



INTRODUCTION

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Recently, international media organizations have reported the resurgence of coups in West Africa. On 23 December 2008, Captain Moussa Dadis Camara seized power in Guinea after the death of long-time ruler Lansana Conté. In Mali, Captain Amoudou Sanogo orchestrated a coup on 21 March 2012, which some have claimed triggered the ongoing security crisis and Islamic insurgency in that country (Bøås and Torheim 2013). Guinea-Bissau was the scene of a mutiny before the second round of the Presidential elections between April and May 2012. And in Burkina Faso, former aide to President Blaise Compaoré, and commander of the Regiment of Presidential Security, General Gilbert Diendéré, led a coup on 12 September 2015.

A coup, according to McGowan, is 'a change in power from the top that always results in the abrupt replacement of leading government personnel, but may or may not alter a state's fundamental social and economic policies or entail a significant redistribution of power among political groups' (2003: 342). Between January 1956 and December 2001, McGowan indicates, a total of eighty successful coups, 108 attempts and 139 reported coup plots have taken place in sub-Saharan countries (2003: 339). Especially, the West African region has been coup prone, as its sixteen nations account for '85 failed and successful coups out of 188 (45.2%)' (ibid.). Moreover, 'all of the 16 states in this region, apart from Senegal, have experienced from one to six (Benin, Burkina Faso, Nigeria) successful coups and all have had at least one failed coup attempt' (ibid.). Ghana, like its West African counterparts, has had its fair share of well-documented interventions in 1966, 1972, 1978, 1979 and 1981 (Welch 1967, 1972; Feit 1968; Decalo 1973; Baynham 1978a, 1978b, 1984, 1985a, 1985b; Hansen and Collins 1980; Hettne 1980; Oquaye 1980, 2004; Rothchild 1980; Kraus 1983; McGowan and Johnson 1984; Gutteridge 1985; Owusu 1986, 1989; Agyeman-Duah 1987, 2002; Ninsin 1987; Pobee 1987; Teye 1988; Killingray 1991; Petchenkine 1993; Clark 1994; Luckham 1994; Nugent 1995; Hutchful 1997a, 1997b; McGowan 2003). Yet, in contrast to other West African armed forces, the Ghana

Armed Forces have evolved from an institution responsible for societal unrest and numerous revolts to an organization that adheres to the democratic rules of their country.

Reading the transformation process of the Ghana Armed Forces against the background of Ghana's history of coups, I understand transformation as a deliberate attempt by the military establishment to move away from past actions of the armed forces as repeated coup makers into a new, open-ended path towards a projected improvement of, among others, the military institution's organizational structures and human interactions. To treat questions surrounding how the Ghanaian military have managed to steer away from military interventions, the book presents an ethnographic investigation into the everyday practices of soldiering in the Ghanaian barracks. The ethnography departs from the 'critical events' (Das 1995) that triggered the breakdown of military order 'everydayness' (De Certeau 1984) in the barracks at the beginning of the 1980s, through to measures initiated to restore military order and instigate the ongoing transformation process of the armed forces. The transformation process of the Ghanaian military, I argue throughout this book, has been shaped by institutional measures aimed at resuscitating the military order and discipline through the creation of the disciplined soldier subject. This process continues to be reinforced through appeals to soldiers' soldierly values and sense of 'doing the right thing'.

Background: Military Interventions in Ghana (1966–1981)

Ghana experienced its first coup on 24 February 1966 when the National Liberation Council (NLC) overthrew Ghana's first post-independence President Dr Kwame Nkrumah (Kraus 1970: 154). The 1966 coup was orchestrated predominantly by officers trained at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, leading scholars to label the coup makers 'Sandhurst-minded' (Austin 1985: 91), 'elitist and Western-oriented' officers infested with 'the Sandhurst syndrome' (Hettne 1980: 178). These soldiers, among others, vehemently disagreed with Nkrumah's pan-Africanist political agenda.

The second military intervention happened on 13 February 1972. The coup led by then Colonel I.K. Acheampong, in collaboration with middle-ranking officers, successfully and without bloodshed toppled the civilian government of Dr Kofi Busia. Acheampong installed the National Redemption Council/Supreme Military Council (NRC/SMC I) (Baynham 1984, 1985a). Unlike the coup of 1966, Acheampong's personal military career ambitions combined with the military's dented corporate interests con-

verged to make this intervention possible because Busia's government had cut the military's budget and soldiers' amenities (Baynham 1985a: 624). The NRC/SMC I ruled Ghana between 1972 and 1978 (*ibid.*).

