not integrate religious or spiritual aspects in the analysis of social processes and conflict in local communities (Werbner, 1984: 170).3

The death of the bishop was a moment of both fragility and opportunity for the church and the funeral participants. The church was in a precarious situation because it had lost its leader: a power vacuum and the risk of losing members. Many members adhere to a neo-Pentecostal/charismatic church as much because of the leader as because of the institution of the church as such. At the same time the death of the bishop and the funeral represented a moment of opportunity for those involved, as several symbols of, and opportunities for acquiring status, wealth and power were set free. As mentioned above, both the ceremony and the choice of burial site were occasions to establish and confirm ties and alliances with the bishop. The question of succession evidently represented a possibility for someone to

3 Other studies of the Manchester School looked at the relation between religion and socio-economic change. See for instance Long (1968). Note also the review by Gluckman (1949) of Sundkler’s work on Bantu Prophets in South Africa, where he ends “And finally, as an anthropologist I feel he has challenged my profession to pursue the problems he opens here so vividly and skilfully” (1949: 168).
take over the attractive position as leader of the church. One could say that it was a moment that created room for challenge and change.

Such a moment of fragility and power vacuum is, at the same time, a phase of transition, both of the person who is dead, but also for the people and institutions involved. This brings to mind Turner’s concept of liminality. Turner builds both on van Gennep’s three phases of rites de passages and Gluckman’s approach to social process to “develop a rich account of the ways in which rituals manage transitions for individuals and collectivities” (Lambek, 2002: 358). Liminality or a liminal period is seen as ‘in flux’ and in contrast to ‘state’, which is a stable condition culturally recognised. Turner describes liminality and liminal entities as ambiguous and “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner, 1969: 95). Thinking of the funeral as a liminal period is fruitful, because it emphasises the creative forces released in a process of transition. In this case, the funeral of an important person is a moment of liminality in the sense that it is a ‘moment out of time’, where status is confirmed or redefined. As will be discussed below, the death of the bishop was a situation that permitted the widow to proclaim that she was ready to take over the leadership of the church. However, this was not accepted by the church leadership. The death allowed for this challenge of positions - or navigation outside the normal system of status and hierarchies – that was in opposition to culturally defined rules (understood both as rules defined by the constitution of the church and as based on more traditional values that would not allow a woman to become a church leader). However, the situation of the funeral is not a situation of anti-structure (unstructured and undifferentiated communitas) in the way Turner develops the concept. It is more a new social situation that is finding a new structure and, in this process, power and status are in play. Even though the funeral participants are in a situation that is outside normal time and space where processes of change take place, they submit to, for instance, the ‘rule of culture’ when it comes to the burial site of the bishop. The situation is open for change because it is a situation of transition. However, this still takes place within an overall structure that also influences the outcome of the situation (see also De Witte (2001: 9) for a similar discussion).
Funerals are major social events among the Akan. A rich literature, both historical and contemporary, has described and analysed the rituals of such events (Arhin, 1994; De Witte, 2001; Gilbert, 1988; Manuh, 1995; McCaskie, 1989, 2006; Rattray, 1927; van der Geest, 2000). Even if the rituals have changed over time, a dignified and successful funeral is still of paramount importance. Funerals remain one of the most important and celebrated social events: “Death was and is a social event, conceived of and observed as something that happens to an individual person, but only within the context of family (ancestry and posterity as well as the living) and community” (McCaskie, 2006: 342).4

One of the features highlighted in the literature is the extravagance with which funerals are performed as well as the display of wealth (Arhin, 1994). The ‘competitive display’ of wealth at funerals has grown during the last century, due to the monetisation of the economy, migration, urbanisation as well as religious change (Manuh, 1995: 197; McCaskie, 2006: 343), but has also historically been an important element in Akan funerals.5 The wish to impress and display wealth at funerals is understood as a way to compete for recognition and power. Van der Geest (2000) argues that an Akan funeral is more this-worldly than other-worldly in the sense that the rituals performed are ways for the family to demonstrate their status and excellence. One could contest this division of the this-worldly and the other-worldly and rather argue that we are dealing with a phenomenon that involves both. In understanding the importance of funerals as social events, we should also consider the relation between the spiritual and the material world. The way a dead person is sent away to the world of the ancestors influences the way the ancestors will treat the remaining relatives (Aborampah, 1999: 261; McCaskie, 1989: 428). So, in my view, in trying to explain the increasing materialism or competitive display of wealth, it makes no sense to speak of a secularization

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4 I will not describe Akan funeral rites in any detail here. See for instance Arhin (1994) and De Witte (2001) for descriptions and discussions of funeral rites and the organisation of funerals. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the funeral of a neo-Pentecostal/charismatic bishop to understand how religious leaders are recognised by the social surroundings. The aim is therefore not to discuss funerals per se.

5 The important expenditures on funerals have been debated both publicly and among scholars and observers (see for instance Manuh, 1995: 189). I do not engage with this debate here, but would only want to raise the point that spending a lot on funerals while having scarce resource to meet the everyday needs is not necessarily a contradiction in itself, if we take into the consideration the social significance of dignified and ‘wealthy’ funerals. An elaborate funeral celebration is not only about celebrating the dead, but an investment in the status and prestige of the remaining family.
of funerals. Such a view represents a rather rigid understanding of religion, where religion is reduced to belief and does not include material aspects. At the risk of generalising, I would say that understanding funerals as exposures of how the spiritual and material intersect and is part of each other, is a much more accurate reflection of the worldviews of those we are trying to understand.

Nevertheless, successful funerals are important as events where family and others can gain prestige and legitimate status. In this regard, van der Geest writes: “funerals provide occasions for the living to demonstrate their social, political, and economic excellence […] When his or her life is a proof of success, different groups of relatives may fight over the body and claim ownership to use it to their advantage” (2000: 107). The success of a funeral has to do with the reputation and memory of the deceased as well as the status and prestige of the family. Along the same lines, Manuh has argued that “[t]he elaborateness of the funeral ceremony attests to both the wealth of the family and the esteem in which the deceased was held; it becomes a means by which the performers are in turn esteemed by society” (Manuh, 1995: 190).

Huge expenditures on funerals do, moreover, cement existing social bonds and create new ones. Funerals can be seen as expressions of solidarity within families or other groups of belonging e.g. religious groups. Participating in funerals “strengthens and expresses the sense of belonging to a group, of having one’s roots in the hometown and of mutual dependence and solidarity” (De Witte, 2001: 60). In the case discussed in this chapter, we could distinguish various forms of solidarity: solidarity related to the extended family; to the church community; to the pastors of the church (who came from many parts of the world to participate); to other associations such as the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International, as well as to other prominent religious leaders. The aim is to express solidarity, loyalty, and unity. This is achieved by being present, by donating gifts, and by receiving drinks and food.

Funerals are moments of conflict and control. Gilbert discusses the death and funeral of a rich businessman and Christian in the Akuapem kingdom in Southern Ghana. The involves two towns that claim the body of the deceased. By making these claims they also claim
kinship ties and alliances with the deceased (Gilbert, 1988: 297). The funeral was a site for struggle over affiliation both to kin, church and home-town: “The funeral was the ultimate validation of his conversion, as it was of his home-town and kinship affiliation” (Gilbert, 1988: 308). Appiah (1992) writes about the conflicts related to the funeral of his father. His father had stated in his will that the church and his wife should carry out all funeral rites. This was in opposition to custom, where the matrilineal extended family (abusua) was responsible for funeral rites. Moreover, the father was a prominent public figure. Hence the funeral is a public event and “removing the abusua from normal control inevitably entailed an element of public disgrace” (Appiah, 1992: 183). The siblings of the late father tried to take control over the funeral by using their affiliation to the Asantehene (one of the father’s sisters was married to the Asantehene). The children of the deceased resisted and remained in control of the funeral. The case can be seen as a conflict between the extended family and the weight of traditional authority on the one side and the nuclear family and the church on the other.

The cases mentioned above points to Christianity as an important factor of change with regard to funerals (alongside e.g. urbanisation, migration, and monetisation of the economy). In many ways the introduction of Christianity has challenged control of funerals, as the churches focus more on the role of the nuclear family (at least in their ideology). The neo-Pentecostal and charismatic churches do, moreover, perceive the grip of extended families on funerals as a threat to the deceased, because funeral rites would include the pouring of libation. This rite is seen by the churches as ancestor worship, and is not accepted. However, this is not only a question of conflicting religious ideas and practices, but it is also a question of control. To invoke the assistance or the power of traditional authorities is a way to gain control over a funeral, as much as it is about different religious practices. Christianity has, moreover, influenced the funeral ceremony, funeral clothes (in churches people wear white and black, whereas red and black are the traditional funeral colours), place of burial (cemetery), thanksgiving service, as well as the involvement of the clergy in the organisation and the conduct of funerals (see De Witte (2001) for more details).

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6 Noret (2003) puts forward the point that death and funerals often are approached from an ethnic perspective. This approach to some extent fails to capture the different influences (for instance of different religions) on funerals.
THE FUNERAL OF PAUL OWUSU-TABIRI
– DESCRIPTION OF A SOCIAL SITUATION\(^7\)

Bishop Paul Owusu-Tabiri, founder and leader of the Bethel Prayer Ministry International, died on the 2\(^{nd}\) June 2005 in a hospital in Accra at the age of 69. He was buried in his hometown Taforo - a suburb of Dormaa Ahenkro in the Brong Ahafo region - on the 13\(^{th}\) of August 2005. The bishop was born in 1935 in Taforo to the late Nana Kwaku Owusu and the late Nana Afia Frimpomaa (alias Afia Abayaa). After completing school he enrolled in the Ghana Police Academy. He became a police general constable and later a police inspector. He studied law at the Glasgow School of Law (UK) and later started a palm plantation farm. In 1980 he became born-again in the Church of Pentecost and later became an elder and regional deacon of the church. He was the first representative of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International in the Brong Ahafo region. In 1988 he had a divine call to become a full time minister and in 1990 he started the Bethel Prayer Camp with seven people. Five years later he founded the Bethel Prayer Ministry International (BPMI). He was ordained as a bishop in 1996 by the Shiloh International Ministerial Fellowship Worldwide. That same year, he got a degree of doctor of divinity by the Shiloh United Ecclesiastical Bible College, London, UK (Funeral programme: 7-9). His theology is a mix of a traditional Akan worldview and an evangelical Pentecostal understanding of the world with particular emphasis on spiritual deliverance and protection. According to Larbi (2001), he has popularised the concepts of ‘binding’, ‘breaking’, and ‘bombing’, which in his theology are the weapons to fight evil forces (see also van Dijk (2001: 226-227).\(^8\)

\(^7\) The material for this case was gathered through participation in the funeral of bishop Paul Owusu-Tabiri (12-14 August 2005, Sunyani), interview with the former general secretary and new chairman of Bethel Prayer Ministry International (Samuel Gyamfi, 26 September 2005, Accra), interview with the bishop who did the preaching at the funeral ceremony at the stadium (Samuel Addae, 6 September 2005, Kumasi), various conversations with Emmanuel Owusu-Ansah (who is a member of the late bishop’s extended family and who has worked for the bishop as a pastor and personal advisor) and his mother (Accra, Sunyani, Kumasi, August and September 2005), interview with the former driver of the late bishop, who is also a family member (Sampson Owusu, 24 September 2005, Accra), interview with the widow and a daughter of the late bishop (Mrs. Georgina Owusu-Tabiri & Evelyn Frimpomaa, London 9 May 2006), as well as audio-visual and written material (video, funeral programme, newspaper articles) from the funeral.

