

**A Tribute to Professor James Robert Kwesi Anquandah,**  
the Indigenous Trailblazer of Ghanaian Archaeology

Professor James Robert Kwesi Anquandah was the first Ghanaian archaeologist, an illustrious member of not only the Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, but also of the University of Ghana community, the global intellectual community, and the nation of Ghana at large. Being a long time member of the editorial board of the *Research Review/Contemporary Journal of African Studies*, it is befitting that such a tribute should be published to grace his outstanding contributions and memory.

Born on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 1938 to Mr Robert Anquandah and Mrs Amy Graham-Wilberforce Anquandah, Prof. James Anquandah lived a life worthy of emulation. He was an astute academic and as one of the earliest and longest serving Ghanaian archaeologists, he made lots of sacrifices from the mid-1970s until his demise on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2017. His tenacity and dedication to archaeological scholarship for over four decades was to ensure that our Department enjoys the life and vitality it has today.

According to Professor Posnansky (2017), one of his teachers, Anquandah ‘was the first university undergraduate to major in archaeology in an African University.’ After his secondary education at the Achimota School in 1959, he pursued a BA honours degree in History. With a foundation in history, Anquandah developed a passion for archaeology. He pursued this programme under the tutelage of the European archaeological pioneers of this Department: notably, Professor Posnansky and the Late Peter Shinnie. He subsequently obtained a Postgraduate Diploma in Archaeology from the University of Ghana and an M.Litt degree in Archaeology from the Oxford University. His quest to rediscover Ghana’s past outweighed the comfort of life in the United Kingdom and employment at the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford University. In his pursuit of this, he returned and worked as a research fellow at the Department of Archaeology and the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana. This lasted until 1975 when he became the first West African Lecturer in Archaeology. After grounding himself in the discipline, he produced his seminal publication - *Rediscovering Ghana’s Past*. Despite two decades in the lecture hall, Prof Anquandah he added value to his teaching skills by pursuing a ‘Certificate in University Teaching’ at UCOSDA University in England from 1995 to 1996.

At the University of Ghana he rose through the ranks and became a full professor in 1994. He served diligently in various capacities, such as being the Head of Department of Archaeology from 1981-1993; Dean of the

Faculty of Social Studies, 1991-1997 and Acting Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Ghana in January and February of 1996. He served on many boards and committees in the university.

His favourite courses at the Department of Archaeology were Archaeology of Ghana, Historical Archaeology of Ghana, Archaeology of the Nile Valley, Paleo historical Demography, and Indigenous Knowledge System of Ghana. One of his popular courses was Art History in Ghana and Africa. This was often oversubscribed, especially by foreign students on semester and year abroad programmes in the University of Ghana.

As a heritage specialist, he also served in many capacities in heritage institutions at the national and international levels. Notably, he served as a board member of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) under three different political administrations: 1997-2000 (NDC I), 2000-2004 (NPP) and from 2010-2012 (NDC II). He chaired an interim management committee of the GMMB where he distinguished himself professionally in documenting Ghana's heritage. During these periods he published a famous book entitled *Forts and Castles of Ghana.*

His international role in the heritage sector was also phenomenal. He worked with the National Commission of UNESCO and contributed to the UNESCO Slave Route Project and publication of the UNESCO General History of Africa. His publication, *A Panorama of Ghana's Heritage,* provides a vivid overview of Ghana's heritage resources that can be developed to enhance tourism in Ghana.

His spiritual and evangelical Christian inclinations became a passion that rivalled his archaeological ambitions. Notably he served and gave talks at the Bible House, School of Evangelism, Legon Pentecostal Union, UG, and was a key architect in the establishment of the Legon branch of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International. Until his demise, he was a member of the Springs of Joy Ministries International. He served as the executive secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana and was the Chairman of the Asempa Publishing Board. Eventually he published *Together we Sow and Reap: the Christian Council of Ghana 1929-1979*, a book commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Christian Council. In addition he published *Agenda Extraordinaire* to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Christian Council of Ghana.