Under the NRC/SMC I, Ghana's economy hit rock bottom, which was characterized by shortages of consumer goods, high inflation and low wages (Welch 1983: 543; Baynham 1985a: 634). Because the Ghanaian military backed the NRC/SMC I, the economic hardship was partly blamed on the armed forces, thus manoeuvring them into an undesirable position (*ibid.*). The economic dire circumstances were coupled with a proposed referendum for the Union Government (Unigov, 'a vague scheme of limited disengagement in which both military and civilian bodies would be represented in a no-party corporate polity' (Baynham 1985a: 634)) at the end of March 1978 by the military regime (Austin 1985: 93). This presented the leadership of the Ghanaian military with the perfect 'opportunity to intervene' (Finer 1962: 71) amid accusations that the 'Yes' vote in favour of Acheampong's proposed Unigov was rigged (Austin 1985: 93).

On 5 July 1978, Ghana experienced its third coup, which marked the end of Acheampong's rule (Welch 1983: 546). After the bloodless palace coup, Lieutenant General Frederick Akuffo, head of the Ghana Armed Forces and Acheampong's deputy, established the Supreme Military Council II (SMC II) (*ibid.*). General Akuffo promised to hand over power to a popularly elected government and ordered the drafting of the constitution of the Third Republic (Welch 1983). Under the military leadership, political parties were allowed to congregate again; however, the new government 'failed to calm the opponents' (Hettne 1980: 184).

Akuffo's rule was 'one of continuous concessions to all kinds of lobbying, and the prestige of the military suffered accordingly' (*ibid.*). Due to the preceding coups, economic hardship in Ghana and compromises made with various societal groups, the military's prestige had been soiled (*ibid.*). Furthermore, 'public opinion had been outraged by the S.M.C.'s continued practice of shielding retired military colleagues widely suspected of corruption, while hackles were raised over plans to constitutionally indemnify both S.M.C.s from future prosecution' (Baynham 1985a: 634). The preceding converged to set the stage for the next military intervention.

In the early hours of 4 June 1979, a few weeks from scheduled elections, Ghana experienced its fourth military intervention. General Akuffo was disposed in a joint venture coup of junior officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in the so-called 'revolution from below' led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings (Hettne 1980; Welch 1983; Austin 1985; Baynham 1985a). The ensuing Armed Forces Revolutionary Council

(AFRC) embarked almost immediately on a violent 'housecleaning exercise' (Welch 1983: 546). Between 16 June and 26 June 1979, top military officers, including three former Heads of State (Generals Afrifa, Acheampong and Akuffo), were executed (Baynham 1985a: 634). The housecleaning exercise continued with 'dismissals of senior public servants, seizures and forfeitures of assets, heavy prison sentences following summary trials, the demolishing of houses and markets, public whippings and widespread intimidation of citizens by unauthorised military personnel' (ibid.). Meanwhile, the elections scheduled by SMC II for 18 June 1979, the first in a decade, went ahead as planned (Baynham 1985a).

Hettne notes that it is perhaps a unique historical occurrence that the 'AFRC seized control from a military regime and handed it over to a civilian government' (1980: 184). Eventually, the AFRC's rule was short and violent, 'but the unparalleled bloodletting rudely alerted the civilian population to the dreadful side of the military' (Agyeman-Duah 2002: 5). Despite the violence and bloodletting, on 24 September 1979, the military returned to the barracks. Ghana's Third Republic was inaugurated with the handing over of power to the People's National Party (PNP) of Dr Hilla Limann (Hettne 1980: 184).

However, the handover was short-lived, as on 31 December 1981, Flight Lieutenant Rawlings and his cohorts intervened once again in domestic politics (Nugent 1995; Oquaye 2004). With the benefit of hindsight, 'the hapless two years of Limann's government . . . were simply an interlude between the hesitation of an army not yet sure of its beliefs and the full-blooded conviction of Rawlings' second seizure of power' (Austin 1985: 95).

When Limann's PNP was ousted, Rawlings installed the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC). Finer (1962: 4) notes that under military rule, usually some 'quasi-civilian façade is fabricated'. The PNDC adopted a similar strategy as 'the outlook of the PNDC was less military and the regime insisted that it was a "people's government"' (Agyeman-Duah 2002: 6). Unlike previous Ghanaian military regimes, the majority of the Council members and ministers of state were civilians, with very few soldiers manning public institutions (ibid.), but many Ghanaians regarded these measures as 'mere window dressing: the guns still ruled' (ibid.). The civilian population not only feared the guns but also the brutal treatment of military personnel, which eventually led to a 'culture of silence' (ibid.: 7) in which 'the civilian population retreated from public and political activities' (ibid.). This silence and the population's indifference to all activities political, among other issues, eventually forced the PNDC regime, after more than a decade in power, to organize popular elections (ibid.), thus effectively ending military rule in Ghana.

Location and Contribution to the Field

While academic endeavours examining the place and role of the armed forces in society have been commonplace in the Global North (Lasswell 1941; Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1960), studies featuring African militaries are fairly limited. Further, Western militaries, especially those of the United Kingdom and the United States of America, have attracted considerable (media and) academic attention because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but also due to their effects on soldiers and their families and on society, with soldiers returning from the battlefield with mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety disorders and depression (Kilshaw 2009; Messinger 2010).