\(^8\) Owusu-Tabiri explains the breaking of evil forces in his book titled ‘This is your breakthrough’: “Breaking simply means destroying the devil’s power or hold over you through prayer. Breaking is prayer, but it is not a prayer of supplication or dedication. It is warfare prayer […] Breaking is a prayer of command” (Owusu-Tabiri, 2004: 32).
Paul Owusu-Tabiri lived in London with his wife and children. He had come to Ghana the on the 6th of May 2005 to lead the General Council Meeting of the church and to attend other church programmes (The Gospel Advocate, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 3). However, he felt ill in Accra and was taken to intensive care at the 37 Military Hospital in Accra. His wife came from London, and she was, according to some church leaders, the only person who could see him and had access to him at the hospital before he died. After his death he was kept in the mortuary until he was taken to Sunyani on the 12 August 2005. The wake, the funeral ceremony and the thanksgiving service took place in Sunyani at the stadium and at the church site, between Friday 12th of August until Sunday 14 August 2005. The burial of the corpse took place in the hometown (Taforo) of the bishop.

I accompanied Emmanuel, an Accra-based pastor (from Word Miracle Church International), who was from the bishop’s extended family and who had formerly been working under him as a pastor and personal assistant. Upon our arrival we went to greet the widow at the family residence. Canopies were being set up to host the many people who would come and greet the family. It was expected that pastor Emmanuel would come, because he was both a family member and a former pastor in the church. Throughout the three days of the funeral he tried to stay as ‘invisible’ as possible, because he did not want to be too much involved in the funeral programme. Following custom, we were seated in plastic chairs in the yard and offered a drink. The widow came out of the house, we were asked for our mission and after having greeted the widow we left for the stadium. At the stadium people were preparing for the wake. We met one of the church leaders who explained the circumstances around the bishop’s death and the disagreement between the extended family and the church leadership about the bishop’s burial site. He still hoped and prayed for them to be allowed to bury the bishop on the church premises. At this point in time, the day before the funeral, the dispute concerning the site of the burial was not yet settled.

It was raining heavily Friday 12th of August, when the corpse of bishop Paul Owusu-Tabiri came to Sunyani in an ambulance. A long row of big black four-wheel-drive vehicles and many people walking in procession followed the ambulance. The women wore funeral cloths
(black and white) and waved handkerchiefs. The men walked on the other side of the street, most of them were presumably pastors, and wore black suits. There was music, trumpets, and noise from the ambulance’s call-out system. Some people ran after and alongside the car while touching it. The procession went to the family house where all the men in black walked in front of the ambulance. Many more people were waiting outside the house, holding big posters with pictures of the bishop. Some were crying and shouting. The corpse was kept in the house until the following morning, although it was originally planned to bring the coffin to the stadium for the wake.

At the wake at Coronation Park stadium people were waiting for the corpse to arrive. Late in the evening it was announced that the corpse would not be taken to the stadium because of the rain, but would arrive early Saturday morning. The participants at the wake were mainly pastors and church members. The programme at the stadium consisted of music and worship with hundreds of church members dancing, waving handkerchiefs and playing tambourines while church bands were playing. Later on Apostle Thomas Boateng, who is from the church branch in Paris, delivered a sermon. Several offerings were collected and there was an ‘altar call’ (people were asked to come forward and ‘give their life to Jesus’). The event finished some time after midnight.

On the following day, Saturday 13th of August, a big funeral ceremony took place at the stadium. The bishop was lying in state and people filed past the bishop’s coffin. Girls from a vocational school, which had been established by the bishop, were standing in two rows forming a long corridor, which people walked through to get to the coffin. The coffin was placed at the very centre of the stadium under a canopy decorated with flowers. The coffin was white and the bishop was dressed in a white gown. Wearing a bishop’s hat and a stick; he was in his full attire. The coffin was open while people filed past. Security people surrounded the coffin and tried to control the huge number of people who wanted a last glimpse of the bishop. The pastors and religious leaders walked past the coffin. Most were dressed in black suits, some in white and red robes. There were more than a hundred pastors, some stopped and prayed over the coffin. After the pastors, the family defiled, many cried. The widow left the coffin and walked around the stadium with two people holding her arms and with cameras in front of her to film the event. After the family came some religious
leaders: Bishop Addae⁹ (who did the preaching) and Dr. Larbi¹⁰ who later prayed for the family. Thereafter policemen in uniform filed past the coffin and saluted the late bishop. As the last group, the extended family members filed past in front of the coffin. They were probably more than 200 people. Most wore traditional funeral clothes – black and red – but a few wore black and white.

People were sitting in the four sides of the stadium. The pastors were all placed together right in front of the coffin and in front of the stage from which the tributes were being read out. The most prominent church leaders were sitting in the front row in upholstered chairs, whereas the rest were sitting in plastic chairs. A group of female church members were sitting besides the pastors; they all wore uniforms or church gowns. The family and the extended family were sitting at the side. A number of prominent guests attended the funeral, such as the wife of Ghana’s President Kufuor.

When everyone had passed in front of the coffin, the tributes from the printed funeral programme were read out on the stage. When the story of his life was read out, the widow stood besides the coffin, which had been closed. She leant against it and had her arm and hand placed on top. The last to read a tribute was a police officer; a former colleague and friend of the late bishop. After having read the tribute he explained how the burial would proceed, which made people think that the bishop was to be buried on the church premises and everyone started to clap. He quickly corrected himself and said that it was the role of the police to keep order. He added that when they got to the church camp the extended family would be asked where they wished the body to be buried and that this wish should be respected. This incident created tension and confusion to an already tense situation.

After the tributes, a sermon was preached by bishop Samuel R. Addae from Kumasi. He was first introduced and then he came to the pulpit on the stage. Someone was standing behind him, holding his stick while he preached. He preached in Twi with a pastor translating into

⁹ Bishop Addae is the leader of a Bible school (Shiloh Bible Training Centre) and a church (Shiloh United Church) in Kumasi, and moderator of the International Ministerial Council of Great Britain, Ghana chapter (which is a body for black and ethnic minority churches in Great Britain).

¹⁰ Kingsley Larbi is a member of the Church of Pentecost, the founding president of Regent University, and formerly the president of Central University College (created by Mensa Otabil). He is also a scholar who has published on the history of Pentecostalism in Ghana.
English. After the sermon the family walked through the stadium to stand in front of the stage. The extended family stood behind, and then Dr. Larbi was invited to pray for them. He stood on the stage, while the family was standing below him. At the end of the ceremony the police stood around the coffin, which had been covered by a cloth. A trumpet was played and the late bishop was saluted. Family members came and put their hands on the coffin, some prayed while others cried.

Then the police and security people escorted the car transporting the coffin out of the stadium and to the church site (which is not a church building, but a roof construction). This is sometimes referred to as the prayer camp, as this was where the first prayer group started. The pastors walked behind the car. Two big police cars drove in front, and lots of people were in the streets. The girls from the vocational schools marched after the pastors and sang. Some pastors had their hands on the trailer, and one female pastor was crying. The procession went to the church premises and the coffin was taken to the graveyard that was intended for burying the bishop. Bishop Addae prayed over the coffin. The police guarded the place, which was very crowded. The police again saluted and fired their guns. On the funeral video there is a sequence from the ceremony at the church site where the focus is on a chief who walked around the graveyard. He wore traditional clothes and wore gold jewellery. Some were holding umbrellas for him. A man lifted up his clothes and two young boys danced in front of him.

After this ceremony and prayers, the police escorted the coffin to the ancestral village (Taforo), where it was finally buried. Seven senior pastors, six junior pastors and some elders accompanied it. According to the new chairman of the church (and former General Secretary), this took place in good order and the extended family had agreed that there should be no pouring of libation. The church had built a tomb for the bishop in the village, where he was buried.11 According to one source: “The corpse was given a rousing welcome in the village, he12 said it was like a head of state coming, they had lined up, holding his pictures, waving, he said he has never seen something like that before”.13 The widow did not

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11 Interview with Samuel Gyamfi, Accra, 26 September 2005.
12 Bishop Addae here refers to someone from the church leadership he talked with after the funeral. He did not participate in the burial in Taforo himself.
13 Interview with Samuel Addae, Kumasi, 6 September 2005.
go to the village for the burial, as she explained, she found it too painful. Finally the bishop was buried next to his father and sister, as was his wish (according to both the wife and the extended family).

On Sunday the 14th of August, a thanksgiving service took place at the prayer campsite in Sunyani. All the pastors sat on a stage. In front of the stage there was a big picture of the bishop. Church members, family and extended family members and a large group of pastors were the main participants. Most church members were women and the vast majority of the pastors were men. The programme consisted of music, dancing, singing and preaching. On several occasions offerings were collected. All pastors were presented by a speaker and went forward to walk in a circle in front of the participants. The pastors were presented in various groups. There was a special presentation of the pastors of Bethel Prayer Ministry International working abroad and their wives. They were introduced in three groups; first the pastors and wives from North America, second pastors and wives from Europe and last pastors and wives from Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.

![Figure 17. Dancing a thanksgiving service](image)
A female church member prophesised about the future of the church. She stood on stage, while another woman prayed for her. She made the following three prophesies: ‘God will do new things with the church, they should not feel abandoned’; ‘There will be a consultation and they should trust God’; and ‘A warning: they should live the life of righteousness, they should not serve man, because God is alive’. The sermon was delivered by bishop Annor-Yeboah, who is the founder and leader of another neo-Pentecostal/charismatic church (Christian Praise International Centre). He explained in the sermon that he is from the same town as the bishop, so he considered them to be brothers. The message of the sermon focused mainly on the future of the church and the controversy around the place of burial.

