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African Diaspora in Reverse: The *Tabom* People in Ghana, 1820s-2009

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African Diaspora in Reverse: The *Tabom* People in Ghana, 1820s-2009

by

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Dissertation

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Dedication

To my daughter, Maame Esi Gyapeaba, my wife Dzidzor, my parents, the Essiens and the Darku families in Ghana and abroad for their unconditional support.

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The early 1800s witnessed the exodus of former slaves from Brazil to Africa. A number of slaves migrated after gaining manumission. Others were deported after they were accused of committing various "crimes" and after slave rebellions. These returnees established various communities and identities along the coastline of West Africa, but Historians often limit the scope to communities that developed in Benin, Togo and Nigeria. My dissertation fills in this gap by highlighting the obscured history of the *Tabom* people—the descendants of Afro-Brazilian returnees in Ghana.

The study examines the history of the *Tabom* people to show the various ways they are constructing their identities and how their leaders are forging ties with the Brazilian government, the Ghanaian government, and institutions such as UNESCO. The main goal of the *Tabom* people is to preserve their history, to underscore the significance of sites of memories, and to restore various historical monuments within their communities for tourism. The economic consciousness contributed to the restoration of the "Brazil House"

in Accra which was opened for tourism on November 15, 2007, after a year of repairs through the support of the Brazilian Embassy and various institutions in Ghana. This watershed moment not only marked an important historical event and the birth of tourism within the *Tabom* community, but epitomized decades of attempts to showcase the history of the Afro-Brazilian community which has been obscured in Ghanaian school curriculum and African diaspora history.

My central thesis is that the initiatives by the *Tabom* people are not only influenced by economic interests, but also by the need to express the "dual" identities that underlie what it means to the "Ghanaian-Brazilian." The efforts by the *Tabom* leaders to project their dual heritage, led to the visit by Brazilian President Luiz Inácios Lula da Silva "Lula" in April 2005, who also graciously supported the restoration of the "Brazil House." Through these interactions Lula extended an invitation to the *Tabom* chief and members of the community to visit Brazil for the first time. This dissertation posits that Lula's invitation highlight notions that the African Diaspora is an unending journey.

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Introduction

The traditional Adinkra symbols from Ghana above are two significant cultural motifs which provide a context for my study. The Adinkra symbol on the left, "Nkyinkyim," is an Akan Ghanaian word which literally means twisting or dynamism—the notion of constant movements from one location to the other. Nkyinkyim carries arrays of meaning and has cultural, political and social value. The symbol is sometimes used on top of a staff, a traditional vertical bar that is carried by a linguist, the chief's assistant. It is also useful for fashion designs. Nkyinkyim symbols are also used as decorations on buildings as well as furniture, jewelry, basketry and pottery. Nyinkyim has a fluid component and as the symbol above shows it does not have a common meeting point as this figure twists and turn on multiple fronts. Culturally, it emphasizes that life is an unending journey.

The Adinkra symbol on the right, "Sankofa," is also an Akan word which literally means "going back for something you left behind." Or as the neck of the Sankofa bird shows, it is the idea of going back to the past. Sankofa is used in similar ways as Nkyinkyim in terms of its material and social significance. The Sankofa bird is noted for not being content with a static position. Rather, it moves constantly in search of new and

old territories. Like a chameleon that often adapts to the color of its environment, the Sankofa bird also takes on conditions in its environment. It does so by rotating the neck in a clockwise and anticlockwise direction in order to carry out its duties. Sankofa birds have the ability not only to fly but to use its flexible muscles to spin around a radius or location to collect what has been left behind. The common thread that runs through this rich Ghanaian traditional symbol is the notion of an unending journey or movements. It also speaks to the rapid migration of opinions in my research and the interwoven but yet distinct forms of mobility across cultural spaces and sites of historical memory, geographical boundaries, transnational connections as well as homelands in Africa and the Atlantic world.[1]

There are number of reverse diasporan communities which were inhabited by slaves and freed slaves who migrated from the Caribbean, North America and South America or Latin America to the "motherland."[2] Antonio Olinto's remarkable piece, *The Water House* provides a fascinating imagery about journeys to an ancestral homeland and a dramatic account of an Afro-Brazilian family that joined the voyage from Brazil to coastal territories in Africa to connect with their roots.[3] Other migrations include African

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[1] The Atlantic world and the New World will be used interchangeably to describe communities with African cultural and ancestral ties that emerged in the Americas, Europe and other parts of the world as a result of the transatlantic slavery.

[2] Kwesi Kwaa Prah, "Back to Africa: Status Report, Afro Brazilians" in Kwesi Kwaa Prah (Ed.), *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 4-5.

[3] Antonio Olinto translated by Dorothy Heapy, *The Water House* (NY: Carroll and Graf Publishers, Inc., 1970), 1-7.

slaves and their descendants from Jamaica, Trinidad, Cuban, the American and Brazil who relocated to Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin, Togo, Nigeria, the former Gold Coast, now Ghana.[4] The dissertation incorporates literature that lifts the veil of movements across the Black Atlantic and Africa in multiple directions.[5] Also, it is nestled in two rich Ghanaian cultural motifs, Nkyinkyim and Sankofa and their overriding feature—notions of endless mobility.

My study "African Diaspora in Reverse: The *Tabom* People in Ghana, 1820s-2009" examines an aspect of reverse diasporas in Ghana. It focuses mainly on descendants of former Afro-Brazilian slaves, the contemporary group who became known as the *Tabom* people—"Ghanaian-Brazilians."[6] Descendants of Afro-Brazilians are not only refashioning their identity or cultural traditions, but as in the features of

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[4] Solimar Otero, *Orunile: Heaven is Home, Yoruba and Afrocuban Diasporas Across the Atlantic* (Unpublished Manuscript, 2009), Robin Law, *The Evolution of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah*, in Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay (Eds.), *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World I the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 22-28 and Robin Law, *Francisco de Souza in West Africa, 1820-1849* in Jose C. Curto and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (NY: Humanity Books, 2004),189, 193. For African American returnees and those from the Caribbean see Kwame Essien "African Americans in Ghana and Their Contributions to 'Nation Building:' 1985 through 2004." In Alusine Jalloh and Toyin Falola (Eds.), *The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations* (NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008), Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), Claude A. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4-5, 28-49, Ibrahim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (NC, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 213, Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), xv, chapters 1-3); 6-7, 17; Nemata Amelia Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000.

[5] Niyi Afolabi (Ed.), *Marvels of the African World: African Cultural Patrimony, New World Connections and Identities* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2003), 9-10.

[6] Nehemia Owusu Achiaw, "Brazilian President Official Visit: Govt. Honors Lula da Silva," *Daily Graphic*, 14 April 2005. 24.

Adinkra symbols, the *Tabom* people are also looking back and forward to a future visit to Brazil, the "other home" of their ancestors. Indeed, the study does not intend to suggest that descendants of Afro-Brazilians have given up their Ghanaian citizenship. Instead, they continue to find creative ways of highlighting their 'Brazilianess.' (see chapter 5)

My central thesis is that the notion of a Brazilian homeland is gradually becoming a myth among the *Tabom* people as they continue to assimilate into larger Ghanaian cultures and as their chances of visiting Brazil for the first time seems to be blurred by a lack of financial support and divisions within the community. One of my arguments is that it will be misleading to treat the entire community as a homogenous group. Archival evidence points to waves of migrations to Ghana comprised of numerous family groups.[7] Oral tradition complicates the exact population that settled in Accra in the early 1800s and how these family groups expanded thereafter. Put differently, the *Tabom* people construct varying identities based on how a particular family preserved or passed on the history of their forebears to the next generation.

In fact, many descendants of Afro-Brazilians showcase their Brazilian identity or identify as *Tabom*. On the other hand, a sizable number of descendants identify as Ghanaians.[8] The latter groups either do not know much about their history or have strategically distanced themselves from their community and their past for reasons that will be explored in the dissertation. Some of these rationales are influenced by their ancestor's involvement in slavery after their freedom from Brazil when they relocated to

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[7] CVA 12/52, Peter Quarshie Fiscian and Mary Fiscian v. Nii Azumah III, March 13, 1953, 42.

[8] For the *Tabom* people's assimilation into Ghanaian societies see Appendix A.

the Bight of Benin. This includes Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Ghana and other areas along the coastline of West Africa.[9] How can a "Tabom" criticize different forms of slavery in the modern world when there are traces or even ample evidence that their forebears, like Ghanaians, also sold Africans after they became free people? This is one of the issues the contemporary generation grapples with.

When the African Diaspora Keeps Moving it Must not be Stopped

Geographically, the African Diaspora in Reverse includes the reciprocal connections to multiple destinations in Africa and the Atlantic world. The Atlantic world and the New World will be used interchangeably in reference to communities in North and South America, Europe and other areas that have ancestral ties to Africa. The African Diaspora in Reverse stretches back and forth and meshes together, the past, the present and the future. Unlike existing scholarship that examines reverse diasporas from the Atlantic world to Africa but restricts the analysis to a given geographical range in a linear cultural sphere, my study, which is non-linear in orientation, explores plans for additional movements by descendants of African slaves back to the Atlantic world, especially Brazil, in cyclical motion. Thus, my study looks at the diasporas in reverse from multiple fronts and defines this phenomenon as a series of movements and relocations without an end. In short, my study charts a new path that traces movements from Africa to the New

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[9] Milton Guran, "The Returnees of Benin, Togo, Nigeria and Ghana," in Kwesi Kwaa Prah (Ed.), *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 109-110. See also Sandra E. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 46; Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c 1850 to Recent Times* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), 48, 54.

World, back to Africa and a return to Brazil in the future. The latter plan to visit Brazil is based on the promise Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva made to the *Tabom* people during his visit to Ghana in 2005. (see Appendix E)

The African Diaspora in Reverse has copious tributaries that connect people of African descent through various oceans, on land and other areas of human interactions. Akin to the *Sankofa* bird that literally stretches its neck back and forth to connect the starting point to the new location and back to its origin, vice versa, the *Tabom* history, as other diasporic experiences, stretches beyond historical timelines, roots, routes, cultural boundaries, geopolitical space and transnational frontiers.

Historian Paul T. Zeleza describes this constant movement as "multiple belongings."[10] There are various "incentives" for this dynamic mobility. In *Back to Africa* the anthologies explicitly demonstrate how returnees, especially the "Aguda" people from Brazil and Cuba, relocated to Nigeria and Benin, negotiated their identities, and created their own communities in response to the challenges that they were confronted with in their new locales.[11] According to Milton Guran,

> "In order to insert themselves in local society—given their diverse ethnic origins—the ex-slaves valorized their 'stay' in Brazil, as their only common element. It was as if slavery were taken as the starting point for a new life. Thus,

[10] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic, *African Affairs* (2005), 39-41; 54-57; 63-64.

[11] Milton Guran, "The Returnees of Benin, Togo, Nigeria and Ghana," in Kwesi Kwaa Prah (Ed.), *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 112.

> it is exactly the culture acquired in Brazil that commanded the process [of assimilation or disassociation]."[12]

As Guran relates, the dissertation thus pictures identity formations as well as the African Diaspora in Reverse as a kind of stream whose direction of flow cannot be altered easily. Other scholars, including Anthropologist Bayo Holsey, have identified the continual movement of people of African descent in myriad diasporic enclaves in an attempt to come into terms with how to refashion their identity as diasporan blacks and how local Ghanaians identify with slavery.[13] Saidiya V. Hartman sees this kind of voyage by people of African descent as one in pursuit of strangers "who left behind no traces."[14] Kristin Mann's study of *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* also sheds a light on how slavery shaped commerce and identity in tandem.[15] As Mann's work reveals, in the case of the *Tabom* people, their history with slavery has influenced their consciousness about the commercial benefits of sites of memories in their communities.

Historically, the African Diaspora in Reverse has created fledgling ties between people of African descent through their common experiences with slavery; it brings together issues about their common "biological genes," coupling memories of their

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (Il: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 22, 129.

[14] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (NY: Farrah, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 15.