Despite the general interest in the Global North for studying military institutions, anthropologists have been relatively reluctant in studying the armed forces. That is because anthropologists generally considered the military as perpetrators of violence; at the same time, anthropological studies tend to focus on the victim's perspective (Ben-Ari and Frühstück 2003: 541). Despite the hesitation, anthropological studies of the military are steadily on the rise (Lutz 2001; Huebner 2008; MacLeish 2013). Although the ethnographic examination of militaries and soldiering in anthropology is increasing, none deal with African soldiers and armed forces, leaving the everydayness of soldierly work completely understudied.

Studies on African militaries have been through two phases. From the 1960s onwards, scholars of African militaries investigated colonial armed bodies and the new armed forces of post-independence African states (Welch 1967; Feit 1968; Gutteridge 1969; First 1970; Kraus 1970; Decalo 1973; Hettne 1980; Ravenhill 1980; Baynham 1985a, 1985b). Coups marked the grand entrance of African militaries onto the political scene, beginning with, for example, the military intervention of the Free Officers' Movement in Egypt in July 1952 that overthrew the monarchy (First 1970: 4). This was followed by General Abboud's power seizure six years later in Sudan, in November 1958; and – in sub-Saharan Africa – General Mobutu's temporal intervention in Congo in 1960 (*ibid.*). Scholars were drawn to coups because 'Africa was becoming another Latin America, where political instability has long been chronic' (*ibid.*: 3). Additionally, 'the coup as a phenomenon attracts attention as a dramatic event and seems capable of national explanation resulting from a convergence of different kinds and levels of discontent, including harsh budgets and reduction in army pay and allowances' (Gutteridge 1985: 79).

A second stream of scholarship featuring African militaries, from the 1990s through to the early 2000s, was the result of the fall of communism and 'the wave of competitive multiparty elections' (Bratton 1998) that

swept across Africa causing various repressive regimes to crumble and leaving several African militaries embroiled in conflict and civil war (Howe 2001). As a result, many recent studies that feature African militaries tend to focus mainly on non-state actors, such as rebels and insurgents (Clapham 1998; Richards 2005). Therefore, our knowledge of professional African militaries and understanding of the lived experiences of African soldiers in these armed institutions are limited. This endeavour aims to broaden our knowledge and understanding of African military institutions by offering thick ethnographic descriptions of everyday practices of soldiering in an African context; a look from within the Ghanaian barracks.

Most studies on African militaries have generally focused on political or institutional developments, such as intrusion into politics, civil–military relations or civilian control of the armed forces (Huntington 1957; Janowitz 1960) but omitted the human element – i.e. the experiences of soldiers. Similarly, transformations, such as the reform of security institutions, are commonly examined at the bureaucratic and institutional level and in instrumental settings exhibited in numerous studies on security sector reforms (Ball and Hendrickson 2006).

Crucially, however, examination of the reform of security institutions requires accounting for the human experience of change. That is because humans undergo change processes and execute transformations. Moreover, humans are not only affected by change but interpret and respond to the new constellations in their everyday activities, and they crucially do so in dynamic interaction with other human beings. The integration of humans into the change processes thus determines the level of success of that project (Baiburin, Kelly and Vakhtin 2012). The ethnographic approach of the book illuminates the institutional and human aspects of the transformation process, respectively. Particularly, the everyday practices of soldiering in Ghana, which have yet to be featured in the literature on African militaries, are presented as extremely meaningful for the soldier's subjectivity and, hence, the workings of hierarchical relations, and vice versa.

Social considerations of military transformation processes further relate to the question of how public perceptions of the military can be altered. Public image has always been of interest to armed forces around the world. However, modern militaries across the globe are increasingly conscious of the value of favourable public perception of their institution, due to mass communication and social media (Huebner 2008; McCartney 2011). Moreover, the armed forces are also aware that their actions and behaviour could affect how the general public perceives their organization (ibid.). That is why engineering a favourable public perception

is an important element in the transformation process in the Ghanaian barracks.

While the general public perception of the North Atlantic soldier is generally positive, his African counterpart cannot count on such favourable reviews. From the late 1940s to the late 1970s, Huebner (2008: 2) notes that American soldiers were portrayed as 'warriors' or considered 'martial' (ibid.: 9), and the popular image of the British soldier was that of a 'victim' (McCartney 2011: 43). In juxtaposition to this imagined Euro-American (and Australian) ideal of professionalism, based on training regime standards and educational institutions of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom and St. Cyr in France (First 1970), militaries outside the Global North generally are portrayed as disorderly, violent and unprofessional. Interestingly enough, the Ghanaian military is a carbon copy of the British army, since the Ghana Armed Forces have their roots in the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) (Gutteridge 1966; Aboagye 1999; Addae 2005), and the training regimes of both the officer corps and other ranks are based on the British training methods. Moreover, due to colonialism and post-independence British influence, Ghanaian soldiers embrace and implement international professionalism standards; especially the British professional standards.