**CEREMONY – PORTRAYING AND PERFORMING**

The first part of the analysis discusses the funeral ceremony: how was it performed and how did it contribute to the might and reputation of the late bishop and the church? The way a funeral is performed indicates how the person who has died was perceived by society (Manuh, 1995). Was it an important person, an elite person, someone with whom one would want to be associated? The late bishop can be seen as both a signifier of the church and of his family. The pomp and style of his funeral is both a testimony to his greatness and a testimony of the importance of the church and the family. His importance can be shown in various ways: The number of participants, the attendance of prominent guests, the portrayal of the bishop at the funeral in speech and pictures as well as the decoration and organisation of the event. There were many symbols of success and wealth at the funeral. It was held at a sports stadium, several thousands of people attended as did local and national leaders (political, traditional and religious); a glossy funeral programme (forty four pages) was distributed and sold; many cars followed the procession; there was music and several bands were playing. As in other Ghanaian funerals the body was transformed into a ‘showpiece’ (De Witte, 2003a: 545).

14 The prophecies were made in Twi, and were retold and translated by Samuel Gyamfi (new chairman of the church) in a later conversation.
The way the bishop was portrayed throughout the funeral illustrates his importance and how family and church would want their leader, mentor and ‘spiritual father’ to be remembered. The performance of the ceremony tells us something about how the deceased will continue to influence negotiations of belonging, affiliation and status within church and family. Exploring questions such as ‘Who controls the ceremony?’ ‘Who speaks and preaches?’ ‘How is the biography presented and by whom?’ These questions exemplify and demonstrate how the funeral ceremony serves as a way to position oneself in relation to the late bishop as well as in relation to other prospective leaders and holders of power. The different oral and written texts produced in relation to the ceremony are part of the social relations the actors engage in. Following Barber (2007: 106). These texts are not only ways of representing the bishop and relationships with him; they are also ways of producing these relationships. The performance of the funeral is therefore both an image of the web of relations that are in play in this process, as well as a mode of constructing them. Remembering, belonging and claiming affiliation with the bishop are at stake in this process.

**Portrayal**

Throughout the funeral the bishop was presented as a ‘big man’. The portrayal was performed in various ways: in the funeral programme, in sermons, in pictures, in the decoration, and in the way the participants acted and performed. A funeral programme is a way to portray the dead and is as a notice of death “a way to proclaim success in life” (McCaskie, 2006: 348). The funeral programme was that of an elite person. It was in colours and glossy, contained the programme of the ceremony, the biography, the tributes and various pictures of the bishop throughout his life.
The way the biography of the bishop was pieced together (including elements of educational background, career and the establishment of the church) is a way of highlighting symbols of success, as is often the case in funerals (De Witte, 2003a: 543).

BIOGRAPHY OF RT. REV. DR. PAUL OWUSU TABIRI (PRESIDING BISHOP OF BETHEL PRAYER MINISTRY INTERNATIONAL)

Bishop Paul Kwaku Owusu Tabiri was born on Wednesday 26th October, 1935 at Taforo, a suburb of Dormaa Ahenkro in the Brong Ahafo Region to the late Nana Kwaku Owusu and the late Nana Afia Frimpomaa (alias Afia Abayaa).

He started his elementary education in 1945 at Dormaa Ahenkro and Chiraa and completed in 1955. His uncle Wofa Kwaku Yeboah looked after him during his Primary and Middle School(s) education at Chiraa Roman Catholic School.
After his elementary education, he attended the Commercial School at Berekum in the Brong Ahafo Region and completed successfully in 1959. He enrolled at the Ghana Police Academy and performed brilliantly to pass out as a Police General Constable in the same year (1959). He rose through the ranks to become an Inspector.

He retired from the Ghana Police Service as an Inspector in 1977. He was a God-fearing officer and for that reason his colleagues used to call him Osofo.

He did study privately to excel in his GCE Ordinary Level and Advanced Level while in Police Service. He pursued his education and enrolled at the Glasgow School of Law (UK) and earned a diploma in Criminal Law.

The Bishop later went into business and palm plantation farming in the late 70s and 80s. His hard work paved the way for him to become one time Regional Best Farmer. He accepted Jesus as his Lord and personal Saviour when he was invited to Chair the Annual Harvest of the Church of Pentecost, Dormaa Ahenkro branch, in 1980. Due to his devotion and commitment to the work of God he was made the presiding (Sunyani) Elder of Estates Assembly for 5 years and Regional Deacon in the same year for 12 years in Brong Ahafo Region.

He was the first president and the first Field Representative of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI), Brong Ahafo.


He was officially called into the Ministry of Evangelism in 1991 and was ordained as an Evangelist in 1992. God led him to start Bethel Prayer Ministry International in 1995.

The Ministerial Training College in collaboration with the Shiloh United Ecclesiastical Bible College, London, UK, conferred on Evangelist Paul Owusu Tabiri the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 9th May, 1996. He was consecrated and ordained as Bishop by the Shiloh International Ministerial Fellowship Worldwide on 19th May, 1996.

God has used this faithful Bishop to raise the dead, heal many incurable diseases/sicknesses and to set people who were under the satanic dominion free in Jesus name. It is an indisputable fact that through his Ministry countless souls have been won for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bishop Dr. Paul Owusu Tabiri had received many awards from the Ghana Police Service, the Church of Pentecost, Bethel Prayer Ministry International and non-Governmental organizations due to his dynamic leadership contribution, to the Body of Christ in promoting and uplifting the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and salvation to humankind/mankind. He was unswerving in pursuit of his divine call.

Dr. was obedient to his Master's call so on 2nd June, 2005 at exactly 10:05 am his Maker called him to eternal Glory.

He lived a responsible lifestyle as a father, brother, uncle and Evangelist and Bishop.

He left behind a wife, seven sons, five daughters and many adopted sons and daughters. Our loss is indeed great but we take consolidation from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 which says
“Brother, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.”

We believe therefore that Bishop Dr. Paul Owusu Tabiri is not dead. He is asleep.

Our beloved brother, father and uncle, rest in the perfect peace of

We can distinguish three different aspects of the biography: the social roots, the career path, and his religious life and achievements as a religious person (see Lawuyi (1991) for a discussion of funeral biographies among the Yoruba). The biography of Owusu-Tabiri was an attempt to construct a person with a successful career and a strong religious and spiritual identification. His success as a policeman, farmer, and pastor was emphasised, as well as his personal qualities as a father, husband, mentor and protector. The biography also indicates that the bishop was a successful man before he founded a church; he was an educated man, had risen in the police hierarchy, and had been a successful farmer and entrepreneur. Moreover, he was a righteous and industrious man also before he converted and became a ‘man of God’. These attributes have been essential to building a pastoral career and a church.

The bishop’s spiritual power was referred to in a Christian newspaper. The fact that it rained heavily during the funeral was seen as a sign of God’s recognition of the bishop as well as a sign of his power: “He caused this heavy downpour”. With the title: “Bishop Tabiri shakes heaven”, it was reported that if there is heavy rain on the day of a funeral it is a sign that the person has been a ‘great man’ and should be remembered as such, and “[w]hat added more relish to the memory of the late Bishop was the ‘Sunyani norm (every Wednesday rainfall)’ that was broken (The Gospel Advocate, vol. 1, no. 9, p. 3).

The bishop was not only portrayed and glorified as a religious person (‘man of God’, spiritual father and bishop), but also as a caretaker, a mentor, a father, a husband and a provider; as a complete pastor. Many tributes express the loss of a leader and important ‘man of God’. They have lost not only a strong leader and a good pastor, but for many family members and pastors of the church also a protector, a mentor, a provider, a guide and a physical and spiritual father. He provided many people with work and housing. His role as a caretaker was, for instance, described in the following tribute:

15 The text ends like this in the funeral programme (p. 7-9).
TRIBUTE BY THE PRINTER – MR. OPPONG

“In life parting is more than a painful experience especially when we are bidding farewell to our dearest father, an energetic personality who has greatly influenced our lives, taught us perseverance, giving us sense of direction, hope and self confidence. Nobody would have ever taught that our dear Bishop will be a victim of this very powerful war between death and life so soon ‘Thursday 2nd June 2005’. The day that will forever be remembered in our lives, i.e. when our father Bishop couldn’t say a word to us anymore, “Papa Dayie” I came to know Bishop more, especially when I became his personal printer for most of his jobs to Europe and in Ghana. Bishop was loving and caring at home and always making sure there was enough food on the table for all pastors and members, whenever we went for the usual breaking at Sunyani. Indeed, we shall forever miss his generosity, humility, calmness, love and compassion and above all his counselling as we always expect from him which he never resist or denied us. In his anxiety to save more souls from bondage and captivity, Bishop wrote a book captioned…. ‘THIS IS YOUR BREAKTHROUGH’. Kwabenya Prayer Camp in March 2004 at Accra …In brief this book can be used for studies, counselling, teaching, and as a weapon against your adversaries and for other purpose that glorify the Almighty God. Few copies of this book can be obtained from Challenge Book Shop, Presbyterian Book Shop, etc. Papa Ayekoo! Rest in Perfect Peace.” (Funeral programme, p. 31)

The above tribute by the bishop’s printer emphasises the crucial aspect of texts and literacy when becoming a pastor, as discussed in chapter three. It is worth noticing that here it is not only the text itself that is highlighted, but also the persons involved in producing the text. The author of the tribute refers to himself as the personal printer of the bishop, which can be seen as a desirable position to occupy, as it gives a close relationship to the bishop. Moreover, the use of this term points to the importance attached to publishing texts. It is an example of how the “production of texts is implicated in the production of persons and social relations” (Barber, 2007: 107).

All the tributes were read out by family members, church leaders and former colleagues. This practice is according to McCaskie (2006: 349) both part of an oral tradition and is a sign of aspiration to modernity. His deeds as a pastor, his spiritual power, his family relations and alliances were mentioned, and his success was praised. The emphasis in the biography and the tributes was not on listing ancestors and tracing the royal background of the bishop, but rather on his achievements and virtues as a ‘man of God’, father and leader. The way alliances were expressed was within religious groups (not only the church) and belonging in
kinship groups was not expressed explicitly. As pointed out by McCaskie (2006: 349), the practice of reading out funeral notices and programmes is part of an existing tradition and at the same time it was reinforced with the introduction of Christianity in Asante. At the funeral of bishop Owusu-Tabiri a lot of time was spent on reading out the tributes. This can be seen as a way of performing the portrayal of the bishop as well as the ties the various ‘readers’ might claim to have with the bishop. In this sense, being in control of the funeral ceremony is a combination of deciding the content of the tributes and reading them aloud. As mentioned by McCaskie, one reason for reading out the tributes has been to give access to the information to those funeral participants who are illiterate, as well as reinforcing “the precious sense of privileged elite belonging in the forward march of progress” (McCaskie, 2006: 350). In the case of the funeral discussed in this chapter, all tributes were written and read in English (as a sign of belonging to the elite). Hence reading them out did not help those who had little command of English. A way to make the written word more powerful is to read it out, and reading out the funeral tributes publicly could be seen as being part of that process. At the same time, many of those reading aloud were unfamiliar with the text and with some of the words used. The whole exercise was more a performance than an actual dissemination of information. There was also a certain sentiment of haste to the reading, as it took much longer than the funeral organisers planned. They had to tell people to speed up. Having had the privilege of reading out a tribute and performing it was more important than making the content understandable to the participants.