[15] Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), 22. See also Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay (Eds.), *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World I the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), 3-10.

ancestral past, their identities, as well as the cultural bonds they form through constant movements to Africa, the Atlantic world and vice versa. These multiple trajectories allow scholars to study the common bonds between these groups and how descendants of African slaves fashion and refashion their identities over time.[16] The African Diaspora in Reverse also explores debates about citizenship, gender dynamics and the role of diasporan blacks in globalization—especially how the *Tabom* people and other returnee communities in Ghana create, replicate and "consume tourism" in their locales as shown by Tim Coles and Dallen J. Tomothy.[17] (see chapter 5)

Obviously, the African Diaspora in Reverse does not refer to a specific community of people of African descent. Rather, as my study will show it extends from Africa, the Americas and other locations around the globe. In doing so, it draws on thematic and methodological elements that run through these communities. My study also employs an interdisciplinary approach by integrating history, anthropology, diaspora, tourism, heritage studies and the importance of material cultures in my analysis. The research relies on archival sources, interviews and other materials. These interdisciplinary approaches not only allow me to bring multiple interpretations to bear, but facilitate the processes of knowledge building through the use of existing literature and theories while at the same time extending my study to other academic territories that are yet to be

[16] Christopher Adejumo, "Migration and Slavery as Paradigms in the Aesthetic Transformation of Yoruba Art in the Americas," in Toyin Falola, Niyi Afolabi and Adérónké Adésolá Adésányá *Migrations and Creative Expressions in Africa and the African Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), 91-93.

[17] Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy, "'My Field is the World': Conceptualizing Diasporas, Travel and Tourism" in Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (Eds.), *Tourism, Diasporas and Space* (NY: Routledge, 2004), 1.

explored, especially in globalization, tourism and the "performance" of African cultures at sites of memories.[18] (see chapter 1)

A number of works have underscored the significance of African languages and traditional norms to identity formation and cultural pride.[19] In general, the *Tabom* people do not speak Brazilian Portuguese as their ancestors did. Rather, the *Tabom* people speak Ga, Akan, and English because of decades of assimilation in Ga cultures, a local ethnic group in Accra, Ghana's capital.[20] The *Tabom* people have also embraced Akan and other Ghanaian languages because of the history of Akan influences on the Ga people prior to and during the early years of colonial Accra.[21] In short, marriage and different degrees of acculturation forced descendants of Afro-Brazilians to gravitate culturally and socially towards Ghanaian value systems.

To help the community connect to Brazil linguistically, the Brazilian Government sponsored Marco A. Schaumloeffel, a Brazilian and an official of the Brazilian Embassy in Ghana, to teach the current generation Brazilian Portuguese beginning in 2004. However, this effort did not make any major significant impact on the community

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[18] Paulla Ebron, *Performing Africa* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1.

[19] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 17. George B.N. Ayittey, *Indigenous African Institutions* (NY: Transnational Publishers Inc., 1991), xxvii.

[20] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 2.

[21] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 2-16.

because of their lack of interest and their constant movements to other locations.[22] (see chapter 5)

I have already conducted over forty interviews in Ga and Akan, the most common language of the community besides English. During my first interview with Mantse Nii Azumah V (chief or the leader of the community) in summer 2005, the dialogue remained informal because of my fluency in these two languages. My study depends on an ethnographic approach (interviews) because of lack of sources or archival works on the new generation of the *Tabom* people. This is especially the case because I was interested in documenting their future plans to visit Brazil.[23] As the next half of this chapter will show, the cultural dynamics and the extent to which my interactions and dialogue with the *Mantse* transpired did not develop overnight for there were a number of historical traditions such as stringent cultural protocols that made this possible. (see chapter 3)

The Background of Afro-Brazilian History in Ghana: A Historical Chronology

The early 1800s witnessed the exodus of former slaves from Brazil to Africa. It comprised of a tripartite of historical events: those who gained manumissions, those who were deported after slave rebellions of 1835 or who supposedly committed various crimes, and those who returned voluntarily and settled in Benin, Togo, Nigeria and other

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[22] George Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, 6 August 2008, 1.

[23] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 1.

coastal areas after the demise of slavery in 1888.[24] There are threads of diasporas in reverse running through scholarship during the last two decades, yet in West Africa scholars have not fully explored all these returnee communities. Existing literature often limits the scope to communities that developed in Benin, Togo and Nigeria, underplaying other viable aspects tied to Afro-Brazilian history in Africa.[25] My project fills in this gap by placing tourism, historical monuments in the *Tabom* community, and the voices of women and the youth at the center of my analysis in the reconstruction of the *Tabom* account. Specifically, my study examines the history of the *Tabom* people to show how they are reconstructing their identity and history. It also explores the various ways they are transforming old historical monuments within their communities to generate revenue through tourism.

My dissertation will show that the case of the *Tabom* people, Ghana offers a trans-national historical framework for explaining the African Diaspora in reverse. This thesis is entrenched in the notion that through the post-abolitionist returnee movements, scholars could incorporate neglected studies on reverse mobility into broader discourse on diaspora— particularly, through the narratives of Brazilian returnees who relocated to Ghana after the tripartite historical events I have stated earlier. Tracing the history of Brazilians in Ghana from 1820s through 2009 is important because it shows how the history of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana evolved from one generation to the next—especially

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[24] Joao Jose Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835 in Bahia* (MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 21-28; 139-140. See also Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808-1850* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 320-322.

[25] Michael J. Turner, *Les Bresiliens— The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey* (Ph. D Dissertation: Boston University, 1975), 370.

how acculturation (sharing of cultures) by returnees turned into assimilation or immersion into local cultures after their demise. The history of their descendants continued through the twenty first century.

A major transformation occurred in “Brazilian colonies”—the various areas of Afro-Brazilian settlements in Ghana from the early 1800s on as the first generation relocated. According to oral traditions and archival evidence the first group of returnees maintained their Portuguese identities by maintaining Portuguese language and by dressing in suits as Europeans.[26] As noted earlier their offspring did not follow this tradition. The ways in which the early settlers and their descendants fashioned their identities raises an important theoretical and historical question which will be addressed in chapter 3.

In this regard, the dissertation re-examines and extends Paul Gilroy’s thought provoking work, *The Black Atlantic* and others of its ilk to reframe the debate about the fluidity in identity constructions this time in returnee communities in Ghana. Gilroy posits that slaves and their descendants in North America constructed their identities through the routes of the middle passage or their socialization in New World cultures.[27] The same case can be made about returnees who imagined their own communities in their ancestral homeland in Africa.[28]

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[26] George Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, August 6, 2008, 1.

[27] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), x; 1-16.

[28] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (NY: Verso, 1991), 5-7.

Indeed, it is clear that not all returnees transported or showcased their New World identities as in the case of the early Afro-Brazilian settlers in Accra. A section of their population especially the younger ones "juggled" between their Brazilian identities and the local cultures they were introduced to. For others, their identities were shaped by dominant cultures at their new places of settlements or where their offspring were born later.[29] In short, they embraced both their Brazilian and Ghanaian cultures.[30] In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois characterized the dual cultural heritage in the history of people of African descent as double consciousness or identity crisis.[31] This dissertation treats identity formations in Brazilian colonies in Ghana in two fronts: those that were constructed through the routes of the middle passage and others that evolved through their roots or ancestral connections to Africa. This is explained in chapter 3.

My interaction with the history of Afro-Brazilian returnees in Ghana has taken shape over the years. This dissertation project which began in the summer of 2004 when I was writing about African Americans in Ghana, cumulated in a curious academic venture that eventually led to another visit the following year, this time to the *Tabom* community at Otublohum and the Brazilian Embassy, both in Accra. Most of the members of the

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[29] Femi Ojo-Ade, "Afro-Brazilians in Lagos: A Question of Home or Exile" in in Kwesi Kwaa Prah (Ed.), *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 210-211; 219-227.

[30] One case in point is João Antonio Nelson who was born in Brazil and arrived on the shores of Accra at the age of three years in 1829. Oral traditions show that he lived as a "Brazilian" in his early years. He was later selected as the second *Tabom* Mantse from 1865-1900 where he followed Ga chieftancy traditions. His royal title was Azumah Nelson II. Nelson to Colonial Secretary, February 23, 1897, 1.

[31] David W. Blight and Gooding-Williams (Eds.), *The Souls of Black Folk* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1997), 1-3. See also Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri H. Oliver, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Souls of Black Folk* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), ix.

community cluster in Accra where I had my Polytechnic education. Although the *Tabom* people, especially the current generation, share a more striking cultural resemblance with the people in my community where I was raised, going back to Ghana this time felt like charting an unknown academic path. It took almost a year for me to interview Nii Azumah V, the *Tabom Mantse* and the current leader of the *Tabom* community because of the protocols that are involved in talking to a person of such prominence in Ghanaian society. In the Ga language, *Mantse* means chief or king.[32]

In *Drink, Power and Culture Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times*, Historian Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong, underscores the significance of alcohol and the vital position it occupies in Ghanaian social and religious customs.[33] As one of the descendants evoked in one of the court proceedings, "there is no Brazilian custom in Accra different from the Accra custom; the custom applicable to the Brazilian is the Accra or Ga custom in all matters."[34]

As indicated here and we shall see in chapter 3, the *Tabom* cultural traditions in general are embedded both in Ghanaian and Brazilian cultural norms. There are other

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[32] Officials at the Brazilian Embassy, especially Mr. Frank C.K. Dugbley, a Ghanaian member of staff and Marco Aurelio Schaumloeffel, a Brazilian who was appointed by the Brazilian government to teach Brazilian Portuguese at the Ghana institute of Languages, Accra were willing to help me to set up an appointment with the *Mantse*, but they also had to go through 'red-tape' to introduce me to Nii Azumah V. I finally got his phone number through a Radio Talk Show host in Accra who had a direct contact with the chief because of a previous interview between them. In fact, the chief was unhappy when I called him the first time on August 12, 2005 because I was breaking a tradition by talking directly with him. However, Nii Azumah V gave me the phone number of Mr. Sam Nelson, his linguist (in Western terms his public relation officer or the 'go-between'). The late Sam Nelson was the former Ghanaian Minister of Sports. Mr. Frank C.K. Dugbley, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 January 2005, 1.

[33] Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Culture Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth, N.H: 1996), 12-15.

[34] LS No. 214/1956, Clegg v. Cobblah, April 1, 1957, 2.

intertwined cultural components in Brazilian and Ghanaian cultural traditions. For instance, during our first meeting which lasted for about two and half hours, I was instructed by the linguist, the chief's representative to present a bottle of schnapps (alcoholic drink) and to perform some rituals such as the pouring of a libation.[35] With the aid of a questionnaire and a tape recorder, I was able to conduct this important interview for it was the initial path towards a journey to reconstruct their history.

It is evident that the *Tabom* people and the local people of Accra, the Gas, share a number of things in common, including the Ga language. My fluency in the language of the people of Accra facilitated my research. Because the traditional protocols of the contemporary generation intertwine on many levels with Ghanaian cultural rituals, I was required to speak to the chief indirectly—meaning, I had to address the linguist (in Ga language) who in turn repeated what I said before the chief responded to me directly. These shared cultural traits between Ghanaians and the *Tabom* people are significant because it solidifies a facet of the thesis in my study. It also emphasizes the notion that the current generation lean more closely towards a Ghanaian identity and cultural practices than their forebears did. Chapter 3 highlights this important component to show the differences that existed between the first generation and the subsequent ones, especially how acculturation gave way to integration into local cultures in the early 1900s.

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[35] Steve J. Salm and Toyin Falola, *Culture and Customs of Ghana* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 128.

In terms of the history of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana, there is ongoing debate about when and how returnees moved from one location to the other along the Bight of Benin. In general, the *Tabom* history is “buried” within a broader historiography of returnee communities on the Bight of Benin because current records about the community show that settlement patterns originated from either Benin, Togo or Nigeria towards the Gold Coast (outside-in) rather than the other way round (inside-out). Indeed, references from court cases show evidence of Afro-Brazilians in the Gold Coast visiting other areas in West Africa on few occasions, compared to references that were made from the outside-in.[36] An understanding of these constant movements will assist in explaining how often returnees traveled to the then Gold Coast either to trade, to visit or to settle permanently.

What seems to be missing in this analysis of the geographical focus is the overriding assumption that returnees likely had ancestral roots to the Bight of Benin rather than Angola or other areas around the Indian Ocean where other studies have shown that slaves were captured and brought to the New World. In fact, Roquinaldo Ferreira’s new undertaking on this important subject provides a new insight about the history of returnee communities in Angola.[37] This is another area that is opened for further academic exploration.

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[36] NAG, Divisional Court, STC 20/7/45 Isaac Cobblah Fiscian vs. Henry Asumah Nelson and Sohby Baksmathy, 2.

[37] Requinaldo Ferreira, “Atlantic Microhistories: Slaving, Mobility and Personal Ties in the Atlantic World” in Kwesi Kwaa Prah (Ed.), *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 75. See also Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 23-32.

