



Foreword

by Prof. Edward S. Ayensu

Since the beginning of human history, every civilisation has recorded its activities and progress by establishing national museums and monuments. In fact, when humans lived in caves during the Old Stone Age or Palaeolithic Period, they used the walls of those caves to document both their history and their impressions of events that they did not want to forget.

In addition, our ancestors respected and revered the natural history in and around their areas of habitation.

Fast forward: there is evidence that there were human settlements dating back 30,000 to 40,000 years along the coast of what is now Ghana. It is also documented that,

in around the 12th century, the ancestors of present-day Ghanaians migrated from parts of the northern areas of what is Ghana today. All of this occurred at the time of the fall of the once-prosperous kingdom, the Ghana Empire, which included parts of present-day Mali, Mauritania and Senegal.

The very first Europeans in Ghana were the Portuguese, arriving in the 15th century. They were very interested in the treasures of the place, particularly gold. To establish their imprint, the Portuguese built magnificent forts and castles as a defence against other European seafarers. Although the search for gold was foremost on their minds, they soon realised that slave trading was a more lucrative business. This infamous trade became so attractive that, by the late 16th century, the Dutch, British, Danes and Germans had also become major participants. For almost 250 years, Europeans competed in the slave trade industry and, by the end of the slave trade era the Europeans had constructed some 60 castles, forts and lodges along the

coast of Ghana.

The significance of these edifices in Ghana's museums and monuments history is legendary. The British took over the forts and castles and signed various treaties with the chiefs along the coast. Realising that the Ashantis were warlike and very determined people, the British attacked Kumasi, the capital of the Ashantis and even wanted to confiscate the Golden Stool—which is believed to represent the “soul” of the Ashanti people. After the Ashanti War, the British turned the Gold Coast into a British colony and helped themselves to a substantial portion of the country's antiquities.

The history of Ghana's Museums and Monuments Board has been chronicled by Nana Oforiatta Ayim, the director of the ANO Institute of Arts and Knowledge, and her excellent contributors. Most significantly, their essays indicate the need for the country to modernise and expand the activities of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board with the

establishment of a new act, entitled National Museum Board. It is important to note that the National Museum Board has a pivotal role to play in the social and economic development of the country.

During the inauguration of the President's 12-member Ghana Museums and Monuments Committee on 29 October 2020, the Honourable Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Mrs. Barbara Oteng Gyasi, and the Chairman of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, Mr. Kwame Sowu, jointly echoed President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's expectations that his new Committee will assist the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture and the Museums and Monuments Board to ensure the preservation of Ghana's heritage, especially since the President believes that the "heritage, arts and culture are the very roots of the nation's psyche".

In almost all developed and rapidly developing countries, tourism represents a major source of foreign revenue. In consultation with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, the National Museum Board can capitalise on the national heritage of Ghana, including its forts and castles, festivals, ecotourism, arts and crafts, and more. Ghana's forts and castles, for example, represent a set of historical monuments that are considered to be a kind of mecca for people of African descent. The Elmina and Cape Coast Castles are the darlings of African-American tourists.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture is currently setting up new museums, such as the Mampong Cocoa Museum, the Bonwire Kente Museum and the impending Gold Museum to be established in the Western Region, each of which is

a meaningful addition to Ghana's museum complex.

Ghana is a country that celebrates numerous festivals, which tourists could visit throughout the year. The Museum Board has an unusual opportunity to help the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture to plan and publicise tourist trips to Ghana to help visitors enjoy the festivals that the various regions of the country offer.

Ecotourism is also attracting new kinds of tourists, who are focusing on the natural environment. Ghana has many nature-based sites such as Mole National Park, Kakum Nature Park, the Shai Hills Game Production Reserve, Paga Crocodile Pond in the Upper Region—and the less friendly crocodiles in the Western Region, Boti Falls, Wli and Tagbo Falls. Lake Bosomtwe, a sacred crater lake some 32km south-west of Kumasi, is very well-known. There are other interesting and educational sites that need a facelift. The Tong Whispering Rocks is a fantastic rock formation, which is seemingly endless in its stretch. There are human settlements sporadically dispersed within the rocks. And, in addition to the Aburi Botanical Gardens situated in the Akwapim Mountains, there are almost 280 forest reserves in Ghana. These provide a variety of places to visit.

The arts and crafts in Ghana are widely celebrated. Tourists collect the various handicrafts as gifts: perhaps the most popular materials the tourists seek are the gold jewellery that is developed and produced by artisanal goldsmiths and, of course, the famous kente fabrics the outstanding designs of which are internationally renowned. Ghana's food items are also becoming very popular. Many of the tourists are eager to taste various dishes that locals only eat

occasionally.

The President's Ghana Museums and Monuments Committee is poised to suggest new and innovative ways of establishing the museums of the 2020s. The contents of this book are by no means a definitive treatise on modern museology. However, these essays are a reflection of the enthusiasm of the committee members who have been assigned to serve the nation.