The bishop was also portrayed on fans, posters and scarves. On the fan there was a picture of the bishop in robe and hat and, behind him, a big crowd of people waving. On the other side of the fan was a picture of the bishop standing side by side with Jesus. These pictures seek to represent the bishop as someone with spiritual power and connections (standing besides Jesus); as a leader (with a large crowd behind him), and someone who has a high position in the hierarchy. Here the culturally accepted criteria for being a successful leader and ‘man of God’ are authority and being in control of other people (or having followers), having access to the spiritual world and having a high position. These criteria all reflect a hierarchical social order in which competition for status is important (Lawuyi, 1991: 234).
Figure 19. Pictures of Owusu-Tabiri on fan
A recent way of portraying and representing is by filming and producing films from funerals. With regard to neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches, Meyer (2005) has analysed religion’s renewed occupation of public space through the use of these new media and, among other things, how these media are used to expose pastors. New media are efficient means of exposure and of spreading one’s message to a large audience. A CD of Owusu-Tabiri’s funeral was produced by the church. It contained both interviews with the widow and some of the church leaders, as well as scenes from the funeral. Most of the scenes are from the funeral ceremony at the stadium and from the thanksgiving service. There were no pictures from the burial in the hometown. In the interviews, the qualities of the bishop are highlighted: “Dr. Bishop Paul Owusu-Tabiri is a man of God, a father, a leader, a pioneer, and above all a man of an unblemished character”. This reflects a trend towards using electronic technologies in funerals, as has been discussed by McCaskie. He writes: “Leading-edge urban funerals today are riots of borrowing and spending, frequently into bankruptcy, in which what counts is recording the public display rather than reading the printed word” (McCaskie, 2006: 363). My observations point more in the direction of the electronic media as a complement to the printed word. Even if several people were filming the funeral and a video was produced and sold afterwards, funeral programmes were still sold, circulated and read out. Pictures of the bishop were also to be found on cars and buildings all around the city.

One could say that the array of mediums to portray the bishop and document the event has expanded. In this particular case the printed funeral programme as well as reading it aloud served as a way to commemorate the bishop and to make a reputation worthy of a bishop. Currently, the use of electronic technology is common within the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches (music and church services are recorded and sold on CDs). More generally, the printed and the electronic media go hand in hand within these churches (De Witte, 2003b). CDs and cassettes are used to disseminate the religious messages and, at the same time, religious books written by church leaders serve as a way to prove the status of a ‘man of God’. Writing and publishing a book is a crucial step in building up one’s image as an important pastor, cf. the printer’s mentioning the bishop’s book in the above tribute. In relation to funerals, McCaskie sees the written word in Asante as “in danger of being buried
under accelerating materialism” (McCaskie, 2006: 363). As argued earlier in the thesis, I would claim that within the neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in Asante as in other parts of southern Ghana the written word is of immense importance in the construction of pastorship, perhaps more than for memory of the death. With regard to reading funeral tributes, the important thing is display and the creation of a portrait of a successful person, more than the reading of the text in itself; it is a form of display of a person’s might, and this criterion of recognition and success rests central even though the means of communicating have changed over time.

Another interesting aspect of the funeral of Owusu-Tabiri is the commercialisation of the funeral. This is not only in the sense of performing and displaying wealth as mentioned by McCaskie (2006: 343) among others. It is moreover in the sense of commercialising aspects of the funeral such as the funeral programme\(^\text{16}\), having offerings, selling gadgets, food and drinks and other goods. Throughout the three days the programme lasted merchandise, such as framed pictures of the bishop, paper fans, t-shirts and headscarves with pictures of the bishop, and beads, was sold. Foods and drinks were sold from stalls. This is unusual in the sense that providing drinks and food is seen as a central part of the funeral ceremony, because it is one of the ways in which a family can give a deceased person a dignified funeral. Providing is a way to show wealth (Arhin, 1994). One could assume that the church, as main organiser of the funeral, was obliged to do it the way it was done, because of the large expenses of the funeral. According to the new general secretary the church spent 200,000,000 cedis (22,400 USD) only to construct the tomb for the bishop at the church site. He moreover explained that the extended family of the bishop did not contribute financially, but had encouraged the church to make a loan to be able to cover the expenses of the funeral. Many people had come to sell goods that were either produced specifically for the funeral (pictures, etc.) or were more normal goods of petty trading (beads, food). This points to the multi-functionality of funerals; it is a ceremony for the dead, but it is moreover a crossroad where people from near and far come together, and therefore also an attractive occasion to bring goods, to trade, and to make money. One could say that public display of

\[^{16}\text{The funeral programme was not distributed for free to the funeral participants as is normally the practice, but could be purchased at the stadium at the price of 5,000 cedis (0.5 USD).}\]
wealth was attached to consumerism and commercialisation at the funeral of bishop Owusu-Tabiri.

_Bonds and alliances_

Prominent guest and state officials visited the funeral. The wife of the president, the first lady Mrs. Theresa Kufuor, attended the funeral and was accompanied by the Senior Minister Mr. Joseph Henry Mensah, the Minister of Energy Professor Mike Ocquaye, the Brong Ahafo Regional Minister Nana Kwadwo Seinti, the Deputy Brong-Ahafo Regional Minister Mr. Ignatius Baffour-Awuah and the Sunyani Municipal Chief Executive Mr. Kwame Twumasi-Awuah (The Ghanaian Times, 15 August 2005). They arrived at the stadium by car and were welcomed by some pastors. The guests greeted the extended family, some religious leaders and the widow and children of the late bishop. They were seated next to the pastors and were then greeted by the most prominent funeral participants. They offered gifts and left shortly after. The wife of the president offered 5 million cedis (560 USD) to the widow, 2 million cedis (224 USD) to the church, one million (112 USD) to the family and 10 crates of assorted drinks. Other prominent guest included traditional chiefs like the Sunyanihene Nana Bosoma Asor Nkrawiri, the Chirahene Barima Mintah-Afari who represented the Omanhene of the Dormaa Traditional Area (Ogyewodin Gyamfi Ampem), the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana Rt. Rev. Yaw Frimpong-Manso, and Dr. Annor-Yeboah, founder and leader of the Christian Praise International Centre (The Daily Graphic, 15 August 2005, p. 20).

The attendance of prominent people can be seen as recognition of the influence of the late bishop and as a way of honouring the dead. The widow explained that the prominent guests attended the funeral to pay their respects to the church and the family and moreover as recognition of the bishop’s work. The daughter, Evelyn, continued: “They knew him and they respected him and he has helped a lot of people, so people came, a lot of people didn’t get invites that they came anyway … Because he was a big person in Ghana”.17

Additionally, the participation and placement of the various groups point to who was in control of the funeral ceremony. The big group of pastors and church leaders were placed in

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the middle, in front of the bishop’s coffin. They occupied a central position and appeared to be the group in control of the ceremony. Both the close family and the extended family of the bishop were seated on the side of the stadium and therefore occupied a less central position. However, they all played their part in the ceremony and we can therefore see these groups as connected in this particular event. This observation brings us back to Gluckman’s discussion about events that connect social groups, because these groups all have an interest in what is going on. Even if some of the participants were separated by, for example, religious affiliation, they were united in both their grief and their claim on the dead bishop. They were united in their relatedness to the bishop.

Furthermore, the funeral can be seen as connecting people in a kind of spiritual field, which has more to do with relations between people and between the living and the dead than with the inner feelings and beliefs of an individual. The bishop’s position and recognition as an important ‘man of God’ with spiritual powers was not limited to the church he founded, nor or to neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches per se. His status as a mediator between man and God was widely recognised and not only the church members would believe in his spiritual powers, but also family members and others. One can see the funeral as a release and continuation of this spiritual power, and as a form of orchestrated spiritual field. Many believed that miracles would happen at the funeral because of the spiritual powers of the death.

Recognition, Reputation and Dignified Funeral

In order to claim the status, power and wealth of the late bishop, the groups involved had to prove and display his importance by giving him a dignified funeral (see Ranger, 2004). The funeral is both a display of the might of the late bishop and an occasion for the family and the church to show their status and wealth. Giving the deceased a dignified funeral can be seen as an investment in the reputation of that person. Claiming links with the deceased is also an investment in one’s own future status. Arhin writes: “...it is the living who seeks glory, or distinction, in their home town, district, region, and beyond, by virtue of the quality and scale of the funeral. Funeral rites are meant to consolidate a status already enjoyed, or to lay claim to a higher one believed to be attained through higher education, successful
business activities or involvement in politics, the three means of social mobility in Ghana” (Arhin, 1994: 317).

The way a funeral ceremony is performed is a way for the relatives and the family of the deceased to make claims. For instance, the way a biography is pieced together, success (in terms of wealth, education, children, and religious life) is an important part of displaying what one is claiming. As will be discussed in the next section, both the church and the close family on the one hand, and the extended family on the other hand, made claims to bury the bishop. The present discussion shows that this way of making claims on the dead is not only a question of possessing the corpse. It is also a question of displaying the success and reputation of the dead person. That is why the dead person is shown to the audience and why burying the person is important. In this way, the audience can then recognise the status that this gives. Here the status laid claim to is derived from education, family, business and pastorship. Pastorship is, as mentioned earlier in the thesis, a way of attaining social mobility that supplements the means listed by Arhin in the above quotation.