In terms of the processes of migrations from Brazil to Ghana or from the Bight of Benin to Ghana there is an agreement between the *Tabom* people and scholars about how the early "settlers" were welcomed to the Otublohum area, a major cultural and commercial center for the people of Accra, the Gas. The consensus is that returnees who relocated to this geographical region along the Gold Coast were first welcomed around 1820s or 1830s by the then Ga Mantse Nii Ankrah who was responsible for the affairs of the community. Mantse Ankrah later introduced the leaders of the early returnees to Mantse Nii Komeh I, the king who was responsible for the entire regions of Accra. Mantse Tackie Tawiah, who inherited from king Komeh I, also played a pivotal role during the interactions and mutual exchanges between Brazilians and the Ga people. Besides, as chapter 2 shows, Mantse Tawiah was a leading voice in what is now known in Ghana as the Greater Accra region. Mantse Tawiah was an influential actor and a formidable advocate against colonial intrusion in the area. Encounters between the British and Mantse Tawiah were filled with tension to the extent that the British had to send the chief into exile to prevent further interference and "uprisings" by the Ga people.[38] Paradoxically, Mantse Tawiah and a number of *Tabom* people appeared in colonial courts during disputes over land tenure.[39]

The story goes that the returnees were offered a large virgin area of land for farming and for settlement purposes. From the late 1800s and the 1920s, the Brazilians and some of their descendants put the land to good use and contributed to food

[38] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 104-106.

[39] Tackie v. Nelson, SCT 2/4/19 Vol. 8, September 29, 1892, 1-37.

production in the area and the neighboring communities. A reference by Elder Nii Azumah Nelson and evidence provided by plaintiffs and defendants in various court cases between 1885 and 1964 establish that the land was located around Fonafor Valley and Akwandor, which is now part of central Accra around Accra Polytechnic, the Examination Council of Ghana, the Ghana National Archives towards Tudu, Adabraka and part of the Accra-Nsawam road around Kwame Nkrumah Circle.[40] Other returnees used their skills in tailoring and in technology, especially digging wells for water to improve poor water conditions in Accra in the nineteenth century.[41]

One cannot fully appreciate Afro-Brazilian history if no effort is made to compare relations between the *Tabom* people's experience with symbols of slavery in other locations in Ghana.[42] Like, other returnees who have invested in tourism and other forms of economic and cultural activities to protect and promote their cultural and economic interests, descendants of Afro-Brazilians are also making gains in their efforts to transform existing historical monuments in their community to raise revenue to improve their communities. Through this effort and with the support of the Brazilian Embassy in Accra, the Brazilian government and the involvement of the Ghanaian government and the Ghana Tourist and Monuments Board, the first major tourist site, the "Brazil House,"

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[40] George Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, 6 August 2008, 2; NAG, Divisional Court, STC 20/7/45 Isaac Cobblah Fiscian vs. Henry Asumah Nelson and Sohby Baksmathy, 2.

[41] CVA 45/49, March 9, 1949, 57.

[42] Sandra L. Richards, "What is to be Remembered: Tourism to Ghana's Slave Castle-Dungeons" *Theatre Journal* 57 (2005), 317, 617, 622. See also Jennifer Hasty, "Rites of Passage, Routes of Redemption: Emancipation Tourism and wealth of Culture" *Africa Today*, 49.3 (2002), 3,9; 22; Christopher R. DeCorse, *An Archaeology of Elmina: Africans and Europeans on the Gold Coast, 14000-1900* (DC: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2001), 11-15.

was remodeled and opened for tourism on November 15, 2007.[43] Part of this chapter will describe the various historical monuments in the community and their significance to *Tabom* history and identity. Debates about the significance of Elmina and Cape Coast castles will also be used. In short, the *Tabom* leaders share a similar concern about historical sites, especially how to manage landmarks with ties to slavery.

The dissertation also explores another feature in the fledgling relations: the role of the Brazilian government and embassy. Since the 1960s, both the Brazilian government and the Embassy in Accra have become major actors and active participants in the reconstruction of *Tabom* history. In 1961, former Brazilian President Janio Quadros appointed Raymundo Souza Dantas as the first Afro-Brazilian ambassador to Ghana after the demise of British rule four years earlier. As Anani Dzidzienyo points out, the tenure of Dantas epitomized contradictions in Brazil's foreign relations with Africa. In Dzidzienyo's words,

> "Brazil's use of history and African culture to present the country and its people to newly independent African countries was an innovation. The problem was not so much with the idea as the way in which it was put into operation. Not assigning a conspicuous role to Afro-Brazilian by way of given proof, positive to the

[43] Samuel Amoako, "Ghana Seeks Brazil's Support for Progress," *The Ghanaian Times*, April 13, 2005, 1; "Ghana, Brazil forge ties in commerce," *The Ghanaian Times*, 14 April 2005, 1. Cliff Ekuful, "The d-day is here: Ghana Brazilians divided in loyalty," *The Ghanaian Times*, 27 June, 2006, 1; Ghana News Agency, "Brazilian President Honored with Ghana's Highest State Award," *The Daily Dispatch*, 15 April 2005, 3. Ghana News Agency, "Brazilian President Honored with Ghana's Highest State Award," *The Daily Dispatch*, 15 April 2005, 3.

rhetorical flourishes, became a reality. One Afro-Brazilian ambassador in nearly half a century is quite a record."[44]

Indeed, Dzidzienyo's observation underscores the challenges that confront the Brazilian government over a century after the demise of slavery in Brazil.[45] The multifaceted nature of race and racism in Brazil and its implication to the future visit by the *Tabom* people is included in the dissertation.

The Embassy has provided various incentives that have not only benefited the *Tabom* community but the Ghanaian population in general. They include scholarship programs for Ghanaian students and basic lessons in Portuguese, specifically for members of the *Tabom* communities. The Embassy also funded various programs, including the restoration of the Brazilian House in 2007.[46] The new *Tabom* leader, Nii Azumah V deserves praise for successfully engaging the Brazilian Government in strengthening cultural relations between Brazil and Ghana.

The dissertation develops an argument that points to divisions within various family groupings in the community over how to preserve or manage the Brazil House and other historical symbols in the community. By and large, the dissertation argues that if these problems are not resolved they would not only delay the prospect of visiting Brazil, but would discourage those who have already expressed interest in the welfare of the

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[44] Anani Dzidzienyo, "The Challenges of Africa and Brazil: Looking Ahead by Reconsidering the Record," in Kwesi Kwaa Prah (Ed.), *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 16.

[45] Niyi Afolabi, *Afro-Brazilians: Cultural Production in a Racial Democracy* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009), 2-15; 22-24.

[46] Nii Azumah Nelson V, interview by Kwame Essien on August 1, 2007, 1.

community from carrying out their support. This chapter is contentious because it aspires to historicize "private issues" in the community that most members are reluctant to talk about, let alone make available for public "consumption" or for historical documentation. Indeed, as a historian of African and African Diaspora history, such silences are part of a broader discourse and challenges other researchers grapple with and outside this discipline. What should or should not be included in the narratives in the field of history? What should be the response of a researcher? Indeed, such revelation or outcome not only threatens possibilities of creating a viable relation with the community we study. What will be the result or the chances of unearthing other "hidden" documents or unknown accounts of the Afro-Brazilian encounter and settlement in Ghana if one takes the other route of scholarly apathy? It is this daunting task and "risk" that the study seeks to accomplish as I contribute to knowledge production in the field of the African Diaspora in Reverse.

Significance of the Study

As stated earlier, studies about African Diaspora in Reverse have been limited often to communities that developed a few areas in West Africa, with less attention paid to other settlement areas in Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana. My dissertation fills in this gap by highlighting the obscured history of the *Tabom* people. This project adds to the current state of knowledge by highlighting the ways in which material culture influences the reconstruction of an African and African Diaspora heritage. The dissertation shows how tourism is gaining ground in *Tabom* communities. The *Tabom* people's efforts to channel tourism to their areas of settlement is an attempt by the new generation and their

leaders to benefit financially through revenues as other returnees have in Ghana, particularly African American entrepreneurs who have invested in hotel management, motels, car rentals and other areas of tourism since the 1990s.[47]

With regards to its regional dimension, although my project's analysis focuses mainly on Ghana, it connects two other regions: South America and North America. In doing so it is grounded within existing scholarship linking Africa and the African Diaspora. Overall, the dissertation provides a base for African-Brazilian dialogue. It also enhances the mutual cultural and economic connections existing between Ghana and Brazil since the 1960s. This study showcases historical landmarks such as the "Brazil House" and points to other historical symbols in the communities, such as the "First Scissor House" which was built by the early settlers in 1854 to continue their skills in tailoring, as future sites for the World Cultural Heritage projects.[48] Finally, my study contributes to a body of work that emphasizes economic and archaeological components; and underscores the significance of tourism and globalization in the African diaspora studies.

Overview of Chapters

AN EPIGRAPH WILL BE USED in each chapter to introduce the section. This is important for the narratives because it places the chapter in context. Chapter 1 provides

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[47] Kwame Essien "African Americans in Ghana and Their Contributions to 'Nation Building:' 1985 through 2004." In Alusine Jalloh and Toyin Falola (Eds.), *The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations* (NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 161-166.

[48] The First Scissor House was destroyed by fire on October 19, 2007. There are ongoing efforts by Nii Azumah V to raise funds to rebuild this important historical monument as it was done in the case of Brazil House.

an Atlantic framework for situating the Afro-Brazilian account in a broader historiographic context and for exploring other emerging themes elsewhere. The origin of the Diasporas in Reverse is significant not only because it widens the scope and the experiences of people of African descent in the New World and on the continent, but it creates a narrative that crosses over cultures, boundaries and oceans. This chapter argues that the twenty first century provides a new avenue for exploring continuity in the formation of reverse African diasporas in different locations.

Chapter 2 shows the premise for creating African Diasporas in reverse, most notably the driving forces that prompted the notion of a return to an African "homeland." What were the challenges for a returning community of former slaves and how did they negotiate their return religiously, culturally, economically and socially? Historical conditions within the New World, especially the abolition of slavery in the early 1900s, and its in part on the Gold Coast has a peculiar meaning in the Afro-Brazilian history. Therefore, this chapter underscores the implications of slavery both on the local and continental level. The impact of colonialism, property rights, land issues and the role of local chiefs will also be underscored.

Returnees' involvement in slavery for economic gains or for domestic use is a very controversial subject. In some ways, this activity has tarnished the image of the community because it has complicated discourse about their experiences as slaves in Brazil.[49] Obviously, one cannot point fingers at the Brazilians without taking into

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[49] Elisée Soumonni, "The Aguda of Benin: From the Memory of Brazil to the Construction of a Community Identity" in Kwesi Kwaa Prah (Ed.), *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 262-267.

consideration the historical conditions that existed in Accra during the early 1800s.[50] John Parker explains the nature of slavery in the Gold Coast, especially among the Ga people prior to the arrival of the returnees. In short, the dissertation charges that returnees did not invent slavery along the coastal areas of Otublohum, Accra, rather, they took advantage of opportunities already available to achieve power and economic advancement.[51] Also, the chapter is significant because it sets out a premise for explaining why some members of the contemporary generation are not forthcoming with this "dark side" of their past. This guilt might be justifiable in recent times, but the traditions in Accra in the nineteen century and early twentieth century's cushioned returnees' self-reproach.

Chapter 3 seeks to shed a light on the differences between the Brazilians or Afro-Brazilians and their descendants. A particular attention is given to communal activities within returnee communities from the 1820s through the early periods of the 1900s. This chapter argues that the advent of colonialism was an important era and a watershed moment in the Afro-Brazilian history because it shows how returnees unified to confront again colonial presence, this time in Africa—in contrast to divisions among the subsequent generation. A case in point is the arrest of João Antonio Nelson Nelson (Nii Azumah II) who was imprisoned together with other chiefs of Accra for protesting against British policies, including the Compulsory Labor Ordinance of 1895. The British

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[50] RG 5/1/89, April 4, 1931, 27.

[51] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 23-29.

authorities imposed a £25.00 fine on the *Tabom* chief.[52] This example shows how the returnees, as did other Ghanaian nationalist leaders who came after them, contributed to the decolonization process in Ghana. Ghanaian historiography need to be rewritten to accommodate this experience.

How the first generation related to their children and passed on their skills in farming, fishing, tailoring, digging wells and transferred their properties and Muslim religion is also documented in this chapter. Chapter 3 also marks the end of one generation and the beginning of another. Unlike the first generation that preserved their Brazilian cultures and traditions such as the use of Portuguese language, names and the way they dressed as Europeans, their descendants did not continue these traditions. According to historian Quarcoopome, the subsequent generation assimilated into the cultures of the then Gold Coast around the early 1920s, intermarried with the local people, and as a result speaks Ga and other local languages.[53] The adoption of Ghanaian cultures and traditions brought a great deal of comfort to the *Tabom* people. In fact, it offered them the opportunity not only to inherit properties that were transferred to them by their forebears but it allowed the community to participate in the social, economic and political fabrics of Ghana. It concludes with descendant's contributions to various social-economic and political activities as it was in the case of the first settlers.