Military institutions, for instance, in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s were labelled 'antipolitics' (Loveman and Davies 1978: 3), due to their frequent military interventions and support of dictatorships. Similarly, numerous negative characterizations persist of African soldiers and militaries. Howe (2001: 38), for example, has labelled African soldiers 'unprofessional', 'irrelevant', 'dangerous' and referred to them as 'armed thugs' and 'hit squads' in Zimbabwe and Kenya, respectively. Particularly, the orchestration and execution of coups in the post-colonial era has contributed to the poor 'cultural representations of African militaries and their soldiers' (Welch 1986: 324). Soldiers, as a result of human rights violations perpetrated against civilians, were thus considered uncouth, brutes, killers and bullies (Finer 1962: 7); or 'simple illiterates who are unfit for social intercourse with civilians' (Baynham 1994: 17).

The Ghanaian military also suffered from poor public image; dating back to the days of the RWAFF (Gutteridge 1966; Aboagye 1999; Addae 2005). Baynham (1994: 17) notes that the majority of the infantry soldiers in the colonial army were recruited from the lowest socio-economic strata. Socially, these men were not highly regarded by the general civilian population and were feared for their ruthlessness, as the British colonizers deployed them for internal security assignments (ibid.). Colonial soldiers apparently had no problems repressing their own people while serving a foreign military body (ibid.). In garrison towns, moreover, co-

lonial soldiers reportedly assaulted civilians and harassed and molested women (*ibid.*). All these factors converged, resulting in the poor public image of the Gold Coast colonial soldier, who passed this inheritance on to his successor, the Ghanaian soldier.

Additionally, the post-independence Ghanaian soldiers also contributed to the poor public perception of their institution through their repeated orchestration of coups and associated human rights abuses (Oquaye 1980, 2004; Nugent 1995). Some military operatives used their uniform to extract scarce resources from the civilian population, while occasionally functioning as debt collectors for others, especially in the 1980s (Nugent 1995: 86). The illegal activities regularly resulted in violent confrontations between soldiers and civilians, thus exacerbating an already deteriorating condition.

The Ghanaian military has, in the current constellation, vested interest in generating a favourable public imagination for securing their corporate interests, such as better payment, good living conditions and modern military equipment. In this book, I present ethnographic descriptions of measures and activities the Ghana Armed Forces have undertaken to engineer positive public reviews. Additionally, in this endeavour, I deconstruct the notion that African militaries, and the Ghana Armed Forces in particular, are disorderly (Decalo 1973, 1989).

The contemporary public image of African soldiers is gradually changing as a result of, among other things, their contribution to and participation in peacekeeping missions, which generate the perception of 'peace soldiers' (Moskos 1976; Cunliffe 2013). This ties in with the notion of the 'new soldier' (Sarkar 2009), who 'exercises restraint and caution in combat and has the capability to empathise with the needs of the local population' (Hughes 2014: 239). Moreover, Ghanaian soldiers are part of a global military arena in which these notions are the norm.

Furthermore, I deploy the concepts of military diffusion (Goldman 2006; Horowitz 2010) and military emulation (Farrell and Terriff 2002; Resende-Santos 2007) to assess the transformation process in the Ghanaian barracks. Military diffusion is a 'process of transmission of new information, the decision by elites to adopt new technologies, ideas and practices; and ultimately the assimilation of these ideas into institutions and practices' (Goldman 2006: 69). In the Ghanaian context, the military system is injected with potentially transformative ideas, new technologies and practices imported from elsewhere in the international military arena. Military emulation, on the other hand, is 'the deliberate imitation by one state of any aspect of another state's military system that bears upon its own military system' (Resende-Santos 2007: 9). In other words, it is a conscious effort undertaken by a military to copy and implement

best practices from other armed forces. Transformations are generally viewed as finished products or end states. My argument, however, is that because transformation processes involve humans but also, in the Ghanaian case, military diffusion and military emulation, it is still ongoing, because the aim of transformation is necessarily ambiguous – never static but ever evolving in time and sociopolitical contexts.

Apart from military educational institutions, the exposure of key actors to international security discourses, peacekeeping missions and international training courses has contributed to altering the perceptions and viewpoints of Ghanaian soldiers. These so-called ‘boundary crossers’ (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) provide translations of norms of security governance and international human rights discourses from the international arenas into the particular context of the Ghana Armed Forces, where they function as ‘multipliers’ (Behrends, Park and Rottenburg 2014) in shaping the perceptions of their colleagues and subordinates.