THE PLACE OF REST: CONFLICT OVER BURIAL SITE

The funeral of Paul Owusu-Tabiri unfolded at several places: at his residence; at the sports stadium of Sunyani; at the church site and in his hometown. Until the end, it was unclear where the body was to be buried. The church had built a big monument on the church site, where they intended to bury the bishop. However, the extended family of the bishop also claimed the body, and they referred to the tradition that a dead person belongs to the family, when making this claim (Appiah, 1992: 183). There had been negotiations between the church executives and the extended family and, until the end, the church leaders hoped that the family leaders would change their minds. The wife and children of the deceased also pleaded that the bishop should be buried on the church premises, because he was a ‘man of God’ and the founder of the church. The daughter, Evelyn, recalled: “… and mummy and the rest of the family wanted to bury him in Sunyani at the camp, because of what he did, a lot of people that he brought to God, and give him a big memorial centre, but the family didn’t agree”. They were also worried that he would not get ‘a proper’ funeral in the village.
According to the widow the bishop had himself wanted to be buried in his village next to his father and his sister. However, this wish had never been written down and therefore no one could prove it. Even though the widow was aware of this wish, she had insisted that he was buried at the church site because of his status as a church founder and leader. The late bishop’s ‘father’, who had taken over the title as Tafohene after the death of his biological father, insisted that the bishop was buried in his hometown. The bishop’s brother, who was also a chief but not ranking as high as the father and Tafohene, apparently did not agree with the decision to take him to the village, but could not influence the decision on where the late bishop was to be buried.

The national media covered the funeral and the conflict over the site of burial was reported in this way in two national newspapers:

“Whereas the church members and the children wanted the remains to be buried in the special tomb constructed at about c 300 million at the church premises in Sunyani, the extended family insisted on the burial being in his hometown. That did not go down well with the relatives who rushed to the church premises to interrupt the burial service. For about 30 minutes the atmosphere was charged, following a heated argument between the children and the family members” (The Ghanaian Times, 15 August 2005).

“Eventually, the family won the day as the disappointed pastors and members, who did not want to engage in any legal battle released the corpse to the family for burial at Taforo”... “...the family members vehemently opposed the site for the burial and insisted that the body should be sent to Taforo for interment. The atmosphere was then charged as a result of the misunderstanding between the two groups but the large number of police personnel who were at the scene to mourn the late Bishop Owusu Tabiri, who was a former Police Inspector, were deployed to maintain law and order. The bishop’s corpse was then sent to the Bethel Prayer Ministry headquarters in a special glass hearse, where the coffin was put near the specially designed expensive grave for prayers after which a police jeep conveyed it to Taforo for interment. The pastors and elders of the church were so disappointed by the family members’ decision to bury the body of the late bishop at his hometown instead of the prayer
According to bishop Addae from Kumasi, who preached at the funeral ceremony, the
church pleaded with the extended family, who seemed to support the burial site of the
church premises. But they appeared to have changed their minds at the last minute: “a week
to the time then they said they are not going to allow you to bury him”. He referred to an
incident between the wife and the bishop’s family that had deteriorated the conflict: “as soon
as he died, the wife said something. The wife said as for her husband, she will never allow
anyone to go and bury him in the village […] They were provoked […] they said you are a
wife, you have nothing to say, that’s our culture, you have nothing to say at all”. Bishop
Addae explained that “the moment a person dies he belongs to the family. The church has
no authority, no control over the dead body. So as for that, if you joke with it, there will be
war”. According to other people, the wife and her family had accused the bishop’s family of
being witches and therefore they would not allow him to be buried in the village.

In the end the church leaders and the wife lost ground and were forced to give up the idea of
burying the bishop at the church site. In a later conversation I had with the widow she
explained that she had been wrong in insisting on the bishop being buried at the church site.
She explained this not in relation to culture or tradition, but in relation to God. Firstly, it was
the will of her husband to be buried in the village, and that wish originated from God.
Secondly, they would worship the bishop more than God if he was buried at the church
premises. According to her, the way the situation ended was God’s will and they should
respect this. The bishop who did the preaching at the thanksgiving service also put this
argument forward. Bishop Annor-Yeboah explained the situation as in God’s favour. He
said:

“because of what he did I have been wondering why we did not allow him to be
buried on the ground where he started his work, but the Lord doesn’t want him to be
buried on the ground, what you have to think of it is not him who should be
worshipped, but Jesus, if he had been buried here people coming from prayer would

18 Interview with Samuel Richard Addae, Kumasi, 6 September 2005.
worship the ground where he was buried, instead of directing your belief to Jesus your belief will be directed to the ground where the bishop was buried”.19

The argument with regard to the burial site of the bishop was turned upside down, and the more important thing came to be that they should remember to worship God and not the bishop. Giving the bishop a proper burial site became less important. Having the bishop’s grave’s site at the church became, in this explanation, second to their relation to God. This change in argument indicates a certain flexibility in the church’s discourse. The church reveals an ability to adapt to and anticipate the outcome of the situation and avoid direct conflict, but still in a way that matched the overall neo-Pentecostal frame of reference (e.g. ‘the will of God’). There was a time of uncertainty, of accusations, of negotiations. But the result was, within different frames of explanation, acceptable or rather was made acceptable by those involved. This shows that religious ideology is not a mere fixed system of belief, but allows for flexibility when the situation calls for it. In this case, flexibility created and maintained order, and order is important because it is a prerequisite for the continued existence of the church in a situation of instability and power struggle. The church leaders explained the final burial site of the bishop in a meaningful way, although the ‘loss’ of the gravesite also meant losing a symbol of spiritual power and charismatic authority.

This way of trying to make sense of the outcome of the struggle can also be seen as a reflection of the tension between the different ideologies in play. On the one hand the religious ideology strongly emphasises that adherents should worship God and not man; it is repeated time and again by pastors. On the other hand there is a strong tendency of a ‘personality cult’. As has been discussed earlier the churches are organised around one leader, who is an icon of the church. The churches exist partly because of their strong leaders and people’s favour for them. When a leader dies or leaves, there is the risk that the church will fall apart. In this case the church leaders and the widow fought to get the body of the bishop, because he was a ‘big man’. Although they lost the battle, and made sense of this by making reference to the will of God, they were still aware of the fragile situation of the church and the power of attraction a burial site at the church site would have been. The place of burial will be an attractive spiritual site in the future, because of the spiritual powers the bishop was

19 Sermon at thanksgiving service by bishop Annor-Yeboah, Sunyani, 14 August 2005.
believed to have. A person’s power to heal does not vanish because the person is dead. As mentioned before it was believed that miracles would take place at the funeral of the bishop, because he had been such a powerful ‘man of God’.

The bishop is seen as being with God, in heaven, but the place of burial might also be seen as “the most potent mnemonic for the origin of collective identities and the social order” (Parker, 2000: 208). Parker uses this description for the importance of ‘ancestral houses’ in the Gâ communities and the role of Homowo festivals in reasserting the contract between the living and the dead. The burial site was talked about as a way to show respect for the late bishop, but also a place for remembering and worshipping him and thus re-establishing bonds to the late bishop.

One way to understand the struggle over the dead body is that there are interests related to it. The extended family of the bishop had an interest in taking the bishop home. One bishop said that the grave would become a “tourist attraction” and would therefore be an attractive site for the family.20 The burial site of the bishop was seen as a symbol of success and status, and the placement of this in the village would affirm the ties of the community to this ‘big man’. With reference to the conflict over the burial of the Kenyan lawyer S. M. Otieno, Stamp writes that “[t]he burial site has been a significant part of this affirmation [of kinship ties], testifying to the inviolable connection between a lineage and its land” (Stamp, 1991: 833). The burial of S. M. Otieno deserves some attention here. Otieno died in December 1986. After his death an extensive conflict arose about where the burial should take place. On the one side was his widow, a Kikuyu, who wanted to give her husband a Christian burial at their farm in Ngong. On the other side was the brother of S. M. Otieno as well as the head of the Umira Kager clan, that Otieno belonged to. They wanted the body to be buried at the clan home in Siaya. After five months of conflict, court cases and public debate, Otieno was finally buried in his ancestral village; his place of birth (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1989: 133-138; 1992). The struggle over the site of burial was multifaceted, and expressed

20 Interview with Samuel Richard Addae, Kumasi, 6 September 2005.
ongoing debates in Kenyan society about issues such as ethnic identity, nationalism, and gender (Cohen & Odhiambo, 1992).  

In the case of Owusu-Tabiri and the links to his extended family, it is interesting to note that some church leaders complained that the extended family members claimed the bishop after his death, but did not want ‘his name’ when he was alive. The bishop had proposed to build a clinic and a school in his hometown, to be named after him, but the family had refused the idea. Building a school and a clinic would increase his influence in the village, which might not have been in the interests of the traditional leaders. However, burying the body of the bishop is different, in the sense that it would permit the extended family to claim their connection to this ‘big man’ as well as his status and achievements; claims that are about the future more than the past.

Considering the struggle over burial site from a traditional religious perspective, is fruitful, in particular with regard to funerals of ‘big men’ in the past. As has been pointed out by McCaskie (1989: 428) in relation to burying the Asantehene, “the Asante construed the afterlife as an extension or mirror of the prevailing hierarchies of lived experience”, and, most importantly, any neglect or failure in the funeral rites was seen as an offence to the departed Asantehene. According to the new chairman of Bethel Prayer Ministry International, the extended family of the bishop feared that the ghost of the bishop would haunt them if they did not perform well in relation to the funeral and if he was not buried in his hometown. With regard to the Asantehene, McCaskie writes that “[i]f left with an ambiguous and uncertain status, he would withdraw his protective co-operation from society, and instead remonstrate with it for its injurious abandonment and wilful insult of him” (McCaskie, 1989: 428). Also Aborampah (1999: 261) explains how the most important aspect of public mourning was “to secure the happiness of the departed on its journey to the spirit world”, and that the “deceased as a corpse and spirit was perceived as a potential source of danger”. In this way the claim of the extended family can be seen not only as a way to demonstrate their link with bishop and their legitimate right to bury him, but also as a way to secure their spiritual (hence physical) wellbeing. The importance of the place of burial therefore has to be

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21 See also Moore (1999) for an analysis with more focus on the political context; see also Whyte (2005) on the meaning of home.
seen in the light of the importance of the dead for the living or the relation between living and dead.

The conflict over the burial site is also an example of construction and control of a sacred place. It emphasises the power relations involved in the creation of such a place, as well as the interplay of these relations with ideas about spiritual power. However, the conflict is not only about the construction of a sacred place. It is also about the utility and significance of this place in the future.22

SUCCESSION

‘God will do new things with the church, they should not feel abandoned’, ‘There will be a consultation and they should trust God’, and ‘A warning: they should live the life of righteousness, they should never serve man, because God is alive’. These were the prophecies made about the church at the thanksgiving service at the funeral. In relation to prophecies Aborampah (1999: 262) writes that women often play the role of mediums e.g. women in trance at funerals: and ‘[…] through these mediums, an otherwise very difficult family or lineage conflict could be resolved. Akan people trusted such mediums as oracles to resolve difficult cases for which satisfactory adjudication by the living was deemed impossible’. The prophecies, in this case, all relate to the continuation of the church, hence potential conflicts. This section analyses the processes around succession and finding an heir to the bishop.23 The risk of the church falling apart was mentioned specifically in a sermon. But the fragility and the uncertain situation of the church can also be read from the prophecies.