At the advent of British colonial rule, land tenure and disputes were carried out mainly by colonial courts, native tribunals, chiefs, community leaders and family heads.

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[52] Nelson to Colonial Secretary, February 23, 1897, 1

[53] Samuel Quarcoopome, *The Brazilian Community of Ghana* (Dissertation, University of Ghana, June 1970), 6.

Chapter 4, the shortest in the dissertation, shows the intersection between colonial laws and local directives and how these laws shaped disputes over land in *Tabom* communities. The ways in which the returnees gained attention from the local leaders of Otublohum, Accra especially *Mantsemɛi* Komey I, Ankrah, Tawiah and other community leaders, as well as conflicts between the chiefs and the British in Accra, deserve attention here. Finally, the chapter show how the descendants became divided after lingering lawsuits and counter-lawsuits as they sought to reclaim portions of land that were legally or illegally sold to non-members of the Afro-Brazilian community.[54] Part of the argument in the study is that conflicts within the community beginning at the dawn of the twentieth century set up grounds for future disputes over the selection of leaders to represent the community and the management of property such as the "Brazil House." Existing conflicts have also created apathy in the community about the importance of their history.

An aspect of Chapter 5 also shows the distinction between the ways in which the older people and the younger ones constructed their identity, produced, reproduced or ignored their history. Indeed, as this section demonstrates, based on the central thesis of my study, the younger generation is far removed from the history of their forebears. For decades most of the members of the second generation, as well as their children and grand-children, made Ghana their permanent home. Most of the integration has been influenced by ongoing assimilation, especially in areas of marriage, socialization and the *Tabom* people's participation in *Homowo*, the annual festival of the Ga people.

[54] CVA 45/ 59 Suit No. 997/36, March 9, 1949, 55. See also CVA 40/56, January 24, 1958, 25.

The unsuccessful attempt by the elders of the community to visit Brazil for the first time has also made it difficult for the younger generation—Ghanaian citizens—to fathom the reality of a second ancestral homeland in Brazil. Chapter 5 explains how the *Tabom* people forged or continue to solidify their ties with the Brazilian government and embassy in Ghana. This chapter briefly shows how the Brazilian Embassy in Accra acts as a bridge and how it has interacted with the *Tabom* community since the 1960s.

Not only does this chapter build on the previous chapters but it provides another dimension to the multifaceted movements back and forth to Africa and the New World as people of African descent seek ways to refashion their identity and to showcase their dual heritage. The "push and pull" factors in the process of identity formation in diasporan communities have resonated in the Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana. Put differently, the *Tabom* people's effort to visit Brazil is part of what has been characterized as intricate memberships in the African diaspora.[55] Besides, chapter 5 probes socio-economic incentives in the *Tabom* community and how tourism in Ghana has energized the *Tabom* "base," and in some ways hastened the yearning to visit Brazil for the first time.

Finally, as stated earlier, *Nkyinkyim* does not have a fixed point of origin and an end location. Reminiscent of *Nkyinkyim*, the African Diaspora in Reverse is not one-dimensional, and like a web, it has multiple layers that link several unique historical events, themes of identity formation and reformation as well as cultures. Obviously, there is a possibility of a "return to Brazil." However, the odds are that it could happen not

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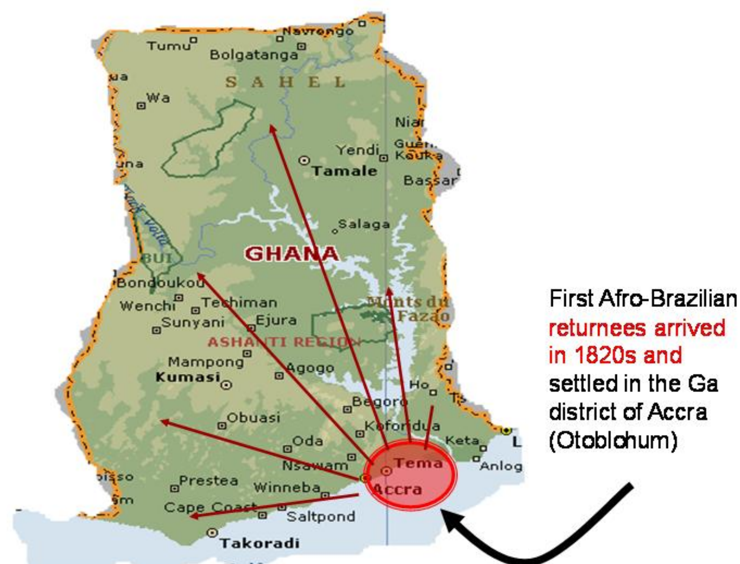
[55] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic, *African Affairs* (2005), 39-41; 54-57; 63-64.

only on the premise that descendants are able to raise enough funds for this visit nor if they are able to unite towards a common goal.

Much of this dream is predicated on two other factors: the legacy of the current generation and the future of the community which rests on the younger generation. Without a doubt, this generation has either not been given a major role to play in efforts to preserve their history. On the other hand, most members of this generation identify more as Ghanaians than as *Tabom* people. In short, looming silences in the community could be erased or minimized if the future generation, from different *Tabom* "family trees," becomes more involved in affairs of the community instead of the current state or structure of their leadership which seems to favor only adults. This could threaten the future and the "survival" of the *Tabom* people.

Figure 1: The Geographical Distribution of the *Tabom* people within Ghana



Chapter One
Degrees of Return: The Origins of the African Diaspora in Reverse

Introduction

"No matter where you come from, as long as you are black, you are an African."

Peter Tosh.

Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the conceptions of the Diaspora, but it does not seek to cover all segments or dimensions of dispersals in Africa and the African Diaspora. Rather, it explores the ideology behind notions of African Diaspora in reverse: the reciprocal connections to multiple destinations in Africa and the Atlantic world, and its implications for the study of African and Atlantic world history. This chapter examines interwoven themes, theories, paradigms and debates that are embedded in diasporan communities with ties to the middle passage. The first half of this chapter delves into the origin of the African Diaspora in reverse, beginning with diasporas that emerged in Africa prior to the fifteenth century or the middle passage. The second section situates the African Diaspora in reverse in an Atlantic framework and literature to explain how the history of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana overlaps with other historical accounts relating to movements and identity formation. The last part of the chapter underscores the focus of my study by highlighting the significance of a future visit to Brazil by descendants of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana—the *Tabom* people—to the study of African history and the African Diaspora in reverse. It does so by locating and establishing these parallel experiences within a wider historiographical context.

This chapter argues that the twenty first century provides a new avenue for exploring continuity in the formation of reverse African Diasporas in different geographical locations. As stated earlier, the objective here is to compare and contrast experiences of the *Tabom* people with other facets of diasporan history and the similar themes that emerged elsewhere. It also posits that each African diasporic experience encompasses discrete events and cultural elements that deserve separate scholarly evaluation. Indeed, a number of historical events in the African Diaspora share similar themes such as memory, imagination of an ancestral homeland in Africa and the need to relocate to refashion their identity. Afro-Brazilian returnees who share this long tradition migrated to the Bight of Benin, especially on the Gold Coast in the 1800s.[56] Over a century later, their descendants —the *Tabom* people, are talking about another reverse movement, this time to Brazil.[57]

The origin of the African Diaspora in reverse is significant not only because it shows the shared experiences of former slaves and their descendants, but also because it widens the scope of this subject as scholars interrogate the experiences of people of African descent both in the New World and Africa. Additionally, such interconnected analysis provides a narrative that transcends cultures, boundaries and traditions which

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[56] Nii Azumah Nelson V, interview by Kwame Essien on July 4, 2007. See also Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port,' 1727-1892* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004).

[57] Jose C Curto and Paul E. Lovejoy (Eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (New York: Humanity Books, 2004), 15-16. See also Solimar Otero, *Orunile: Heaven is Home, Yoruba and Afrocuban Diasporas Across the Atlantic* (PhD Dissertation), 1-4. For returnees from North America and the Caribbean see Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 6, 17, 266; Nemata Amelia Blyden's *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000), 7-15; Ibrahim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 9-13.

scholars often search for in one location. It also provides a premise for articulating discourses about reverse migrations.

This chapter also places memory at the center of my analysis, as I interrogate complex reverse migrations to Africa and to the New World. Obviously, memory has played a pivotal role in relations between people of African descent since the end of slavery. However, memory could be authentic or an illusion.[58] How has entangled memory shaped relations between people of African descent? What are the recollections of blacks in the Atlantic world about Africa, and the African memories of the experiences of slavery and the middle passage? As Anthropologist Pilar Riano-Alcala argues, "memory as a cultural practice is a bridge between the individual and the collective that facilitates processes of identity construction" and preservation.[59] In short, memory and identity walk side by side. Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, the African-American intellectual and pan-Africanist puts the metaphor better this way: "Two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."[60] How does the back-and-forth which Du Bois conceives contribute to the recollection of home and the notion of a return to Africa?

It is evident that memory of a place does not guarantee acceptance. Indeed, a "Homecoming" does not automatically unite a divided people, who have been separated

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[58] Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space and the Dialects of Memory* (CA: University of California Press, 1999), 27.

[59] Pilar Riano-Alcala, *Dwellers of Memory: Youth and Violence in Medellin, Columbia* (NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 11.

[60] Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri H. Oliver, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Souls of Black Folk* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), ix. See also Robert Johnson Jr., *Why Blacks Left America for Africa: Interview with Black Expatriates, 1971-1999* (Westport: Praeger, 1999), xvii.

by time and space for over five centuries. Such interactions and migrations unearth a lingering legacy of slavery. For many returnees, their determination to return surpassed negative perceptions and challenges they encountered as they imagined a home elsewhere. These were the motivations that enabled returnees to overcome the reality of rejection, as they interacted and engaged with the local people from the early 1800s on. Like a vicious cycle, memory of home has informed and stimulated black history since the onset of the middle passage. In this regard, it is significant to add that memory of a homeland has a strong attachment to historical landmarks and sites such as the slave dungeons and forts along the coastline of Ghana and buildings within *Tabom* communities. For descendants of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana, these material cultures or archaeological remains epitomize visual aspects of collective memory of their Brazilian past. Indeed, memory can be misleading and contradictory. In other words, memory based on fantasy or illusion can be disrupted when confronted by reality.

The epigraph of this chapter, an excerpt from the lyrics by Peter Tosh, the legend of the Jamaican reggae musician could be true in the musical world. But, not every person of African ancestry would agree with the notion that "no matter where you come from, as long as you are black—you are an African" which the lyrics aspired to convey. Tosh's suggestion that a "one drop" ancestral blood connection makes anyone of African heritage an African is problematic, because it does not take into consideration contestations over who is black, who is of African ancestry or part of the diaspora, especially since not all people with ties to slavery identify as black or African. It is clear that this song contributes to the layers of academic and socio-political constructs that

homogenizes the offspring of slaves. In fact, from the onset of the middle passage to the post abolition era, the names of descendants of slaves have oscillated from one definition to the other—from Africans to Brazilians to Ghanaian-Brazilians to the *Tabom* peope or Ghanaians. As we shall see in the next two chapters, returnees negotiated their identity differently.

Clearly, the imposition of and the metamorphosis of blackness or Africaness, from African—to blacks—to Afros or other identification over time transcends Tosh's lyrics. Put differently, the complex construction and reframing of African identities cannot be restricted to the definition of a "black" or "African" man as Tosh seems to simplify it. These constructs are relative groupings that are imbued with dynamic historical progressions since the onset of the sixteenth century. Metaphorically, these shades of names speak of the shifting fibres of the "transatlantic rope" that tied slaves from Africa to the transatlantic world. The character of slavery has evolved alongside the identities and cultures they sprouted thereafter.

Similar to the fluidity or classification of people of African descent above, the concept of diaspora is also a continuum, meaning it is unending and cyclical. Indeed, the African Diaspora and Africa have a lot in common. These two geographical areas have a long history of commerce, religious conversions, cultural exchanges, socio-political interactions, and the transmission of technology and knowledge, among others. "Diaspora" emerged from the Greek world "diasperien." It is traced through the root word "dia", meaning across and the word; "sperien," which expresses the idea of dispersals or spread and movement from one point to the other in cyclical motion. Put

together, the concept of diaspora simply conveys the notion of dispersals and scatterings, which was either created through a single movement or multiple mobilities by individuals, families or groups.

