



An excerpt from a gripping narration of Louis Armstrong's (Satchmo's) 1956 visit to Achimota, with a moving epilogue; of his wife's spontaneous dance and his own epiphany; a true tale of Sankofa:

Upon arriving at Achimota College for the traditional drumming and dancing exhibition, the Armstrong party was welcomed by Phillip Gbeho and Beattie Casely-Hayford, the secretary of the Arts Council. These two somehow had been able to bring together Chiefs and representatives from all regions of Ghana and work out a seating plan that seemed to satisfy everyone. The Armstrong group was led to its place beneath a large umbrella.

"Then the entertainment began."

"Groups from each region, accompanied by their own drummers and musicians, came into the arena and danced in front of the visitors...The Americans watched, entranced. It was a

great and moving tribute to a black man from beyond the seas."

"Louis and Lucille Armstrong sat sweating in the heat but loving it. They had Phillip Gbeho's small children perched on their laps, and drank from the gourd bowls of palm wine that were passed round. Edmond Hall sat quietly enjoying himself: 'We spend all our lives going round the world entertaining people,' he said in his gentle voice, 'but this is the first time anybody ever entertained us.' " [page 239]

Then, when the last tribe had paid its tribute, Casely-Hayford introduced "Mr. Armstrong, the great American musician." The band opened with Indiana, but there was no response from the audience...they had never heard music like this. Next, a number at a slower tempo...still no response.

"Then, away across the far side of the arena, a solitary figure arose. It was an old, old man, with a stave, from some northern tribe. Slowly, gravely, he advanced towards the band, in a kind of shuffle, attuned somewhere deep in his mind to the beat of the music. We waited. Was this the catalyst that would fuse the cultures? It was not enough. So an American took the initiative. Lucille Armstrong stood up and went out into the arena to join the old man. Side by side, under the bell of Armstrong's swinging trumpet they slowly danced, as Lucille watched the old man's feet shuffling in the dust, and matched his steps. She was an odd but significant figure in her crisp New York dress, dancing with the old tribesman in his cotton robe. This was the turning point. As the American woman and the man

of Africa danced, more and more people from around the arena got up and joined in."

Shortly thereafter, Louis espied a woman in the arena who reminded him of his mother. After finishing his number, he ran to James Moxon and told him what he had seen, saying "I know it now, Jim. I know I came from here, way back." Upon returning to James' house, Louis sent off a number of telegrams to friends in the United States explaining what he had seen.