22 A later rumour with regard to the place of rest of the late bishop was that the extended family from the home town wanted the church to take back the corpse of the bishop. They had experienced troubles since the burial and were hearing strange sounds in the village (allegedly the sounds of the ‘breaking sessions’ that the bishop did at the Sunyani prayer camp, of which the aim was to break linkages to evil forces). The church had, however, had no formal request from the family. In 2006 a one year anniversary celebration of the funeral was held both in Accra, Sunyani and Taforo.

23 See also Ukah (2003b) on the death and succession of the founding pastor of The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Nigeria. Death and succession in this case seems to be planned and prepared to a much larger extent than in the case of Owusu-Tabiri, it was however also affected by attempts to take over church leadership by people in the church leadership. Here different sources of authority come into play; the constitution of the church and the word of God (the Bible) (Ukah, 2003b: 75-82).
Bishop Annor-Yeboah, preaching at the thanksgiving service focused on the continuation of the church, said:

“if someone thinks that what has happened will destroy BPMI then the person should look for somewhere else […] I said hallelujah, Bethel shall never fall, the Lord will continue to guide this church, the Lord will not allow his work and this congregation to be astray […] so I want you to understand, those who love this church should keep going, I hope the executive council will be blessed to lead the good work, because this good church should stand”.

The widow explained the problem of having lost the leader: “yes, because it happens, when the leader is not there people tend to go, because most people depend on the pastor or the bishop […] So when he is not there, even in Europe and in other culture, when the leader is not there, people tend to shift, so it is also like that”. The church was in a power vacuum that was about finding an heir and about avoiding loosing members.

At the time of the funeral, the widow had made it known that she was ready to take over the leadership of the church. According to her, she was the obvious inheritor because her husband had founded the church, and they had lead the church together. Moreover, she had been made an apostle and was therefore a priori qualified for the position. She presented herself as a candidate to the executive council but, according to her account, she was told that she would not be elected and that it was better if she did not present herself. According to some, the executives and elders of the church were not interested in her becoming the leader, because that would entail too much family involvement in the church.

The church leaders referred to the constitution of the church, where it was written that a new leader should be elected. The family of the bishop and his wife were highly involved in Bethel Prayer Ministry International and, according to one informant, they tried to control the church as much as possible. However, most of the family members were not members of the executive council and therefore their influence was not at the leadership level but

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more on ‘the ground’ as described by a former pastor of the church. This pastor said that it was the pastors who were in control of church services and of what happens on stage. However, the family controlled ‘from the ground’. This particular pastor explained his exit from the church by saying that it was too much of a family business. The family also tried to control who could get access to the bishop; a lot of people came to his house to see him, and the family members would decide who got an appointment. The widow’s family was also involved in the church. For instance, her brother was, according to one source, the one who was de facto responsible for the church finances. The reason why the church leadership and the church elders were reluctant to have the widow as the new leader of the church could be that family involvement in church affairs might eventually lead to the splitting up of the church since family control was seen as an authoritarian way of leadership.

The widow saw herself as the co-founder and co-leader of the church and had therefore announced, before the funeral, that she was willing to take over the leadership of the church. She understood the process of electing a successor in a different way, and according to her, she was not chosen because she was a woman. Her daughter translated and explained:

“When it came to that daddy is no more, she [the widow] is the co-founder of the church and she was supposed to be promoted as the founder since daddy is not there, because she is a woman she didn’t get that position, they had to chose another person. So if she was supposed to be a man she would have had that, because she is a woman, and women can’t rule men so they wouldn’t allow that. Yeah, and it is not fair, but what can you say, she can’t force it, its God’s work”.25

This refers to the role of female pastors and pastors’ wives as discussed in chapter four.

In the case of Apostle Mrs. Georgina Owusu-Tabiri, her candidature was refused with a combination of cultural arguments and arguments regarding the strong family involvement in the church. Apostle Mrs. Georgina Owusu-Tabiri was/became the leader of the London branch of the church and, moreover, a member of the executive council. At the webpage of

the church she is titled apostle and co-founder. In this way her importance was recognised, even though she did not become the leader of the church. At the death of Benson Idahosa from Nigeria, his wife also attempted to take control with the church and managed to do so. It was expected that one of the associate pastors would take over, but “à la grande surprise de tous et à la consternation de beaucoup, c'est son épouse qui a repris le contrôle de la Mission” (Marshall-Fratani, 2001: 27).

After the funeral, the church leaders had a meeting in Kumasi where they discussed the succession to the bishop. They invited bishop Addae to the meeting to take his advice on the matter. Addae explained “they have 13 leaders and they will pray and then nominate three and then they will present the three people to the council”. One of the other obvious candidates was the general secretary of the church. However, he died one month after the funeral of bishop Owusu-Tabiri. After that a former General Secretary (Apostle Samuel Gyamfi) became the acting chairman until an election was held and he was elected new chairman of the church. Samuel Gyamfi comes, like the late bishop, from Dormaa Ahenkro in the Brong Ahafo region. He became a pastor in 1989, and joined Bethel Prayer Ministry International in 1997.

One way to see the funeral ceremony and the conflicts surrounding it is as attempts to claim the spiritual power of the bishop as well as his wealth. In this regard, Arhin (1994: 317) writes: “What is emphasised today is the claim to a share in the estate of a dying man who has, or is believed to have, property”. In this case the church can be seen as property or as representing wealth, and the various parties at the funeral sought to claim their share of what the late bishop created. This links the importance of the funeral ceremony to the question of succession. “The old rule remains that those who share the funeral debt, ayi ase ka, have the rights to the estate of the deceased” (Arhin, 1994: 317).

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26 http://bethelprayerministryint.com
DISCUSSION

By studying funerals we cannot only throw light on debates about Christianity in Africa or Ghana, but also on forms and expressions of negotiations of power and authority (Ranger, 2004). Funerals can be seen as “important public spaces in which mutual connections are revealed and acted upon and also where difference may be negotiated” (Durham & Klaits, 2002: 777).

It has been argued in this chapter that the struggle over the burial site is about claiming the status, wealth and power of the bishop. The funeral is the ultimate occasion to legitimate or to prove the might and greatness of the bishop. When successful, this adds to the benefits that can be derived from being associated with the late bishop. Therefore it is in the interest of all those claiming the bishop to portray him as ‘big’ and powerful and to organise a ceremony that is appropriate for an elite person. It was explained by the church leaders that the size of the funeral and the monument built at the church site for his burial was done in order to pay him the last respects. On first sight, this might seem to be actions mainly related to a person who is dead. But if we understand the respect one needs to pay to a deceased person in relation to what that respect means for the reputation of the person, it also points to the future, in the sense that the success of the ceremony also is a final confirmation of the success of the person. Those who claim the body will, in various ways, benefit from this success. In the article referred to earlier on the death of a millionaire, Gilbert has a similar discussion. The article deals with religious conversion and discusses this in relation to the death of a wealthy man. She describes the man as contradictory, because of his affiliations with both Christian and traditional religious institutions and “[h]is funeral was the arena for resolving the inherent contradictions” (1988: 307). Her main point is that conversion is multifaceted, but she also uses the case of the funeral to show that it is at this event that the conversion as well as other affiliations were validated: “Conversion here was not only a question of one individual’s belief; the community had to accept him, and it was a political issue as well because he was rich” (1988: 308). The case is interesting for my discussion because it emphasises the importance of seeing a funeral as an arena for negotiating affiliations and making claims to various resources. It also points to the importance of other merits of a big pastor, such as success in business: success that makes him a complete pastor.
As discussed earlier, the bishop was hailed not only as a religious person, but also as a policeman, businessman and father. I would suggest that the funeral is as much a funeral of an elite person as it is the funeral of a neo-Pentecostal pastor. This contention points back to the idea developed earlier in the thesis of the complete pastor. The way the funeral was performed, and the way the bishop was portrayed, alluded to his status as a ‘big man’; a status that comprised several roles. He played religious, social, familial, moral and political roles. He was not only a religious leader in terms of being a mediator between the spiritual and the material world. He built himself up by taking on these convergent roles. Moreover, the way pastors legitimise their standing and authority is not only through the church but, additionally, through other platforms.

Pastors should not only be studied in terms of their relatedness to the church and other religious persons, but also through their relations to family and kin. In the case of bishop Owusu-Tabiri, there are no clear boundaries between family and church. Many family members were involved in the church, with different functions. Many depended on the late bishop. Owusu-Tabiri had built up his status and position, not only through his achievements as a church founder and leader, but also through the relations of dependency that he had with family members, former colleges, and other religious people. It seems as if the relations of dependency are more distinct because Owusu-Tabiri was an elite pastor than was the case with the middle-level pastors discussed earlier in the thesis. The attendance of a large number of people, of which not all where church members or pastors, indicates that he was involved with people far beyond the ‘limits’ of the church.

In the case discussed in this chapter, the funeral is a contestation of political and spiritual power, in terms of control and access over an international religious institution, a person and the divine power he had access to. With regard to the ceremony, it was the church leaders that were in charge and in control and therefore also had access to portraying the late bishop. The extended family did not play a very central part. They were present, filed past the coffin and were prayed for. One can see struggle over sites as opposed to consensus on performance: When it comes to the burial site, the claim of the ‘traditionalists’ (among the extended family members) is stronger than that of the church. But when deciding how the funeral should be performed, the religious affiliation of the bishop was respected. There was
no disagreement as to whether he should have the funeral of a ‘big man’. His status, wealth and power were recognised and brought into play on several platforms at the same time.

This case is about the politics and drama around being and consolidating a position as a big pastor exemplified by a funeral. It highlights the role played by family and kin, as well as by text and performance in this process of confirmation. On the one hand, the case is about death, burial, ceremony and performance. On the other hand, it is about the role of family and kin in neo-Pentecostalism. The argument is that families are still immensely important when building up careers, and that churches at times can be seen as a form of family business. Despite the claimed break with the social surroundings within neo-Pentecostal discourse, and the ‘modern’ view on family relations, the extended family or the ‘traditional way’ won the battle on where to bury the bishop and the church leaders on the issue of succession. Finally, the chapter illustrates the links between the a priori distinct groups participating in the funeral. They were united in their participation in this event and by their recognition of the grandness of bishop Owusu-Tabiri.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

This thesis is a commentary on the trajectories of religious and social change in Asante in Ghana. It illustrates and discusses new ways of building wealth, status and power exemplified by neo-Pentecostal pastors. The thesis is, moreover, a contribution to studies of Pentecostalism in Africa and in particular to debates on the relation between religion and politics within this strand of Christianity. The analysis of the thesis furthermore adds to broader debates on the relation between religion, society and politics. The focus of the thesis has primarily been on up-coming or middle-level pastors in neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches in and around Kumasi. The central question, which the thesis set out to explore was, how and why pastors become pastors, and what social, political and economic processes are involved in becoming a pastor.