The African Diasporas in reverse, the main focus of my study builds, on the other hand, on notions of diaspora. However, it expands the conversation by exploring other multifaceted forms of mobilization from the New World to Africa back to the New World and to Africa, as in the case of descendants of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana, the *Tabom* people who are in the process of visiting Brazil for the first time.[61] The 'Z-path' or 'cyclic Z-migrations' which literary refers to the continuing nature of movements, settlements and re-settlements across the New World and Africa deserve attention in the study of the African diasporas in reverse. The multifaceted mobility that has occurred within diasporan communities since the fifteenth century has driven or continues to frame the study of diaspora in tandem with transforming identities. The experiences transpired over time as returnees moved back and forth to known and unknown locations.

Pre-Middle Passage Diasporas and Others: Theories, Studies and Meanings

Literature about pre-middle passage diasporas in Africa has not gained sufficient attention although this important historical era also provides insight into the origins of the African Diaspora. Existing theories about this subject are mostly generated by archaeologists, scientists, historians, demographers and researchers in other disciplines that emphasize that Africa is the origin of civilization and development. Archaeological

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[61] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 7, 2007, 1.

findings, in particular, have advanced the study and scholars in this field have articulated forcefully that diaspora is tied to the African continent, the birth place of the human population. Archaeological analysis also draws attention to the role of hunters and gatherers in the formation of various communities that emerged across geographical boundaries in the Iron-Age and the period thereafter. Pre-New World diasporas on the African continent were influenced by commercial migrations, religious movements and other activities that were conducted back and forth as people moved, settled, relocated and constructed new identities and cultures along the way. These moving diasporas share some things in common with paradigms of trade diasporas.[62]

In his formulation of five conditions for defining the diaspora, Colin A. Palmer credited the expansion or migration of Bantu speaking people during and after the Iron-Age.[63] Carole Boyce Davies on the other hand traces diasporas to the intellectual or academic works that emerged in 'African institutions' in Timbuktu, the old Ghana Empire, now Mali; and others that surfaced in Alexandria, Egypt around the fourteenth century.[64] Clearly, the conceptualization of the African diaspora predates discourses or stringent paradigms that were formulated in the academy of the early twentieth century.

Scholars who hold that the African diaspora emerged before slaves were forced into bondage in the Americas do not deny the importance of disporas outside Africa.

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[62] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (UK: UCL Press, 1997), 83.

[63] Colin A. Palmer, "Defining and studying the Modern African Diaspora," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 85, No. ½ (Winter-Spring 2000), 28.

[64] Carole Boyce Davies (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora: Origins, Experiences and Culture*, Vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), xxxvi.

Instead, they have underscored the significance of movements that existed earlier. Based on this premise, these scholars draw their analysis from the trans-regional networks and cultural activities that took place during the reigns of the Ghana, Dahomey, Oyo Empire's from the sixteenth through early nineteenth century. Both literary writers and nationalist historians used a similar argument to establish that the people on the African continent had a form of civilization prior to European contact and the transatlantic slave trade. They were strongly convinced that these constructive developments occurred within diasporas that emerged on the African continent as a result of cultural, religious, economic and political interactions that emerged during this period.

It is clear that the creation of new communities in various areas in Africa did not gain much attention. This could be partly blamed on a one-dimensional approach to scholarship that focused mainly on the lives and activities of slaves and their descendants in the New World as well as discourses on Western imperialism. The unbalanced focus contributed to the silences of internal movements that occurred in Africa prior to the establishment of artificial colonial boundaries in the late nineteenth century. Also, diversity within traveling diasporas on the African continent shaped relations and contributed to the formation of new identities similar to those that emerged during post emancipation and after the demise of colonialism. It also came with a price.

Obviously, the shades of cultures and religions in pre-middle passage Africa created unity and divisions at the same time as other diasporan communities in the Atlantic world. Some of these rifts included tensions between the "first comers," the local people, and "new comers" or "outsiders" who relocated to these areas thereafter. In some

cases, these tensions were generated because of the expertise, skills, religions or unique value systems newcomers such as hunters, gatherers, farmers and herders transmitted to their new locations. In short, people who migrated from one point to the other in the fifteenth century posed a threat to the locals both before and after the middle passage.[65] Diasporas on the continent and those outside have experienced similar challenges about return to a homeland they aspire to be part of. Just as there are contestations between tourists, pilgrims and returnees or others who return to their ancestral homeland elsewhere for religious and cultural reasons, so is the case of African diasporan tourists, pilgrims and returnees who go back to Africa.[66]

It is evident that different diasporas emerged at different geographical locations during the pre-colonial, post-colonial, post-modernist periods and during the period of globalization. These "disentangling" diasporas are not the same. Although these diasporas emerged under unique or similar social conditions based on cultural, economic, political, and religious factors, the study of dispersal communities has not often been given the attention it deserves. In some situations, the word diaspora is sometimes misused or applied loosely by historians, anthropologists, political scientists, writers, sociologists, gender studies critics, economists and scholars in other fields of study. In short, discourses about the diaspora are sometimes lumped together despite their differences.

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[65] Michael J. Turner, *Les Bresiliens— The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey* (Ph. D Dissertation: Boston University, 1975), 83; 370.

[66] William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 83. See also Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (Eds.), *Tourism, Diasporas and Space* (NY: Routledge, 2004).

A number of scholars have challenged this generalization and application in recent times and have called for systematic scholarly research to contextualize or place the various experiences within the diaspora in a suitable historical, nationalist, cultural, global and capitalist framework. For instance, Jana E. Braziel and Anita Mannur, who forcefully emphasized the extraction of loose references to dispersals, argue that "theorization of diaspora need not, and should not be divorced from historical and cultural specificity."[67] If this distinction were made, it would not only show the significance of diasporas that emerged in Africa prior to the middle passage, but it would also show how cultural and trans-regional dynamics in these areas dialogue about other diasporas that continue to surface within the African continent as local Africans and diasporan returnees crossed paths from the eighteenth century on. Other issues have been addressed to underscore the complexities of the African diaspora. Kristin Mann, for instance, has noted that in an attempt to gather varying ideas and theories about the diaspora or an effort to create a bridge that could allow dialectic engagements about different paradigms, scholars sometimes allow their differences of opinions or vested interests to stifle constructive paths for generating useful exchanges.[68]

In this regard, it is significant to add that diasporas can be created voluntarily and involuntarily, as people leave their homelands to foreign lands or into exile. There are other characteristics. The creation of voluntarily and involuntarily diasporan communities

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[67] Jana Evans Braziel and Anita Mummur (eds.), *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader* (Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 3. See also Khalid Koser (Ed), *New African Diasporas* (NY: Routledge, 2003).

[68] Kristin Mann, *Shifting Paradigms in the Study of the African Diaspora and the Atlantic History and Culture* in Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay..., 3.

are sometimes influenced by religious and cultural reasons and nostalgic desires to "return" to one's "home" or to create a new place of abode elsewhere besides the place of birth—the "inversion of the middle passage."[69] In both cases, such movements could result in temporary or permanent conditions. Voluntary diasporas emerged and emerge as people migrate or travel to other locations to seek greener pastures to improve their economic conditions, for tourism reasons, for exploring new territories, for educational purposes, for family reunions and for fulfilling other aspects of contacts. The former condition includes African migrants who relocate to other African nations, Europe, the Americas or other areas mainly for economic and social reasons.

Conversely, involuntary diasporas involve a long history of servitude, genocide, civil wars, racial and ethnic conflicts and other forms of experience that influence discourses and patterns of migration**.** They include both Africans and people of African descent, who are often compelled to migrate outside the motherland, as in the case of African refugees from war-torn nations and those that were affected by famine and other natural disasters.[70] These also include Africans and people of African heritage who are part of what Robin Cohen describes as members of "victim diasporas."[71] Both voluntarily and involuntarily circumstances could also result in the creation of new identities and new cultures across the globe.

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[69] Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates, Jr and Carl Pederson (Eds.), *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 184.

[70] Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, *A Refugee Diaspora: When the Somali Go West* and Khalid Koser, *Mobilizing New African Diasporas: An Eritrean Case Study* both in Khalid Koser (Ed), *New African Diasporas* (NY: Routledge, 2003), 37; 111-113.

[71] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (UK: UCL Press, 1997), 26-42.

Other Degrees of Diaspora

Existing literature that focuses on dwelling places and spaces occupied by descendants of African slaves share more in common with reverse diasporas than scholars have demonstrated. Since the African Diaspora predates the reverse settlements that occurred thereafter, it will be safe to suggest that the African Diaspora in reverse is an offshoot of the African Diaspora. This distinction is significant in our understanding of the agency for formulating a field that shows the different segments of mobility and identity formation in other locations across the globe. With this in mind, it is also vital to underscore the fact that the reconstruction of new reverse disporas allow discussion on this important subject to extend beyond the Atlantic world or the African Diaspora. In other words, these forms of scatterings are not limited to the people of African descent. It also includes the Jewish Diasporas, the Irish Diasporas, the Lebanese Diasporas, Indian Diasporas and others with evidence of reverse mobility or relocations. However, the dominant historical events that relate to my study are the diasporas that emerged within the African continent after the end of the transatlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century, as well as other migrations back to Brazil after this period.

The debate about the significance of "roots"—evidence of diasporan blacks' ancestral ties to Africa, and "routes"—the various patterns of dispersals or scatterings into the Atlantic world characterize aspects of the diasporan contestation and further complicates various dimension of the discourse. Obviously, large populations of people of African descent have not been successful in their quest to trace the exact location where their forebears were captured in Africa. The articulation of roots and routes by

Paul Gilroy generated considerable academic attention because of the controversies surrounding where, when and how to establish the origin of New World black identities. Gilroy simply believes and acknowledges in his analysis that discourse about the dispersals of people of African descent deserves new interpretation.[72]

Recent attempts to employ biological genotype experiments or scientific methods via DNA mutation have attracted a number of curious diasporan populations who can afford expensive and complex lab experiments. Indeed, as *In Search of Our Roots* has echoed, descendants of slaves might be able to pursue this venture as they inquire about their genetic composition.[73] We have yet to know how this approach could be efficient economically to others with curiosity about their ancestral connections to Africa. It may take some time to accomplish this task, but without a doubt, Africanism or traits of African retention and presence in the Atlantic world in forms of art, music, language, cultural lifestyle, religion and others continue to stand on their own. These elements are the most reliable form of proof, survivalism or cultural bridge that binds people of African descent to Africa.

Ongoing attempts to forge historical relationship between past, present and future of former slaves reveal the inherent nature of umbilical cords that ties them and the generations that followed them.

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[72] See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[73] Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *In Search of Our Roots: How 19 Extraordinary African-Americans Reclaimed their Past* (NY: Crown Publishers, 2009), 10-14.

Despite varying definitions and components of the diaspora, almost all diasporas share two things in common: nostalgia about "home" and the notion that they are "victims" of historical circumstances—a "displaced" population on a mission to reclaim a lost territory and identity—in response to a past history of subjugation; to some extent, an attempt "to throw off the shackles of their prior social constraints."[74] In other words, without individual or collective memory of home elsewhere, discourses about diasporas in reverse could not exist whether African, Latin American, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, European, Asian or those of other geographical origins. Simply put, "the old country—the notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore—always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions. That claim may be strong or weak, or boldly or meekly articulated in a given circumstance or historical period, but a member's adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an inescapable link with their past migration history and sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background."[75] Cohen's poignant observation resonates elsewhere.

There are other implications. For some returnees, the element of victimhood is inverted by the notion of freedom or return. Indeed, this important element has also shaped the character of both diaspora and the African Diasporas in reverse. Also, these forces may vary from one historical account to the other—"Babylon for Jews, slavery for Africans, famine for the Irish, genocide for Armenians and the formation of the state of

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[74] Cohen, 145.

[75] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (UK: UCL Press, 1997), ix.

Israel for the Palestinians."[76] Cohen's assessment and grouping of victim diasporas provides a framework for evaluating different groups with shared history of oppression, social calamities and memory of home. However, his focus limits the diaspora to events that have already occurred with little reference to future movements by descendants, especially those who aspire to appropriate sites of ancestral heritage for cultural, social, religious and economic benefits. My study provides this account.

The Origins of the Diaspora and the African Diaspora in Reverse

There is no single way of tracing the origins of the African Diaspora in reverse because of its multifaceted nature. Narratives about the starting point of the diaspora are largely contained within a framework that ascribes this dialogue to either the Jewish experience or to discussions about transatlantic slavery, which began around the sixteenth century together with events that took place in the New World thereafter. Simply put, various elements of diaspora formations within the African continent prior to the middle passage have been placed on the periphery.[77]

It is, therefore, imperative to stress that the origins of the African Diaspora could be traced through commercial network systems, technological and educational exchanges, as well as religious migrations across different geographical regions for Islamic and Christian conversions. These and other mobility across the Saharan desert, especially in North Africa and those to and from the Indian Ocean on the East and the

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[76] Cohen, 28.