Finally, societal processes, such as the increased level of education and the spread of information and communications technologies (ICTs) (De Bruijn and Van Dijk 2012), have had their bearing on the Ghanaian military institution as the armed forces aim to engineer its public image through the reintroduction of professionalism into the rank and file and the initiation of civilizing activities or civility, such as public relations, disaster relief and medical outreach programmes. Moreover, Ghana is currently considered a stable, democratic country by its international partners, such as United Kingdom, which after the December 2010 elections expressed through its Foreign Office Minister that Ghana is ‘rightly considered the beacon of democracy in the region’.¹ The transformation process was also partly triggered because ‘coups are no longer done because the international community will descend on you like flies on shit’,² while other sociopolitical factors have contributed to the Ghanaian military shying away from coups. The manifold reasons for this development will be illuminated in the course of the book.

Negotiating Access to the ‘Closed World’ of the Military

Many studies featuring African militaries barely feature African soldiers. That is partly due to widespread perceptions in recent years of African military institutions as secretive or repressive institutions. These views not only make working with these organizations challenging; but also deter scholars from engaging with these armed forces, resulting in a scholarship drought. However, the book departs from the question of whether there has been a change in attitude and perceptions of Ghanaian soldiers

about coups but also considers the drivers or limiting factors of these changes for entrance into the Ghanaian military barracks. Additionally, to write an ethnography of transformation in the Ghanaian military barracks and of how this process is experienced in the everyday practices of the Ghanaian soldier requires robust access to the barracks.

Due to persistent social perceptions of African militaries, including Ghanaian, as repressive organizations – institutions that are sealed off from the outside world – feeding into the assumption that African armed forces are unapproachable. These views are further strengthened by visible security measures, such as high walls, barbed wire gates and sentries manned by armed men, surrounding African military barracks. The environs of the Ghanaian military are no different. The Ghanaian military barracks are securitized environments fenced off from the outside by a variety of physical obstacles, ranging from swamp land and impenetrable bushes to entrances with sentries. Visitors must enter the barracks through one of the entrances, where one is interrogated and, occasionally, searched by soldiers on duty. Inside the barracks, cameras in key areas monitor the environment and movements. Additionally, visitors of the administrative offices have to fill in a visitor's book in which the purpose and addressee of the visit are stated. After signing in, the visitor must hand in an identification card in exchange for a visitor's card in order to proceed. These technologies and infrastructures characterized the 'bounded setting' (Candea 2007: 167) in which military anthropology is carried out.

Okely (1992: 2) notes that fieldwork is a social experience in which the fieldworker indulges in relationships with others. Personal relations serve as the main tool for collecting data and gaining insights into the everyday practices of being a soldier (Amit 2000: 2) but also to absorb their narratives (Rapport 2000). Access to the barracks and being part of the daily activities of soldiers therefore is crucial.

In view of this, studying the 'closed world' (Wulff 2000: 148) of the military entails dependency on that world's generosity towards the fieldworker, granting access to otherwise inaccessible places. Similarly, Berrenberg (2009: 220) notes that during fieldwork the ethnographer is at the mercy of those studied. Others, rather than the fieldworker, 'take centre stage and direct the course of events' (ibid.). Fieldwork means that the ethnographer must adjust to the terms and conditions set by others; in this case, the Ghana Armed Forces, gatekeeper of my participation in social activities, observation of life in the barracks and interactions between soldiers.

Moreover, an institution bent on transforming its public image can also not afford to completely seal itself off from the outside world. There-

fore, the Ghana Armed Forces' public relations department, the Directorate of Public Relations (DPR), provided me with access to the barracks to conduct fieldwork at a variety of locations, regiments and battalions in North and South Ghana. From December 2013 through to January 2015, I was allowed to interact, converse and participate in daily life at the barracks – that is, observe and record the voices of Ghanaian soldiers' lived experiences and memories without any limitations. The book fills a gap in the amount of African soldiers' voices in the literature on African militaries by presenting an ethnography of the Ghanaian barracks from soldiers' perspectives and in their own voices.

Although, the main barracks of the Ghanaian military is Burma Camp, in Accra, the Ghana Armed Forces have battalions spread across the country. The units in my data sample were selected based on geography, following the North-South divide of the Ghanaian military institution (i.e. the Northern and Southern Commands).³

Although my approach to gaining access to the field was 'top-down', this did not mean that I conducted my fieldwork in that manner. In fact, I mainly studied the bottom. The subsequent sections illustrate my approach to the field sites.

Encountering and Navigating the Field

Despite permission to conduct fieldwork with the Ghana Armed Forces, my initial encounters in the field were rough, as gatekeepers on sentry proved obstacles to be negotiated. In addition, distrust on the part of some military operatives who are not used to having civilians in their units made the beginning of the endeavour strenuous. Sometimes the unit adjutant who usually was to inform the officers and men of my arrival forgot to pass on this information, leading to irritation. On several occasions, I had to call upon my liaison officer to renegotiate my access to a unit.