The thesis fills in gaps in the existing literature within this field in two ways. It approaches pastorship from the level of up-coming pastors. Most of the literature on Pentecostalism in Africa has had a focus on the most prominent pastors in the biggest churches in the big cities. As I describe in the introduction of the thesis, I was puzzled about the ‘small’ pastors operating in classrooms, storerooms and garages, and their attempts to become ‘small big men’. I argue throughout the thesis that looking at the social influence and role of Pentecostalism and pastors from this level adds to the understanding we have of these churches. This thesis has showed that pastors represent an up-coming middle-level social grouping, characterised by achieved status and entrepreneurship. It has also showed that pastors are much more linked up to other social networks than that of the church than has hitherto been recognised in the literature. Therefore the analysis of the significance of neo-Pentecostalism in Ghana can not solely be approached as an analysis of a church or a religious movement. Such an analysis should integrate the wider social setting and see the role of for instance pastors as something that matters and makes sense for more people than those related to the church. Moreover, this thesis has adopted a broad approach to the study of religion and politics in the sense that it has drawn on vernacular concepts and ideas about status, wealth and power. In this way I have tried to understand issues brought up within a
neo-Pentecostal institutional setting and in the religious rhetoric in relation to broader debates and tensions in society. Bringing in and discussing the centrality of these concepts adds to the understanding of how a religious movement arises from and gets integrated in a society. The point is that neo-Pentecostalism cannot be understood without understanding what it is surrounded by in time and space.

The study is in particular a contribution to the literature on Pentecostalism in Africa. Pastors have mainly achieved attention from an elite perspective and as icons of success. The social processes involved in becoming a pastor have not received much attention. Focusing on these processes permits to understand some of the social mechanisms at play when becoming a pastor, mechanisms that are relevant not only for this category of figures of authority, but more broadly for understanding social change in Africa under neo-liberal conditions. I have argued that the new pastors of Ghana’s neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches are re-inventing the role of religious leaders. On the one hand, they are performing as traditional religious leaders, providing access to spiritual power, prosperity and protection against evil. On the other hand, they are also performing in ways that draw on a repertoire of forms of political leadership: providing protection and recognition. Approaching the making of pastoral careers as a process of becoming ‘bigger’ is a way to open up the study of Pentecostalism in Africa. It offers a perspective that includes not only the religious sphere, but also takes into account the wider social surroundings of a pastor, and views social relations as ways to access resources such as spiritual power, credibility, a congregation and networks of pastors at a national and international level. This study demonstrates how religion and politics intertwine in these processes and permits us to ‘normalise’ the study of African Pentecostalism by focusing on middle-level actors and their interconnections and dependence on their social surroundings.

In a broader perspective the study discusses social, political and economic aspirations and ways of becoming in Africa. I look at social change through the lens of religion; not at religion (as institutions and ideas) in itself, but on how religious institutions and ideas interact and overlap with other institutions and ideas. Continuity and change in ideas around status, wealth and power have been central in this study. So has the ways in which religious ideas and doctrine are in affinity with people’s interests and resonate with the past. I have
argued that by looking at this particular group of religious leaders one is able to highlight and get insights into the relationship between religion and politics in a way that applies more broadly. By trying to piece together stories of pastoral careers and progress and by reorganising categories from the perspective of middle-level pastors, religion is perceived of as a specific translation of the mundane. In this way, religion is not defined within the dichotomy of ‘substance’ and ‘function’ or ‘ideas’ and ‘institutions’. Trying to understand how religious careers unfold and are politicised by people adds to the understanding of how religion interacts with politics in a context such as that of southern Ghana. It gives insight into the room for manoeuvre which neo-Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity provides and insights into how neo-Pentecostal pastors advance individually by engaging in a sort of religious apprenticeship and entrepreneurship. The new religious platform in Ghana provides the opportunities for reinventing and occupying these social roles in ways, which build on traditional religious figures and at the same time brings in new understandings of the role of a religious leader.

Pastorship as a way to become a ‘big man’ or a ‘small big man’

I have approached the engagement in pastorship as a process of becoming ‘big’. In doing this I have drawn on the historical Asante figures of ɔbirɛmpɔn and ɔkɔmfɔ, as well as later groups of rising young men (such as the akonkofɔ). I have highlighted the importance of history when understanding the significance of this current phenomenon. I argue that neo-Pentecostal pastors should be understood as part of a longer historical trajectory of changing significations of wealth and ɔbirɛmpɔn. Pastors represent a certain understanding of wealth that is part of a wider global religious movement, but they at the same time relate to the existing conceptions about being a ‘big man’ and to the long relationship between wealth, status and power that has existed in Asante. In chapter three I have elaborated on the concept of wealth in relation to the neo-Pentecostal discourse and pastors’ practices. I argued that wealth should not only be understood as money. Approaching wealth in a way that also takes in its shifting meaning over time, allows us to see that wealth in a neo-Pentecostal setting is more than money. Building up a powerful position as a pastor also requires wealth in terms of for instance control over people. Moreover, in Kumasi becoming ‘big’ is a question of finding a balance between accumulating for the community and for oneself. Hence wealth is to be understood within its historical context and not only from a
modern, neo-liberal perspective. Accumulating wealth and achieving power and status is not only a question of personal interests or rational calculation. It is a question of having the loyalty and attention of people. The reciprocity is not a rigid patron-client relation (jff. chapter five). Agency is highlighted through a processual perspective. It is not pastors as individuals, but pastors as tied up in social relations. The pastors piece together and add on to build up their careers.

Becoming a pastor is seen as a career trajectory and as a way to ascend social hierarchies. But it is more than that. Pastors also become leadership figures and become new versions of ‘big men’. The spiritual dimension to this role is of paramount importance. Pastors act as mediators, brokers, gate-keepers, but add a spiritual dimension to that role. Their sphere of influence is enlarged because it also involves access to divine powers. This enables pastors to provide protection and to be sources of success.

Pastors and multiple platforms
Pastors operate in and between different platforms, and hence become ‘big’ in more than just the church. As they build up their positions as pastors they also obtain and build status, wealth and power in other platforms. Hence, becoming a pastor is seen as a way of ascending hierarchies and exercising multiple forms of authority. Religious leadership translates into other types of leadership. There is a fluidity and informality about these leadership positions that make them different from former positions of power.

The neo-Pentecostal/charismatic churches represent new platforms to operate from when seeking to become bigger. The churches overlap and in some cases replace other social groups. They represent new circuits of redistribution and accumulation of wealth that permit aspiring pastors to build themselves up as a ‘big man’. Pastors challenge some power hierarchies, but do not question the fundamental idea of being an ɔbironpon.

Pastors and (the study of) social change
One of the opening remarks of the thesis was that new religious movements, such as the neo-Pentecostal movement, are not necessarily responses to modernity. I have argued that this religious movement can not be seen as being a direct response to a specific period in

233
time. That said, neo-Pentecostal pastors not only reproduce the past, but reflect and engage in processes of social change. As has been showed in the thesis becoming a pastor requires being innovative and entrepreneurial. Neo-Pentecostal pastors as an emerging group feed in and take part in debates and struggles over status, wealth and power. The social field is today highly instable and changeable and therefore virtues such as entrepreneurship and innovation become central. The religious platform is open and attractive, because it represents more opportunities – opportunities of ascension both politically, socially and economically. The political and economic room for manoeuvre within the religious platform has increased.

Another central point of this study is that one-sided analytical approaches are not satisfactory in explaining and understanding the phenomenon of new religious movements. We cannot understand the processes at stake merely as classic patron-client relations involved in when becoming a ‘big man’, nor are we dealing with a question of only religious experience or church building. It is the conjuncture between material conditions, inherited ideas on figures of authority, as well as a new religious world view or doctrine that is in play.

Religion and pastors today play a bigger public role. At the same time the political field is larger and more open. One could moreover claim that the religious office has become less confined to dealing with matters of access to the spiritual world, and is more directly and indirectly involved in social and political issues (in a broad sense of the term). Finally, there are signs that there are more similarities between political office and religious office now than before. There has been an opening up of the religious office, which constitute a new form in which politics can be performed and carried out. There are several ways in which one can achieve status, wealth and power and neo-Pentecostal pastorship has become one of them. This path is attractive, both because it is relatively more accessible and moreover because the position is recognised in society and not only within the boundaries of the church.

In sum, Neo-Pentecostal pastors are embedded and enmeshed in both traditional structures and in broader processes of social change. They are not mere reflections hereof, but are constitutive for these processes.
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APPENDIX A

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

All interviews in Copenhagen, Accra and London are conducted by Karen Lauterbach. Interviews in Kumasi and Techiman are conducted with the assistance of Michael Poku-Boansii and Munirat Tawiah. Some interviews have been recorded on tape and others have been noted either during or after the interview/conversation. The majority of the taped interviews have been transcribed in full. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and two hours. Michael Poku-Boansii and Munirat Tawiah have assisted with translation from Twi to English.