[77] Michael A. Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press), 8. See also Gomez, *Diasporic Africa: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

Atlantic Ocean on the West among others, created new communities and family networks that also resulted in the emergence of new cultures, homes and heterogeneous societies.[78]

My study seeks to emphasize that the African Diaspora in reverse is not solely about the movement of human bodies back and forth to the Americas, Europe and Africa. Broadly, the phenomenon is also grounded in anthropological notions of creolization, hybridity and syncretism. These themes mainly shore up dynamics of identity and cultural formation in both old and new diasporan communities as people migrate from one location to the other.[79] The constructions and reconstruction of identity in the process of migrations and movements coalesce with religious and cultural traditions, rituals and intimate exchanges that take place among people of African ancestry from different historical and geographical backgrounds.[80] Put differently, the converging of diverse identities and historical accounts since slaves started reflecting on and embarking on various journeys back to Africa has contributed to the creation of new cultures and communities, especially among returnees with ties to Brazil, Cuba, the United States of America, Jamaica, Trinidad and other locations.[81] What do these enclaves in the diaspora have in common and how are these communalities shaped by past or present mode of migrations?

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[78] See Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic, *African Affairs* (2005). For diasporas in the Indian Ocean during chattel slavery and abolition see Gwyn Campbell (Ed), *The Structure of Slavery in Indian Africa and Asia* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2004).

[79] See Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs (Eds.), *The Changing Worlds of Atlantic Africa*, Essays in honor of Robin Law (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2009).

[80] Ibid.

[81] Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port,' 1727-1892* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 27.

The Atlantic Ocean, a dynamic body of water that connects Africa and the New World, created a space for transporting African slaves, their labor and skills to the Atlantic world.[82] Obviously, the Atlantic Ocean does not always symbolize a painful, horrifying or traumatic rupture, because in some ways the dim conditions that often characterized slavery along the Atlantic Ocean during the middle passage also provided a channel for slaves to preserve their individual and collective memories of the ancestral homeland.

There is a multidimensional feature to the movement of people of African descent across the Atlantic Ocean and other geographical boundaries. For instance, trajectories in North America are similar to strategic passages or routes of passage for regions in South America and other locations—specifically, Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Cubans and other returnees from the Caribbean who settled in Benin, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and other geographical areas. In some ways, the tributaries of the Atlantic Ocean linking Africa and the Atlantic world—the two main axes for slavery and return provided tangential points for envisioning home, as in the case of Marcus Mosiah Garvey, the flamboyant Jamaican who led the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in the early 1920s, and others who never made it to Africa.[83] Just as the distance between the two locations could not hinder the dispersals of African cultures to slave plantations, in

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[82] See Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[83] Amy Jacques Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey: Or Africa for Africans* (MA: Majority Press, 1986), 412.

the same way, it could not also prevent returnees from reinventing new diasporan communities along the coastline of West Africa.

As streams or bodies of water run in multiple tributaries and continually move from one point to another, the notion of African Diaspora in reverse shares these characteristics and as a historical current it runs beyond a stringent chronology. From another lens, the African Diaspora in reverse in my study could be likened to some components of the human body—most notably, capillary and blood vessels that connect a number of arteries. The historical tide which intertwines with each other connects the Atlantic Ocean and other bodies of water from Africa to Brazil, and from Ghana and back to Brazil. As a number of slave narratives have shown, slaves who lived in remote plantations, cities, towns and others who had access to myriad bodies of water imagined home from their respective locations and as a result they used the spaces as channels for freedom.

There is a tripartite dimension to the African Diaspora in reverse or reverse migrations. These three interrelated parts are largely influenced by notions of enslavement and emancipation, as well as features of identity formation and citizenship that drove the search for a home. The group of those who desired to return to one's home or an imagined location comprised of those who imagined Africa as in the case of Garvey and those who relocated physically. An important dimension that has not gained the attention it deserves is the envisioning of reverse migrations to the New World in the twenty first century as in the case of the *Tabom* people—the 'Z-path' or 'cyclic Z-migrations.' Indeed, the African Diaspora in reverse did not develop overnight after

slaves and free slaves adopted religious, cultural and radical approaches to return to Africa. It is clear that individual or collective memory, retention of Africa and identity formations facilitated this process. This trajectory has enhanced migrations back to the Atlantic world or from Ghana to Brazil.

Identity Crisis/Matters and Diasporas

Identity is fluid in its orientation and it transforms from one epoch to the other. Transformations that occurred after the end of slavery in the Americas formed into important contesting themes as identity formation and reconstruction in addition to intricate issues relating to ethnicity, race and citizenship among others. Du Bois, in particular, left an indelible mark in his description of these range of issues. First, he asserted that the early twentieth century was entrenched in race and other contentions over citizenship. This profound prophetic proclamation, which was one of the central ingredients that contributed to the transatlantic slavery, also influenced the complex matters about the identities of people of African descent after the demise of slavery, especially in the nineteenth century. According to Du Bois, other features about the legacy of slavery created a "permanent" condition or mark which he coined as identity crisis or double consciousness: "One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."[84]

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[84] Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri H. Oliver, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Souls of Black Folk* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), ix.

Part of my study elaborates how the notion of "double belongings"—competing identities that dwell within the "souls" of descendants of slaves in the New World has contributed to the African Diaspora in reverse. This discussion will be framed around efforts by offspring of former slaves to maintain one identity or embrace both heritages—their ancestral ties to Africa and the New World simultaneously. (see chapter 3)

Du Bois's observation of the crisis of identity raises important epistemological questions about the dual nature of returnees. On the one hand, they are of African ancestral roots and, on the other hand, they are the embodiment of aspects of plantation experiences. The legacy of slavery and memory about home has occupied a vital presence in identity formation. At the same time, it has reflected and echoed in interactions between returnees and local people upon return. This important facet not only shaped or shapes discourses about reverse diasporas, but it continues to drive different dimensions and the character of identity formation in returnee communities. Besides, the concept of return to the motherland is firmly planted in Du Bois's theory, and in the notion of "otherness" which Edward Said reminded us of in his interpretations of subaltern groups.[85] Said has argued that the notion of the otherness which erupts when a minority population is marginalized has defined interactions between distinct ethnicities. For returnees, the awareness flactuates when they come to terms with the reality of rejection in Africa, a place they internalize as part of their heritage. Du Bois's conceptualization of race and double consciousness has also contributed to other dialectic genres, especially

[85] See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

those among the *Tabom* people over how to refashion or navigate both their Brazilian and their Ghanaian identities along with their citizenship.

One aspect of interactions between the first generation of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana, their descendants and Ghanaians has underscored the multifaceted negotiations between these three groups as they contest for space and power.[86] The legacy of family and home has a great deal of impact on their offspring and has become a motivation and driving force for charting a new course for South America in the future. As the diaspora continues to evolve with time, scholars need to be aware of the interest of a number of descendants who showcase components of their Brazilianess. This has also facilitated their quest to embark on the voyage to Brazil.

Identity crisis has had other impacts on notions of a return. The Ga word wɔje biɛ kɛ jɛɛ epitomizes the notion of a double belonging or 'dual' nationality—claims of citizenship at two distant locations at the same time. Clearly, a number of returnees and their offspring have not only preserved memory of the past, but they have physically positioned themselves to be part of a remote legacy either in an old or new location. This aspect of placement could enhance our understanding of the fluidity and the dynamic nature of the African Diaspora in reverse.

The idea that there is no permanent condition in migrations is true of Afro-Brazilian history. Obviously, the circumstances were not the same that led to the exodus of slaves and free slaves to Africa in the case of Afro-Brazilians during the 1835 slave revolts and the demise of slavery in Brazil in 1888. Despite the stark differences, it is

[86] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Fiscian v. Nelson and Basmaty, 20/7/45.

vital to mention that efforts by the *Tabom* people to visit Brazil have opened another avenue for Du Bois's notion of double consciousness—one that interrogates the driving forces or motivations for the *Tabom* people to interrogate or advance dialogue about diasporic citizenship. Discourses about the role of Afro-Brazilian returnees in socio-political cultures in the nineteenth century have commanded considerable interest in recent decades.

Broadly, it is fascinating to explore how descendants of slaves grapple with their identity and their citizenship. Are the *Tabom* people who were born and raised in Ghana to find a "closure" to their memories of a distant or imagined home in Brazil? Is this a sign of a brewing discontent with their Ghanaian nationality, a growing curiosity, or both? What does the concept of a "home" tell us about discourses of a "return" in the African Diaspora?

Home has had different levels of impact on different generations with ties to transatlantic slavery. Indeed, the first generation of slaves who landed in the Americas had "fresh" memory and agency about the homes and communities they were forcefully removed from than others who were born many centuries later. Some African slaves who landed in the New World in the sixteenth century killed themselves, while others wanted to turn into fishes in order to swim back to Africa or into birds to fly back to their point of capture.

Homeland, which includes motherland, fatherland and degrees of return to a starting point, intersects with the ways in which transnational populations replicate their identity. Diasporans' conceptualization of home is sometimes treated as a moral or "civil

rights" issue. It is not a private matter when it comes to fantasy and myths about home. As a good number of returnees expressed publicly their "homesickness," while others showcased notions of entitlement, by showing that although historical circumstances kept them away from their roots for centuries they deserved the same access and recognition as others. Some have echoed that, Africa "is our country as much as those who have never left...it is part of morality not to be at home in one's own home."[87]

Clearly, the notion of home or return ingrained in the psyche of returnees has been colored historically by the brutal experience of servitude, hopelessness in the midst of racism, myriad forms of discrimination, questions about the place of freed slaves, and their descendants in the formation of nation-states—especially concerning their status as citizens and their access to resources in different locations.[88] Other driving forces that have shaped the concept of a home in Africa are entrenched in returnees' common "ethnic" and cultural heritage with the people of Africa. Returnees' marginalization by the mainstream or the dominant populations in the communities they integrated into in the New World after slavery, post-reconstruction and after the demise of segregation gave rise to claims of entitlement or the right to be part of existing communities and cultures in Africa based on their own terms.

[87] Quoted form Robin Cohen…, 150-151.

[88] Michael J. Turner, *Les Bresiliens— The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey* (Ph. D Dissertation: Boston University, 1975), See also Ibrahim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (NC, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Claude A. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African-Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Besides the illusions or high expectations returnees developed or continue to hold about their ancestral homeland, migrations to Africa for settlement or visits have been influenced somewhat by social and economic inequalities in the Americas and a lingering hope by free slaves that the other side of the Atlantic—Africa—could offer better opportunities, acceptance, tolerance and a space for refashioning their identities.[89] In short, there was continuity in the ways in which slaves and their descendants imagined their past experiences with servitude and their options to be "liberated," as well as their future. These were the motivations for creating new identities and communities of their own.

The Ga word s*hia dze shia* communicates the idea that there is no better place than home. As my study will show, historical timelines have their own way of reshaping events within and outside the *Tabom* community. Narratives about the Afro-Brazilian returnees raise a number of questions because of complex issues: how did their ancestors leave the shores of Africa, how do we explain their voyage to the New World, their living conditions in Brazilian plantations, and what factors prompted their return to Africa—especially to settle in the Gold Coast beginning in 1835? Archival documents have not been very explicit about returnees' motivation for relocating to the Gold Coast except recurring themes on motivations for trading that was conducted mostly by Brazilian merchants. References to this subject in colonial court documents often mention in passing visits by returnees from Nigeria to the Gold Coast. The consensus in the

[89] See Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade* (IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Michele Mitchell *Righteous Propagation*: *African-Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4-5.

interviews I conducted, especially those that were emphasized by Elder George Aruna Nelson, underscored this pattern of migration to Nigeria and back to Ghana.[90]

For Afro-Brazilian returnees who relocated to West Africa, they also did so mainly in response to their oppressive conditions in various locations of settlement. According to João José Reis, slave rebellions in Bahia were motivated not only by servitude but by slaves' long history of retentions and unity. The Muslim identities in particular shaped their collective memory and notions of return.[91]

The way back home started in Africa and continued on slave ships and immediately slaves landed in the New World. In Africa, captured slaves, men, women and children resisted, protested and rebelled by challenging the very nature of chattel slavery and various attempts to constrain them to pens and barracoons prior to the dispersals in the New World.[92] A number of works have explained how African slaves resisted and revolted prior to their journeys on the Atlantic Ocean, when they were on board of slave ships and after they arrived in the New World. Indeed, as estimates by historians Paul E. Lovejoy, Joseph E. Inikori and others have shown, over 10 million slaves who landed in the New World could not succeed in their efforts to resist their forceful removal from their villages, towns and cities during the middle passage.