The following vignette illustrates the need to carefully navigate the field of the Ghanaian barracks. The Ghana Military Academy (GMA) is part of the Ghana Military Academy and Training School (MATS), located at Whistler Barracks, Teshie; a suburb of Ghana's capital Accra. I arrive at seven o'clock in the morning at the entrance of MATS. The soldier on sentry strolls slowly away from the guardroom and moves towards me while all along looking for and maintaining eye contact with me. He is wearing his G3-rifle around his neck; his finger is close to the trigger. The rifle is pointed to the ground.

In the background, the Atlantic Ocean waves splash against the cliffs and rocks. The soldier and I meet exactly at the gate. He inspects me

from head to toe. I realize I am a bit uncomfortable, but I manage to mumble a weak, 'Good morning, sir' to him. The soldier, a young man in his early twenties, is well dressed in ironed, dark green camouflage military uniform. He has a shiny, shaven head, which he hides under his cap. He responds to my mumble with a firm, 'Good morning!' He requests to know my name and what my purpose for visiting MATS is. I explain that I have been given permission to conduct fieldwork with his unit. He requests to see the letter confirming my story. He examines the letter and seems satisfied. Then he continues:

The soldier: 'Sir, may I know your mission?'

HAA: 'Yes, of course! I am here to see the Commandant of the GMA.'

The soldier: 'But sir, why? Any problem?'

HAA: 'No, no. My letter from Directorate of Public Relations [DPR] and GHQ [General Headquarters] says I should see the Commandant of GMA. This is why.'

The soldier: 'Oh, ok. Sir, may I see your letters again?'

I open my bag and hand the letters to the soldier. He examines the letters closely once more and hands them back to me. He asks another soldier in front of the guardroom to inform the adjutant of GMA that someone is on his way to see the commandant. The soldier asks me whether I know the way to the commandant's office.

The soldier: 'Sir, but it is far from here. It is quite a walking distance.'

HAA: 'No problem. I am young and fit.' I joke.

The soldier smiles meekly and proceeds to instruct me how to get there. I thank him and continue my journey.

After the soldier's timid smile, I feel relief that I have managed to convince him to let me pass. I have negotiated the first hurdle and secured my first steps into the field site. Although I was aware that he could not have completely disallowed me entrance into the barracks due to my official permission, I knew that he could have delayed my entrance.

Whistler Barracks is a huge military facility, with acres and acres of land around it. After taking the first hurdle, I follow the tarred road that meanders through the barracks. After walking about 500 metres from the first sentry, I realize I am quickly approaching a second sentry but not before I make my way around heaps of sandbags piled on the road. There is a booth in front of the guardroom, just next to the road. As I approach, a neatly dressed Private Soldier with a shawl of the unit colours (white and red) around his neck appears from the small booth. He steps forward and bangs with his left foot firmly on the ground making a deafening sound.

He holds his rifle with stretched arms in front of him, then pulls it back to his left side, places the weapon tightly next to his body and salutes firmly with his right hand. The role of the soldier at the sentry is strictly ceremonial (I gather later). He does not stop me or interrogate me. As I walk past him, a soldier appears from the guardroom. This soldier is older than the ones at the sentries. He is a Sergeant. The following encounter ensues:

The Sergeant: 'Excuse me! Are you looking for someone or something?'

He inspects me from head to toe while maintaining eye contact with me.

HAA: 'Yes. The Commandant's office.'

The Sergeant: 'Which of them? There are two of them here!'

HAA: 'Oh, yeah? The one – of the GMA.' I mumble.

The Sergeant: 'The GMA is behind the tower over there,' he tells me briskly. 'You will see green and white colours in the surroundings. That is the place.'

He directs me to walk straight ahead and stands to ensure I am following the instructions he has given me. As I walk towards the administration building of the GMA, a group of soldiers arranged in rows of four, totaling about forty, dressed in combat uniform, marching and singing, come towards me. I do not want to draw attention to myself so I avoid looking at them and walk on swiftly.

After walking approximately 600 metres from the second sentry, I arrive at the administration block of the GMA. The raised white and green flag in front of the administration block dances in the cool breeze. The green grass around this block is neatly cut, and the hedges are precisely trimmed. The administration block is bustling with military operatives. I ask an officer for directions to the commandant's office. He unknowingly gives me my first lesson in military etiquette. He alerts me that it is not permitted to go directly to see the commandant. First, I have to report to the adjutant.⁴ He walks me to the adjutant's office. The female officer is aware of my arrival; she listens to me and then requests to see my permission letter. Later on that morning, she introduces me to the commandant. The acting commandant, a Colonel, invites me into his office and enquires about the study and its objectives but also what kind of assistance I require from his outfit. After our interaction, he informs me that he will make arrangements with his staff to accommodate me. In addition, he will appoint a contact person at the GMA, but he will need time to make these arrangements and asks me to return in three days.