Copenhagen:
1. Acheampong, Dora (wife of Tony Acheampong): 17 January 2005
3. Acheampong, Tony: 24 June 2005
5. Akoto-Banfo, Yaw (church member/semi-leader): 13 June 2005
6. Ansaah, Francis (pastor): 1 August 2004
7. Appiah, Emmanuel Kwame (pastor): 10 November 2004
8. Ateko, Kofi Obam (chief of Ewe association): 28 June 2004
12. Commey, James: 26 November 2004
13. Gyamfi, Ransford (church member): 1 July 2005
15. Oduro, Chris Akwasi (pastor): 2 November 2004
17. Oduro, Chris Akwasi: 28 June 2005
18. Owusu-Ansah, Sylvia (pastor): 14 April 2005
19. Paa Kofi (church member and musician): 8 July 2004

London:

Accra:
22. Budu, Clifford (pastor): 5 December 2004
23. Dodoo, Daniel (church member in DK): 8 December 2004
24. Dordzie, Emmanuel K. (pastor & international missions director): 5 August 2005
25. Frimpong, Hansel (apostle): 7 August 2005
27. Jones, Amanor Darkwa (pastor & scholar): 8 December 2004
29. Larbi, Kingsley E. (Rev. Prof.): 9 August 2005
30. Laryea, Eleanor (sister to no. 5): 9 August 2005
32. Omenyo, Ceraphim (scholar): 28 September 2005
33. Osei Owusu (pastor): 26 September 2005
34. Owusu, Sampson & Christiana (driver of bishop Owusu-Tabiri and wife): 24 September 2005

**Tema:**
35. Kingsley, Anie (brother in DK): 16 December 2004

**Kumasi:**
36. Ababio, Rosemary (church member, sister in DK): 7 February 2005
37. Abu, James (pastor): 13 December 2004
38. Abu, James: 13 February 2005
39. Ackuah, Mimi (church member): 6 September 2005
41. Adomako, Boadicea Nanaserwa (pastor): 23 August 2005
42. Adubofour, Samuel Brefo (scholar): 7 September 2005
43. Adubofour, Samuel Brefo: 12 September 2005
44. Afriifa, Francis (pastor): 17 February 2005
45. Afriifa, Francis: 5 September 2005
46. Afriifa, Francis: 13 September 2005
47. Agamah, Seraphim (pastor/mission director): 8 September 2005
48. Amoah, Emmanuel (pastor): 23 August 2005
49. Amoako, Samuel (church member: 18 December 2005*
50. Ampofo, Simon (pastor): 13 December 2004
51. Ampofo, Simon: 15 February 2005
52. Asamoah, Charles K. (pastor): 23 February 2005
53. Asare, Nicholas (bishop): 5 September 2005
54. Asenso, Michael (pastor): 23 August 2005
55. Bediako, Akwasi (parent to no. 9): 24 August 2005
56. Bediako, Akosua Saamaa (parent to no. 9): 24 August 2005
57. Boabye, Kingsley (elder): 14 February 2005
58. Boateng-Sarpong, Sam (pastor): 26 August 2005
59. Darko Kabea, Daniel (pastor): 12 September 2005
60. Duku, Peter (church elder): 20 February 2005
61. Forkuo, Steven (church member and friend to no. 7): 8 February 2005
63. Kensah, Afua (cousin to no. 5): 25 August 2005
64. Kuffour, Seth Osei (pastor): 24 August 2005
65. Lawson, Elizabeth (secretary of no. 66): 26 August 2005
66. Mensah Bonsu, Sandra (her sister is church member in 49’s church and lives in Norway): 24 February 2005
67. Mensah Afriyie, Gloria (pastor): 1 September 2005
68. Nana Dwamena Akenten II (Apenkrahene/chief of Apenkra): 19 September 2005
69. Obeng, Ransford (pastor): 12 September 2005
70. Osei, Victor (pastor): 3 February 2005
71. Osei, Victor: 20 August 2005
73. Owusu, Kofi (Bamuhene of Apenkra): 19 September 2005
74. Owusu-Ansah, Edward (pastor/prophet): 13 December 2004
75. Owusu-Ansah, Edward; Addai, Felix & co. (pastors): 13 February 2005
76. Owusu-Ansah, Edward & co.: 15 September 2005
77. Owusu-Ansah, Emmanuel (pastor): 15 August 2005
78. Tawiah, Manfred (pastor): 12 September 2005
79. Focus group discussion with pastors at Charisma Bible College: 5 September 2005

Techiman:
80. Abrafie Koto, Nana Afia (queenmother of Techiman): 30 August 2005
81. Appiah, Elizabeth (wife of no. 7/81): 11 February 2005
82. Appiah, Emmanuel Kwame (evangelist, same as no. 7): 30 August 2005
83. Yeboah, Akosua (mother of 7/81): 11 February 2005
84. Konadu, Benjamin (pastor): 29 August 2005
85. Focus group discussion with pastors: 11 February 2005
86. Frempong Manso, Joseph (pastor): 29 August 2005
87. Owusu Ameyaw, David (pastor): 9 September 2005

*Interview conducted by Munirat Tawiah.

PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH SERVICES AND MEETINGS

Copenhagen:
1. Alive Bible Congregation: 24 October 2004
2. Alive Bible Congregation: 9 January 2005
3. Alive Bible Congregation: 16 January 2005
4. Alive Bible Congregation: 27 March 2005
5. International City Baptist Church: 15 May 2005
6. International City Baptist Church: 19 June 2005

Accra:
7. Harvest Chapel International, Head branch: 7 December 2004
8. Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFM), Jericho Hour: 9 December 2004
9. Royalhouse Chapel: 5 December 2004
10. Word Miracle Church International, Head branch: 5 August 2005

Kumasi:
12. Overcomers Charismatic Church, Old Tafo: 27 February 2005
13. Apostels Continuation Church: 12 December 2004
15. Alive Bible Congregation, Kwadaso: 13 February 2005
17. Alive Bible Congregation, Kwadaso: 11 September 2005
18. Alive Bible Congregation, Kwadaso: 18 September 2005
19. Calvary Charismatic Centre: 4 September 2005
20. Calvary Charismatic Centre: 11 September 2005
21. Calvary Charismatic Centre: 18 September 2005
22. Family Chapel International, Father’s Cathedral: 6 February 2005
23. Family Chapel International, Father’s Cathedral: 21 February 2005
25. Family Chapel International, Father’s Cathedral: 7 September 2005
27. Family Chapel International - Youth meeting on marriage, Silicon hotel: 20 August 2005
28. Fountain Life International Christian Centre, Bremang, prayer meeting: 5 September 2005
29. Fountain Life International Christian Centre, Bremang, prayer meeting: 13 September 2005
31. Resurrected Faith in Christ Ministries, Daban, prayer meeting: 16 September 2005

Sunyani:
32. Bethel Prayer Ministry International: 12, 13 & 14 August 2005 (funeral of Bishop Paul Owusu Tabiri)

**AUDIO-VISUAL SOURCES**

Video from Sunday service at ABC-Copenhagen, April 2005
Video from Sunday service at ABC-Kumasi, December 2004
VCD from Family Chapel International, music event
VCD from Family Chapel International, Sunday service 13 February 2005
VCD from Family Chapel International, programme, February 2005
VCD from funeral of Bishop Owusu Tabiri, Bethel Prayer Ministry International, 12-14 August 2005
Cassette with Rev. Sylvia Owusu-Ansah: “Pouring out for breakthrough”

Kwame Owusu Danquah has assisted with the translation of church service videos.

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Paul Owusu-Tabiri: “This Is Your Breakthrough”, 2004
The Gospel Advocate
Constitution from Word Miracle Church International, Accra.
APPENDIX B

Questions for pastors

An example of questions I asked pastors during interviews

1. Please introduce yourself and your family background (name, age, mother, father and brothers and sisters, lineage)

2. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

3. When did you become a born-again? What religious experiences entailed (ex. healing, deliverance, breaking of curses)?

4. How did you become a pastor and when?

5. Why did you become a pastor and what was the motivation, inspiration and expectations (in terms of career)? Who was/is your role model as a pastor?

6. Who helped you to become a pastor?

7. Please describe the role of a pastor? What is his work in terms of pastoral care, preaching, evangelising, healing & deliverance? What are your obligations towards your senior pastor, other pastors and church members? Is the pastor a public figure? How?

8. What are your relations to other pastors (friend, leader, colleague, family)?

9. What is your role within your family? Has it changed since you became a pastor and in what ways?
10. What is your role or position within the extended family (relation to head of family and/or chief), in relation to your home-town? What do you see as your obligations and loyalty towards your extended family?

11. Have you been living or travelling abroad? If yes, where and was it in relation with your work as a pastor and how did it come about?

12. Please describe what you did when travelling or living abroad (in terms of pastoral work)

13. What was your contact to Ghanaians the place you visited?

14. What was your contact back to Ghana (home church, head branch, senior pastor, or any particular person in the church, family (what members), friends and what kind of contact was it)?

15. What did you do when you came back? What position did you occupy in the church (same or new)? Has your stay abroad been a promotion? Why and in what ways? Has it changed your view on yourself as a pastor?

16. Are any of your family members living abroad?
APPENDIX C

Questions for charismatic / Pentecostal churches in Kumasi

1. Foundation of church:
   a - When was the church founded and by whom?
   b - What was the motivation for founding the church?
   c - Please describe the different phases of the church’ development

2. Size and location:
   a - What is the membership number?
   b - What is the composition in the church membership in terms of gender, age and educational background?
   c - How many people attend a Sunday service at HQ in average?
   d - How do you become a member of the church?
   e - Where is the HQ located?

3. Organisation of church:
   a - What is the organizational structure of the church?
   b - How many branches and where are they situated?
   c - What are the activities of the church?

4. Church branches abroad:
   a - How and why were these branches established?
   b - How are branches staying in touch with head quarter? And what kind of relations does the head quater have with pastors abroad?
   c - What is the relation between head quarter and branches in terms of responsibility, authority, finance, inter-pastoral relations, communication, travel?
   d - Are pastors recruited abroad or send out from Ghana?

5. Church members moving abroad:
a - What is the approximate number of church members who have moved abroad?
b - What are the main destinations?
c - What are the most common reasons for moving / traveling?
d - What is the role of the church when a member is moving abroad?
e - Does the church assist the member when traveling in any ways?
f - Does the church provide contact to pastors in the country of destination?
g – Would the church advice members in religious life when traveling (e.g. membership of church in new country etc.)?
h - How is church membership/religion influencing the relation people have to their extended family or home area?

6. Staying in touch:

a – How does the church stay in touch with members moving abroad? And how?
b – Are members expected to report back and send goods, money etc to their ‘home’ church?
c – Would the church / the pastor advice the church member living abroad in matters concerning family, finance, marriage, education? And how does this take place? And is it for a particular group of members?
d – What is the role of the church / the pastor in important events in the family of the member who has moved abroad? (Like for instance participating in funerals, weddings, engagements, inheritance negotiations)

7. Other transnational relations:

a – Is the church linked to other churches inside and outside Ghana?
b – What is the nature of this relationship?
c – What kind of activities are pastors participating in outside Ghana?

Thank you for participating.
Questionnaire

The role of Churches in Ghana

Karen Lauterbach
International Development Studies
Roskilde University

Date: ____________________
Interviewer: _______________
1. How did you become a member of this church? And why is it this particular church?

2. What other associations (cultural, home-town etc.) are you member of?

3. Is the church in your opinion equally good for men and for women? Why?

4. Is the church in your opinion equally good for young people and people from older generations? Why?
5. What is the role of the pastor in the church? How is the pastor different from a chief or a head of family?

6. What is the role of churches for the future of Ghana?
7. How are churches in Ghana different from church branches abroad? Does
the church give access to living abroad and is the church important for
people living abroad? Why and in what ways?

8. Is it normal to change from one church to another during one’s life and if
one is moving abroad? Why?
**APPENDIX E**

Ohwim Pastoral Seminar programme

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