

## The Adu Boahen Memorial Library and Archive

### Department of History, University of Ghana

Established in 1948, History was a founding department of the University of Ghana (then the University College of the Gold Coast). In 1967 Albert Kwadwo Adu Boahen (1932-2006) became the first African to head the department, a position he would hold until 1975. Boahen had been teaching at the University of Ghana since 1959, the year he became the first Ghanaian to receive a Ph.D. in African History from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS, University of London) at the age of 27. This marked the beginning of his remarkable career as one of the most renowned scholars of African history, for which he was posthumously awarded the Order of the Star of Ghana in 2006.

The year before his inauguration as Head of the Department of History, Boahen published one of his most well-known texts, *Topics in West African History* (1966). Many more would follow on the histories of Ghana, Africa and links to the wider-world. These include *The Revolutionary Years: West Africa since 1800* (1967), *Britain, The Sahara and the Western Sudan 1788-1861* (1968) and *Ghana: evolution and change in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (1975). For his editorial work on the eight-volume *General History of Africa*, Boahen was awarded the UNESCO Avicenna Silver Medal in 1999. Committed to the publication of academic research and student textbooks, Boahen also began his own publishing house, Sankofa Educational Publishers. A notable title from Sankofa was *Mfantsipim and the Making of Ghana 1876-1976* (1997), which considered the historical role of Boahen's former school and won him the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa.

An active critic of colonial and partisan rule from the age of 16, Boahen also published the lectures in which he openly criticised Rawlings' military dictatorship and broke the 'culture of silence'. The lectures were published as *The Ghanaian Sphinx: the contemporary history of Ghana 1972-1987* (1998). At the end of the twentieth-century he took his liberal democratic ideals to the people once again as a founding member of the NPP and their 1992 presidential candidate. In *The Guardian* newspaper's obituary to Boahen, Ivor Agyeman-Duah wrote of Boahen's political activity that 'his role as the father of modern Ghanaian protest and nationalistic politics should not be in doubt'. Boahen led reform in electoral practices, was honoured with a State Burial and, in doing so, both wrote and made Ghanaian history.

During his career at the University of Ghana, Boahen also served as Dean of Graduate Studies (1973-1975), gained promotion to professor in 1971 and became emeritus professor in 1990. In light of Boahen's commitment to the university, the international acclaim he achieved for his scholarly endeavours, and his services to the nation of Ghana, the establishment of a new reference library and secure archive facility in his name to be housed at the Department of History is proposed as a fitting memorial. Significantly, the library will house books, journals, magazines, tapes, manuscripts and papers from Boahen's personal library. It will also house rare books and special collections, such as the papers of other scholars who dedicate their careers to furthering our understanding of the history of Ghana and Africa more broadly. The facility will provide a reference library and secure archive facility for future generations of students and scholars of history, and of the life and work of Professor Emeritus Albert Kwadwo Adu Boahen.

- The success of the facility depends on the full-time presence of an experienced librarian/archivist. Additional support is offered by the University Archives, under the direction of Senior Archivist Leo Woode. This support includes advice on planning the space, climate, shelving and acquisition of supplies such as acid-free archive boxes; training for the librarian/archivist; ongoing training for any allocated National Service persons on working with rare books and archival material; preparing terms and conditions for the donation of private papers; processing and cataloguing newly donated collections; and writing guidelines and regulations for users.
- In line with Prof. Boahen's Last Will and Testament, the library will house his personal library of c.3000 books; issues of *African Affairs* (for which he was an Editorial Board member); rare copies of *West Africa Magazine*; unique manuscripts, personal papers and research tapes.
- Prof. Tom McCaskie and Prof. Robert Addo-Fening have led the way in offering to donate selected items such as titles from their personal libraries, PDFs of their own works, and their research papers. This offer is on the condition that a secure archive is achieved. It is hoped that other prominent scholars of Ghanaian and African history will do the same. Special Collections can either be gifted to the library or remain the property of the individual/family.
- The facility will amalgamate the existing departmental holdings as well as updating and enhancing its collection with new works, rare titles and special collections. The library will request donations from relevant authors, editors and publishers, and make an open invitation to scholars and the public, partly via the Ghana Studies Association who support the development of this facility. Donations can be made in paper or electronic form (to be read on the library's computers).
- In direct reference to Boahen, the aim is to house a complete run of *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* (of which Boahen was President for a decade, 1966-76); the complete works of Adu Boahen; and texts connected with him, such as the festschrift *Ghana in Africa and the World: essays in honour of Adu Boahen* (2003) and *Africa in the Twentieth Century: the Adu Boahen Reader* (2005), both edited by Toyin Falola.
- Computers in the library will serve four purposes. Firstly, they will provide access to the library's catalogue, which will also be available on the university-wide catalogue system. Secondly, they will provide reading stations for titles held in the electronic library. Thirdly, they will gradually become an electronic repository for the rare books, archival collections and other documents that are to be scanned by trained National Service persons as part of the library's ongoing work. Lastly, they will provide listening stations for engaging with the facility's oral history collection.
- No book or document will be permitted to leave the facility. As such, users are allowed to read within the library or make prints/photocopies. Copies will be available subject to copyright and at a cost that allows for minimal but essential profit to enable the facility to purchase its own consumables, such as paper, ink and toner.
- Senior Members of the Department of History are in unanimous support of this proposal, with some offering to serve on the planning committee and others offering their skills in establishing and/or running the facility. Former and Part-Time members of the department, Prof. Joseph Adjaye, Prof. Robert Addo-Fening and Prof. Tom McCaskie, have also offered to serve on this committee.
- Following an invitation from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Prof. Kodzo Gavua, a copy of this proposal was put before those in attendance at the Faculty Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2015. Unanimous support was once again received.