The above vignettes illustrate that, despite the permission granted me by the Ghana Armed Forces, at the entrances to the various military in-

stallations I was initially met with suspicion by the soldiers at these entry points as is expected of them. However, this usually happened when I first reported to a unit. Usually, after the unit had been informed at durbars and with a publication in the *Part I Orders*, soldiers were aware of my arrival and after a few days forgot that I was an outsider because I come to 'work' – that is, report for duty at 07:30 with them and leave with them. Moreover, as time went on, I became 'known' in the various barracks, which contributed to reducing negotiations at the sentries.

The excerpt also reveals how my unawareness of the barracks conventions made it easy for soldiers to spot me; the outsider. My out-of-placeness meant I was constantly questioned about my being in the barracks, forcing me to justify my intentions for being there. However, once I gained access to the unit, soldiers were willing to 'help', and some were curious, while others had stories to tell. Moreover, soldiers were more than willing to talk about soldiering, so once I had proven that I had robust permission from the military leadership, they were willing to engage. Investing in and building long-term relations were the key to gaining the trust of soldiers and accessing the barracks on a social level.

Narratives and Problems of Documentation

Bickford (2011: 31) notes that 'anthropology allows us to examine lived experience of soldiers.' Although the main method for data gathering in the barracks was participant observation, I was able to also absorb soldiers' narratives of their experiences in the military. Narratives, Rapport points out, 'are the primary embodiment of how people understand and experience the world, but also how people understand themselves' (2000: 75). Since my aim is to understand soldiers' lived experiences 'in their own words', I had to get their stories and narratives.

To extract narratives, open-ended interviews (Weller 1998) but also informal conversation techniques (Herskovits 1950; Forsey 2010) were used, as I realized quite early in my fieldwork that my interlocutors were uncomfortable and were not speaking frankly with me whenever I approached with pen and paper or a tape recorder. This was evident from the shallow analysis, narratives and views my informants produced. I observed that my informants associated these devices with 'official' meaning. In other words, they believed that their exact words could be officially traced and verified if I were to lose the shared information, which could spell trouble for them. In short, I had to explore and adapt different strategies to get my informants to be at ease around me and to interact frankly with me.

Following my introduction to the soldiers by the chief clerk, the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM), the adjutant, the second in command (ZiC)

or the commanding officer (CO) of a unit to their personnel, this usually allowed me to have countless informal conversations, without pen and paper or recording device, with soldiers while hanging out around the unit, sitting under sheds and trees, on porches, or in offices. In these contexts, soldiers were more comfortable in talking about their lives, their work and their experiences in peacekeeping operations but also about 'tricky' or 'sensitive' topics like past coups. Without recording devices, my informants seemed at ease as they narrated and answered all my questions without reservation. It must, however, be noted that immediately after these (informal) conversations, I looked for a quiet spot to record what had just been shared with me. I also wrote down interviews or used a voice recorder for official interviews; for example, with the military's public relations officers. During my field study, I conducted 134 interviews and over 200 informal conversations, out of which twenty were recorded with an audio device. In addition, I held six focus group discussions, which were also recorded with an audio device.

Recruitment of Informants

Part of the challenge of the fieldwork experience is the recruitment of informants and gaining their trust. How did I go about these issues? After a few weeks hanging around the units, I knew the routines of unit life. For instance, Mondays were very busy for soldiers, as they had to attend all sorts of security-related briefings and meetings, which thus made making arrangements on this day a challenge. On other days, soldiers were more flexible, generous and forthcoming with their time.

For interviews and informal conversations at the units, I randomly walked up to soldiers, introduced myself, explained my project and its objectives and then solicited their assistance. Soldiers also recommended me to their colleagues, pleading with them to help me in any way they could. For the focus group discussions, the RSMs and base coxswain selected (more or less ordered) soldiers for the occasions, leading to careful deliberations between soldiers. Although I randomly selected my informants, all social groups and ranks (Private Soldiers to Generals) are represented in the body of data generated.

An inevitable problem with conducting fieldwork with the military is soldiers' immense flexibility and mobility. Amit (2000: 12) notes that absences and presences are part and parcel of the ethnographic field experience. My informants were regularly deployed on peacekeeping missions, sent on courses or were posted elsewhere on a new assignment. The soldiers' departure was also an opportunity to gain (potential) new insights and views from (potential) new informants. The ebb and flow of peo-

ple requires extreme flexibility and adaptability from the ethnographer, especially when soldiers returning from missions or courses are hostile (because they are not used to having a civilian around) to the fieldworker. Simultaneously, absences and presences are also marked by the fieldworker moving to new localities (every two to three months) due to the 'multi-locale' (Marcus and Fischer 1986), where a new group of soldiers had to grow accustomed to my presence.