The movie *Amistad* epitomizes macro-forms of rebellions and mutiny that characterized slaves who sacrificed their lives in order to reconnect with their African

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[90] Elder George Aruna Nelson, interview by interview by Kwame Essien, January 10, 2009.

[91] João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835 in Bahia* (MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993) 43.

[92]Toyin Falola and Amanda Warnock, *Encyclopedia of Middle Passage* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 137.

heritage. Besides the various approaches towards liberation and a return home to Africa as *Amistad* conveys, there is other evidence that slaves, free slaves and their descendants constructed "pan-African" networks in their communities and other areas to forge unity among them mainly for the purpose of achieving freedom. Pan-African in the context of this chapter basically means the shared common experiences and ties that connected one location of slavery to the other, when people of African descent created alliances in the New World. These forms of resistance created a pathway for future resistance at the height of Pan-Africanist and black nationalist consciousness in the early twentieth century.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, freed slaves and their descendants embraced notions of return. This experience resonated widely and the trend persisted in the Atlantic world as people of African descent migrated from South America, North America and the Caribbean. The presence of Africanisms or African cultural practices in Brazil contributed to elements of unity among slaves, especially in Bahia from the sixteenth century, when a large segment of the African population preserved or showcased their African identities in the form of religion, clothing, naming ceremonies, dance and others.[93]

As James Sweet and others have also argued, evidence of African retention and survivalism not only enabled slaves to unite and support each other, but it was the recipe that energized their base during slave revolts and insurrection. It is obvious that solidarity

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[93] See John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

among Muslim and non-Muslim slaves in Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paolo and other areas in Brazil underscores a degree of pan-African spirit. According to Brazilian historian João José Reis slaves retention of Africa contributed to individual and group migrations to Africa during slave insurrections and after the demise of slavery in 1888.[94]

The level of understanding or conceptualization of Africa in some areas in South America, Brazil in particular, shares striking features with other locations in the Western Hemishpere. Like the history of returnees from Brazil after the 1835 slave revolts and the demise of slavery in 1888, the tremor that took place in Brazil shook other foundations in North America and the Caribbean. Many African-Americans viewed their homeland on the basis of misleading information they received from black missionaries and explorers who traveled to Africa. Due to this misleading notion, a large portion of freed slaves and their descendants in North America had no interest in returning to Africa because of their prejudices towards Africans; others had a nostalgia that transcended this stereotype.[95] Put differently, slaves and their descendants internalized these stigmas from the images Europeans presented about Africa. Other influences came from black American missionaries like Bishop McNeil Turner and William Sheppard who visited Africa.[96] Some of these missionaries perpetuated European myths that Africans were savages, while yet others wanted "slavery to be reinstated in Africa so that African-Americans

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Joseph E. Harris (Ed.), *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*…, 28-30.

[96] James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African America Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005*(NY: Penguin Press, 2006), 155. See also Adam Hoschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Study of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

could hold Africans in bondage."[97] During one of his missions to Africa at the mid nineteenth century, Bishop William Shepperd referred to the indigenous Africans as "wild, naked savages, bowing down to idols, filled with superstition."[98]

The enduring misconceptions about Africa infiltrated the minds of other blacks and triggered other prejuduces. "To call a kid an African was an insult." Lorraine Hansberry, author of *A Raisin in the Sun*, recalls her experience as a child: "It was like calling him savage, naked… It was equivalent to ugliness. Everything distasteful and painful was associated with Africa."[99] Du Bois had become more knowledgeable about Africa 20 years earlier, and as a result developed a sense of pride and solidarity with Africans. Du Bois writes, "once I thought of you Africans as children whom we educated Afro-Americans would lead to liberty. I was wrong. We could not lead ourselves much less you."[100] Despite the stigma about Africa, reverse migrations persisted prior to the twentieth century.

Historian Ibrahim K. Sundiata, in his analysis of motivations that influenced African-Americans to relocate to Liberia in the early 1900s, argues that Africa has remained in the ideation of both slaves and their descendants from the day the first African slave landed in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 and during the Post-Reconstruction

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[97] James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African America Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005* (NY: Penguin Press, 2006), xvi.

[98] Adam Hoschild, *King Leopld's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (New York: Houghton Mufflin Company, 1998), 152-153.

[99] James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*: Black …,19. See also Patrick Hutton, "Recent Scholarship on Memory and History," *The History Teacher*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (August, 2000), 536.

[100] WEB Du Bois, Autobiography, 1960. Quoted from James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans : Black*…, 11.

era in the United States. As free slaves gravitated towards Africa, most of them romanticized the continent as the home of their forebears. Sundiata has asserted that, "Africa in the diasporic imagination represents many things—things imaged, things recorded, and things suppressed."[101] Clearly, not only were these men, women and children aware that Africa could be a location for escaping from racial injustices in the United States. As Michele Mitchell presents in *Righteous Propagation: African-Americans and Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction*, others did so to amass wealth.[102] The notion of return was also influenced by radicalism on the local level among the people of African descent.[103]

The Americas in West Africa

As I have shown, a number of scholars in the latter part of the twentieth century began to turn their search light on the formation of diasporan returnee communities across West Africa, focusing on the descendants of Afro-Brazilians in Benin, Togo and Nigeria. Others have written about African-American expatriates, returnees and tourists in Ghana. In other words, for diaspora in reverse, the more recent literature on diasporan blacks' migrations to Africa can be broadly divided into three folds: those written about Afro-Brazilian , Afro-Cuban Diasporas in Benin, Togo and Nigeria as well as other coastal areas in south-central Africa; and, more recently, those that trace the history of

[101] Ibrahim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 2.

[102] Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African-Americans and Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction*

[103] Elliot P. Skinner, *The African Diaspora in the Twenty-first Century: The Past is Prologue* in Ruth Simms Hamilton (Ed.), *Routes of Passage: Rethinking the African Diaspora* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 241.

African-Americans and Caribbeans in Ghana. Indeed, this contemporary trend continues to evolve, as diasporan blacks continue their socio-cultural and economic voyage to Ghana and other areas in Africa. As the case of Brazil, a Latin American Diasporas in West Africa, other diasporas have emerged from the Caribbean.

In the early 1900s, like blacks in Brazil, African "visionaries" from the Caribbean occupied a significant position in diasporan history both in political and religious terms and advanced pilgrimages and various voyages to Africa. From the 1920s, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, the flamboyant Jamaican citizen's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) became the most formidable force in promoting notions of reverse migrations to Africa. Garvey emphasized in his public pronouncements that the exodus home would not last "a day, a year, ten or twenty years."[104]

The intent of Garvey was threefold: first, to create a universal black consciousness and pride; secondly, to emphasize the significance of return or "Back to Africa" movement to the descendants of slaves in the New World; finally, to position people of African descent to reclaim the continent of Africa from the grip of western imperialists. At the same time, one of Garvey's objectives was to provide other "priviledged" blacks (as himself) the opportunity to replicate the same exploitation they spoke against. The latter controversial agenda of Garvey epitomized the degree to which slavery, subjugation, ethnocentrism, legacy of slavery, imperialism and prejudice against Africans on the continent had influenced the psyche of returnees and those like Garvey who did not make it to Africa.

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[104] Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Africans and their History* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 215.

Beside Garvey's fanatic position and passion for promoting the "back-to-Africa" movement, other issues prompted this awareness about home. Religion was a complex but an important theme in black diaspora consciousness. Indeed, one cannot fully comprehend the roots of black diaspora nationalism without exploring the significance of Ethiopia to black religious memory. The racial and cultural implications of the events in Ethiopia during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis in the 1930s permeated the black diaspora and became a prominent theme. Politically, for many blacks, an attack on Ethiopia was tantamount to the desecration of a priceless historical treasure located in their ancestral homeland. Writing in 1943 of his analysis of the mobilization efforts in blacks in the diaspora, Roi Ottley, a black American journalist, pointed out that, "I know of no other event in recent times that has stirred the rank-and-file of Negroes than Italo-Ethiopia war."[105] Religiously, in some Christian circles, Ethiopia was referred to as the "cradle of Christianity."[106] In many ways, the position of Ethiopia in black religiosity and black culture defined responses to the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. In fact, Ethiopia had an enormous influence on the psyche of black people even before the Italian invasion of the 1930s.

Historically, black religious leaders in North America in particular have used their churches as a base for organizing black people as well as a sanctuary for grassroots mobilization. Therefore, the fear that the one of the two remaining African nations (besides Liberia) was under European threat struck a highly sensitive emotional nerve

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[105] Roi Ottley, *New World A-Coming: Inside Black America* (.MA: Riverside Press, 1943), 111.

[106]James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 30.

and prompted a spontaneous black diasporic response to the crisis.[107] A section of the black American population found the crisis as an occasion to show solidarity with the distant homeland they imagined. During the crisis, black physicians, dentists, pharmacists, and nurses merged to form the Medical Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia. The medical team shipped medical supplies before the war broke out. The Provisional Committee for the Defense of Ethiopia surfaced in New York, the Committee for the Aid in Ethiopia started in Detroit, while the New World Alliance also originated in Chicago. Scores of other militant groups were organized across America.[108] Black ministers, such as Dr. L.K. William of the National Baptist Convention in the United States, mounted their pulpits with two central goals in mind: to amass support from the black masses and to convince their followers of the threat the defeat of Ethiopia posed to Christianity in their ancestral homeland.[109]

Beside diasporan cultural memory of Africa, they also had religious recollections of Ethiopia as a symbol of their ancestral homeland. For this reason, many blacks responded to the crisis in Ethiopia because of their deep conviction that Ethiopia was a black Christian nation. They also believed that Ethiopia was an exclusive remaining pride of Africans in the diaspora and the temples in Ethiopia signified the last holy ground, the

[107] While Ethiopia occupied a vital place in black American cultures, Liberia, (the other independent nation) in contrast served as a refuge for black Americans who migrated to Africa in the late 1800s to satisfy racial uplift projects and to escape racism in America. Michele Mitchell *Righteous Propagation*: *African-Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4-5, 28-29.

[108] *Chicago Defender*, 7 September, 1935.

[109] *New York Times*, September 5, 1935, 16.

impregnable rock of black resistance against white racism, and an incarnation of black freedom as well as the "last holdout of real African independence."[110]

Furthermore, religious leaders evoked memories of Ethiopia in the Christian Bible. Some black American ministers used the crisis to express their rage, expressing religious loyalty for Ethiopia. Drawing on biblical verses such as Psalm 68:31, "Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God," some Christians in black American communities held on to their faith in Christian teachings and the divine love of God to redeem Ethiopia from their condition. Bearing in mind the victory at Adowa (when Ethiopians defeated Italians invaders) over half a century earlier. These ministers assured their congregation that "God is able to provide victory for Haile Selassie like he did during the rule of Menelik… Selassie would unite all black people."[111]

As the theme of Ethiopia resonated more loudly in black communities, several churches held a Day of Prayer and All-Night vigil services on August 18, 1935. One of the prayers read, "Lord give him [Sellassie] the same wisdom and understanding you gave to Solomon his ancestors. The King of Kings' should be given sufficient strength to enable him bring about speedy 'redemption' of all Africa and the whole black world."[112]

Black-American communities also organized special fund raising programs to respond to the crisis. The Abyssinia Baptist Church in New York, for instance, raised

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[110] Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black America and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957."* (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, New York, 1994), 16-17. See also Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ., Press, 2003), 254.

[111] Barney Pask, *Chicago Defender*, 14 September, 1935, 16.

[112] Ibid, 142.

$300.[113] Other diasporan blacks stated that, "Americans of African decent are deeply stirred in their attitude and sympathies for Ethiopians… the only remaining example of independent government by black race in the black continent of Africa… We cannot be deaf to the cry that comes from a menaced nation in the land of our fathers."[114]

Indeed, tremors from the Ethiopian crisis heightened black consciousness in international affairs and played a role in black freedom in Africa and America many years later. While various mobilization campaigns did not end the Italian invasion, it did reinforce black assertiveness and solidarity, and it reinforced the earlier memory of a homeland in the diaspora.

In other religious contexts, Rastafarians highlighted the divine significance of Ras Tafari to Emperor Haile Salasie, who was a leader of Ethiopia. Some of these beliefs have religious or Christian interpretations**.** Also, the concept of Ethiopianism was a complex discourse for expressing the religious, cultural, spiritual, and political aspirations of blacks in the diaspora.[115] Notions of Ethiopianism was based on an imagined ancestral destiny and a space for black redemption. In fact, Ethiopianism epitomized, "a cyclical view of history—the idea that the ascendancy of the white race

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[113] *Chicago Defender*, 7 September, 1935. See also James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 48-51.

[114] William Scott, Black Nationalism and Italo-Ethiopian Conflict. *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 63, 2 (April, 1978),121.