Besides his evangelical publications, Prof Anquandah was a prolific scholastic author and a natural teacher who 'ate and drank archaeology as his food in order to impart it to colleagues and students.' His vast archaeological knowledge was based on half a century of field work. Besides international research in the Sudan and Nile Valley, he worked on almost all time periods

of Ghanaian archaeology and history spanning its prehistoric sites including, Mumute, Bonoase; Kintampo Complex sites e.g., Buohu, Boyasi Hill (Anquandah 1982); early Iron Age urban sites e.g., Begho, Yikpabongo, Ladoku, Shai, Ayawaso, Techiman (Anquandah 1965, 1982); and historical sites e.g., Elmina, Ussher Fort, Cape Coast Castle (Anquandah 1999, 1997, 1993, 2000). He has also conducted many ethnographic researches into the indigenous technologies and knowledge systems of most contemporary societies of Ghana. This is captured in his '*Ethnoarchaeological Clues to Ghana's Past and a Great Future.*'

His research work has popularised most archaeological sites and archaeological research in Ghana. His seminal research in the Yikpabongo areas of northern Ghana, has provided interesting insights into the art history of the Komaland Terracotta figurines and practices associated with their usage in 500-1800AD. These important figurines that are increasingly being looted and sold in Euro-American galleries really attest to the indigenous knowledge systems of the Koma and Balsa people. This is addressed in his *Koma-Balsa: Its Art and Archaeology*.

His scholastic endeavours were not limited to the classroom. He practised public archaeology by bringing cultural heritage issues to the doorstep and dinner tables of Ghanaians. He achieved this through his duties as programmes officer of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and senior producer/director of Ghana Televisions (1972/73). He participated in a number of talk shows, radio programmes and documentaries that continue to be periodically aired in Ghana. Furthermore, he was one of the founding members of the West African Archaeological Association. Through his contributions, the association continues to steadily publish annual issues of the *West African Journal of Archaeology* (WAJA). He was also a member of the Society of Africanist Archaeologists and of the Pan-African Archaeological Association.

His alert mind and knowledge about the deep past, even at his elderly age of 79, was outstanding. During his retirement and period of part-time lecturing in the University, he taught, mentored, and supervised both undergraduate and graduate students of Archaeology. Today he has spawned over five generations of academic/archaeological scholars in the department. He taught and inspired almost every faculty member of our Department, past and present; some of whom have become lecturers, senior lecturers, professors, heads of department and Deans of the University of Ghana and elsewhere. Professor Posnansky (2017) captures the deeds of Anquandah in the department as:

*He helped build up Archaeology as a key discipline at the university, taking it beyond being the study of stones and bones as it was previously been regarded. It is partly from his endeavours that the University of Ghana became a major centre for African Heritage studies. To James Anquandah's commitment and efforts much is owed in Ghanaian archaeology and African archaeology in General'*

In conclusion, I will say his fundamental theoretical approach to archaeological scholarship was based on epistemological enquiry and eclecticism (Anquandah 1992). He believed in moulding all-rounded scholars who integrate historical, ethnographic and archival datasets with archaeological findings to spin factual webic stories about the indigenous communities and buried civilizations of Ghana that we unearth and continue to search for (Anquandah et al. 2014). We will continue to accentuate and trumpet his vision of seeing to the urgent amendment of the antiquated 1969 Antiquities Act of Ghana. Faculty and students of the Department of Archaeology in UG will continue to petition the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, the National Commission on Culture and our Sector Ministry to see to the promulgation of a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) bill into law in Ghana *pari passu* the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Act which is currently overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency. This is necessary because the current implementation of the EIA tends to marginalize heritage and archaeological impact studies (or often treats them as after-thoughts) at major development project sites in Ghana today (Apoth et al. 2017). The promulgation and implementation of a new CHIA bill will not only ensure the salvaging, protection, and conservation of our buried tangible and intangible cultural heritage but should also provide avenues for job creation and employment for our graduates.

As a way of continuing with his scholastic legacy, the Department hopes to institute two legacy projects in his honour, beginning from the 2018/19 academic year. This includes an academic prize for best graduating master of philosophy student of Archaeology, and Professor Anquandah Memorial Lectures in Archaeology. May his scholastic archaeological memory be our guiding light in the search for Ghana's buried 'pyramids', and the cradle of humankind and civilizations.

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