Structure of the Book

This ethnography-informed book explores how armed forces, such as the Ghanaian military, are transformed after a breakdown of everydayness, from institutions responsible for societal unrest to stable social actors. Despite the coups and engagement with political activities, how and to what extent has the Ghanaian military managed to steer away from these practices? Which factors and conditions have contributed to this transformation? What roles do the military's human-centred approach (human face philosophy), 'civility' and 'professionalism' play in the ongoing transformation process?

Equally important is how Ghanaian military operatives experience developments in their institution. What are their perspectives on soldiering, their role in society and professionalism? To tackle these questions, the book flows along two interrelated lines: the first part sketches the events and conditions leading to violence and the collapse of military order; in short, the critical events (Das 1995) necessitating and triggering the transformation process. The second part examines the implications of the ongoing developments in the barracks geared towards reinstalling everydayness, soldiers' perceptions thereof, but also how these relate to broader societal developments and, finally, assess how professionalism, civility and civil-military relations relate to each other in broader military and societal context; in short, the current state of affairs in the Ghanaian military.

To assess the questions charted above, Chapter 1 of the book takes off presenting the critical events (Das 1995) that contributed to the breakdown of everydayness, undermining hierarchy and discipline in the Ghanaian barracks of the early 1980s. Critical events triggered responses from military and political actors but also measures targeting interactions between the barracks and the outside world, thus marking the beginning of the transformation process in the Ghanaian barracks.

Hierarchy and trust are important tropes in the military barracks and crucial for the experience of soldiers' everydayness. Chapter 2 examines

the temporary collapse of everydayness as a result of poor communications and toxic professional relations in the Ghanaian barracks. The aim of the chapter is to generate an appreciation for how the military is ordered and maintained as a social organization. More specifically, the chapter looks at hierarchy from the point of view of values and differentiation (Dumont 1970 [1966]) and clarifies how such differentiation is practised and habituated, as well as how it is materialized in distinctions between and on uniforms. The second part of this chapter ties the notion of hierarchy to the concept of trust, which produces predictability in behaviour, but also category-based trust and ultimately everydayness.

Chapter 3 features discipline in the guises of self- and imposed discipline. Due to the breakdown of everydayness, the disciplinary standard the Ghanaian military aspires to was severely lacking in the barracks. The chapter zooms in on how the military works to discipline the minds and bodies of its personnel and soldiers and how they in turn impose self-discipline on themselves. The chapter illustrates how punishment and ideas of 'doing the right thing' reproduce discipline from within and above, resulting in the creation of the disciplined soldier subject who exhibits a particular kind of comportment and behaviour.

As a result of the creation of the disciplined soldier subject, new types of soldiers have emerged in the Ghanaian barracks. Chapter 4 marks the beginning of examining the current state of affairs in the Ghanaian military through the presentation of three archetypes of soldier within the Ghanaian military, distinguished in terms of age, social connections, and education. The chapter moves from the description of an 'old time soldier' to an 'internet' and 'telephone soldier'. The three archetypes represent different temporal orientations and social assemblages – from the nostalgic to the prospective, and the uneducated to the educated. The chapter shows how external factors influence military reforms and how the institution is simultaneously becoming both increasingly permeable and a closed network of connections, patronage and family interest, but it also explains what the 'human face philosophy' entails and its effects.

Butler (1997) following Foucault (1980) points out that subjection is a continuous process. In view of this, Chapter 5 examines the influence of education and international peacekeeping on the Ghanaian military. While education is a defining difference between the first, second and third archetypes dealt with in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 shows how education impacts on the military by shaping military personnel's understanding in relation to its internal functioning and societal position. Additionally, peacekeeping missions can be seen to change the outlook of the Ghanaian soldier by providing training and spurring a pre-emptive realization of the hardship and destruction of war.

Chapter 6 deals with perceptions of both the military and the general public. The Ghana Armed Forces have transformed from coup makers to a self-ascribed 'defender of the state' but also into a 'civilian-friendly' military organization. The final chapter ties together the different empirical processes described in the preceding chapters in a larger discussion of professionalism, civility and civilian–military relations. The chapter thereby connects the larger transformation process of the Ghanaian military with the desire of soldiers to be legitimate and positively integrated within the military and links professionalization with this move towards a positive standing in society. A conclusion then follows.

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NOTES

1. Minister for Africa hails Ghana as a 'beacon of democracy' following successful elections (10 December 2012), see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-for-africa-hails-ghana-as-a-beacon-of-democracy-following-successful-elections> (accessed 22 October 2015).
2. Informal conversation with Colonel A. (rtd), Accra, Ghana (4 March 2014).
3. The army consists of two commands, Northern and Southern. Although there are plans for a Central Command, at the time of writing, it was uncertain how close these plans were to implementation. The navy has the Eastern and Western Naval Commands. The air force has three bases around Ghana – in Accra, Takoradi and Tamale.
4. In the Ghanaian military setting, the adjutant serves in close collaboration with the commanding officer as the administrator of the unit.