[115] Wilson J. Moses, *AFROTOPIA: The Roots of African-American Popular History* (MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26.

was only temporary, and that …divine providence …was working to elevate the African people."[116]

In addition, Rastafarian movements continue to use the discourse of Ethiopianism to describe the land of human origin. Those of this orientation also recognized Emperor Haile Selassie as a divine leader and identified Ethiopia as a symbol of hope. Although missionaries in Africa in the nineteenth century characterized the local people as savages and heathens living in a dark continent, Ethiopians on the other hand were also identified as "sons and daughters of Sheba's race."[117]

Both Christian groups in North America and the Caribbean showcased the significance of Ethiopia for their own social and religious redemption and survival. In fact, these diasporan populations evoked the concept of Ethiopia as the extension of diasporan struggles during the fascist invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s. Also, Christian churches and newspaper headlines highlighted highly emotional and provoking sentiments about Italy's unprovoked attack of another Christian sovereign nation to underscore the importance of return to Africa. Obviously, memories of Ethiopia extended beyond religious connections and within the Rastafarian movements. Diasporan blacks in particular, associated the slaughter of Ethiopians with other forms of racial oppression. It was no surprise that in the editorial section in the *Chicago Defender* a descendant of Africa highlighted the common struggles of people of African descent by stating that

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[116] Michele Mitchell *Righteous Propagation: African-Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 256.
[117] Wilson J. Moses, *AFROTOPIA: The Roots of African-American Popular History* MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 225.

"our black brothers and sisters of our fatherland are slaughtered by Italians and lynched by the American white man."[118]

The outpouring of love and racial unity towards Ethiopians in the 1930s was another phase of African Diaspora solidarity. Ethiopia manifested itself in various ways. An article in a daily newspaper commented that, "Africans outside Ethiopia should aid in the defense of her independence because the impending conflict was racially inspired…[diasporan blacks should not] stand aside and witness the massacre of the 'kinfolk' in East Africa."[119]

Besides the collective consciousness and the group solidarity that came to light, individual efforts were also visible in the daily newspapers: "I feel it is my duty to answer the call of Ethiopia, and shall endeavor to fulfill any job or position given to me, and give all that is in me to help the course of the black race."[120]

Another front page headline read: "Ethiopia is our country and as long as there is blood in our veins we should love and respect it as such… Let every heart within a black man's body be with Ethiopia, the country which is ours."[121]

Overall, the Ethiopian crisis (1930-1936) and the engagements between the blacks in the Caribbean, North America and Africa was one of the catalysts that shaped future ties with

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[118] Alexander Keys to the Editor, *Chicago Defender*, 9 November 1935, 16.

[119] Quoted from William Scott . Black Nationalism and the Italo-Ethiopian Conflict. *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 63, 2 (April, 1978) 120.

[120] Frank Ferrell to the Foreign Editor. Chicago Defender, 14 Sept. 1935, 24.

[121] Chicago Defender, 17 August, 1935, 16.

Africa. Metz Lochard, a contributor in the *Chicago Defender* sums up the Italo-Ethiopian saga this way:

> "The most notable reaction of this Italo-Ethiopian conflict is the crystallization of interest of the black people of the world. The violation of Ethiopia's sovereignty provided the much needed platform of racial solidarity on which all may stand…Today, however, he has an absorbing in both Africa and Africans; he is beginning to be proud of the history of his ancestral land as a film of prejudice is gradually removed from his film of vision."[122]

'Fractured' and Entitled Diasporas?

Solidarity within the African Diaspora has not always demonstrated the spirit of oneness as in the case of events during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis. There were a number of instances whereby people of African ancestry or returnees protected their own interest. As I have stated earlier, notions of "equal" distribution of resources with the citizens of Ghana has increased. Unlike the common bonds that existed between oppressed African populations and those that were demonstrated by Black Nationalist leaders to end colonialism and segregation in Americas, the pan-African dimension is not potent or visible in the history of Afro-Brazilian returnee communities in Ghana, Benin and Nigeria, especially at the height of decolonization in the 1930s through the 1960s. Perhaps, apathy within these communities was largely colored by the prejudices returnees

[122] Metz Lochard, *Chicago Defender*, January, 1936.

had against the local people and the fact that there were prominent and wealthy returnees among the returnee population.[123]

I argue that most returnees internalized the processes of subjugation and exploitation. A good number of returnees were largely concerned about amassing wealth, gaining political power and social advantages over local Africans, because they relocated at the onset of colonialism—a period when local Africans became occupied with how to resist European intrusion and monopoly rather than the threat returnees posed. The other reason was that returnees did not basically see the struggles of Africans as one comparable to their plantation experiences.

Returnees formulated arrays of diaspora and its unique characters. Indeed, their response confirmed that they did not see any urgency to end European rule in Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Benjamin N. Lawrence's recent examination of the role of métis Afro-Brazilian returnees in Togo, a former French colony in West Africa provides details regarding how returnees who were mostly merchants and from the elite class, negotiated colonial spaces and took advantage of their social privileges. For instance, Sylvanus Olympio, a descendant of Afro-Brazilians, who later became the president of Togo, petitioned the United Nations Trusteeship Council on

[123] Prejudices and ethnocenthricism were some of the common features returnees shared across West Africa. This kind of behavior was inherent in a number of communities in Benin, Togo, Nigeria and others. See Michael J. Turner, *Les Bresiliens— The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey* (Ph. D Dissertation: Boston University, 1975); Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay (Eds.), *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World I the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001); Robin Law, *Francisco de Souza in West Africa, 1820-1849* in Jose C. Curto and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (NY: Humanity Books, 2004).

December 4, 1947, during his tenure as prime minister, to allow the Ewe ethnic group to be isolated from French colonial rule.

Lawrence inquires: "How was it possible for an elite métis Afro-Brazilian merchant and professional economist…represent himself as the natural leader of a large ethnically based nationalist movement?" He continues, "how did Olympio and his acolytes conceive of their relationship with the 'Ewe tribe'"?[124] Lawrence later described Olympio as "less a visionary and more an opportunist, and was raised in a culture of political opportunism."[125]

Put simply, Olympio's visit to the United Nations was not about liberating local Togolese from the clutches or web of French imperialism in Africa, but it was a strategic attempt to keep a descendant of Afro-Brazilians at upper echelon**s** of socio-economic and political powers of African societies. A similar thread of apathy and manipulation by returnees has been underscored in the history of returnee communities in Benin, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Liberia. In some cases, returnees and their descendants replicated slavery activities by engaging in the sale of local Africans along the coast. (see chapter 2)

As pointed out earlier, the African Diaspora in reverse encompasses a number of themes besides migrations, identity formation and quest for multiple citizenships. New diasporas are not only centered on the creation of communities for cultural and economic reasons. According to Barbie Zelizer, memory is not always rational or linear and as such

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[124] Benjamin N. Lawrence, *Locality, Mobility and "Nation": Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland, 1900-1960* (NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 7.

[125]Benjamin N. Lawrence, *Locality, Mobility and "Nation": Periurban Colonialism in Togo's Eweland, 1900-1960* (NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 1.

it could be altered or shrouded for a strategic essentialist agenda.[126] It is obvious that diasporan blacks shared a different line of thought. Like a pendulum, memory of home shifted from one end to the other, as returnees imagined Africa and as they positioned themselves for self gratifying reasons. Put differently, a good number of returnees and their descendants made and are aggressively making territorial and spatial claims on the basis of their African heritage or the conviction that they are entitled to some aspects of wealth in Africa. In Africa, beginning in the early nineteenth century, a number of returnees created diasporas of entitlements and rights as a way of making statements, demands or creating various sites for accumulating wealth and resources both legitimately and unlawfully.

Similar to Olympio's audacious positioning in Togo, the role of other Afro-Brazilians in pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence periods in Africa raises a troubling pattern of behavior that has not been thoroughly explored. Robin Law has provided a refreshing analysis of Francisco Felix de Souza "Chacha", a prominent Brazilian slave trader who formed lasting ties with other Brazilian slave traders to shuffle captured Africans from the Bight of Benin to Bahia from the 1820s. De Souza married a local woman and later transformed from the position of a slave trader to a chief in Ouidah.[127] Indeed, the marriage to a local woman did not change Chacha's attitude towards the enslavement of Africans.

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[126] Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies" *Review and Criticism* (June, 1999), 7.

[127] Robin Law, "Francisco de Souza in West Africa, 1820-1849" in Jose C. Curto and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (NY: Humanity Books, 2004), 187-205.

In the Gold Coast, a decade after Chacha settled in Ouidah, Afro-Brazilian returnees who were offered a vast area of land did not necessarily feel entitled to it, but they had other forms of monopoly. The settlers who were mostly merchants like Chacha had a tremendous influence in Accra in the mid nineteenth century, because of their relations with *Mantse* Tackie Tawiah, the elite population in the area, and through intermarriages.[128] Their descendants, the *Tabom* people did everything within their power to protect the land and range of properties they inherited. Attempts by the leaders in the community to manage historical sites, such as the Brazil House, without outside interference do not necessarily suggest they sought to establish a degree of entitlement. In some ways, it shows the subtle manners or the extent to which members of returnee communities positioned or placed themselves to control local resources.

Since the mid twentieth century, scholars from different disciplines have embarked on an academic expedition to interrogate the meaning and the significance of the African Diaspora to the study of the transatlantic slave trade, a "tragic" historical experience that gave rise to the creation of the New World African identity. The New World, which comprises areas in the Americas, Europe and other locations where African slaves were dispersed between the sixteenth and early twentieth century, has provided a space for this dialogue. The transatlantic slave trade, or what is sometimes referred to as the middle passage, has been debated by scholars, intellectuals, nationalist leaders,

[128]Roger S. Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*: *Ghana's Coastal Communities under Colonial Rule* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 70-71. See also John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 2000), 82, 91.

students, private organizations, returnees, people from the African ancestry, who either relocated to live in Africa permanently or went as "tourists" among others.

Some of these contestations were driven by a desire to quantify the number of Africans that were captured both by local Africans and Europeans slave merchants. Other inquiries sought to establish that slavery destroyed the socio-economic and political structures of the geographical area that became known as Africa. Yet, at the twilight of the twentieth century growing debates about the legacy of transatlantic slavery has turned in other directions.

A new awareness about the transatlantic slavery has shaped both academic and political discourses about what the people of European descent or European nations and African chiefs ought to do to compensate the "victims" of the middle passage in the Atlantic world. The debate over those responsible for the enslavement of Africans has raised controversial and heated arguments. In fact, a number of researchers and activists sought to make similar claims for compensation from western institutions and governments as well as public apologies from African chiefs. The dispute about who is responsible for the transatlantic slavery and its lasting impact on Africa and descendants of African slaves linger.

Indeed, like debates over slavery, discourses about the African Diaspora have also evolved over time. As my study will show in this chapter, existing literature probes the meaning of, the characteristics of and contemporary issues that continue to reframe discourses about the African Diaspora, and how this conversation is disseminated. What is the African Diaspora and what is the role of this phenomenon of a "return" to the

"motherland"? How can scholars explain the position of the African Diaspora in the ideation of people of African descent in the Atlantic world? In terms of identity, how does the African Diaspora contribute to the ways in which the people of African ancestry refashion their identity and their history? What are the gender dynamics in the creation of communities with ties to the African Diaspora and the Americas? How do scholars who study the African Diaspora situate the role of tourism in the appropriation or commodification of Africa? How do both local Africans and returnees consume and allocate features of tourism to show their links to the transatlantic slavery and for economic benefits? Put simply, who is entitled and who is not? These important questions are part of the issues that will be addressed in my study.

Ongoing Debates about the Diaspora

Polemics about the diaspora have gained enormous attention both in academic and no-academic circles, and it is vital to point out that there are degrees of debate beyond the scope of my study. While some debates tackled are the homogenization of every form of mobility as a diaspora, other scholars like George Shepperson have stated that the notion of diaspora goes beyond the twentieth century interpretations. According to Shepperson, an approach that is limited in scope is insufficient for creating a broader framework because it "it loses much of its force to dispersal in an outward direction only."[129] Leaning on religious factors, Shepperson locates the diaspora within Christian biblical traditions, specifically the Old Testament book of Psalms (68:31), "Ethiopia shall

[129] George Shepperson, in Joseph E. Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 44.

soon stretch forth her hands" he reminds his readers about the vital place of ancient African kingdoms as Abyssinia, now Ethiopia in the construction of notions of diaspora. At the same time, like Cohen, Shepperson holds that the African Diaspora has its "roots" in the Jewish Diaspora, because they both share Biblical references, history oppression, displacement and constant movements.[130]

In their innovative investigations into the meanings of the African Diaspora, Tiffany Ruby Patterson, Robin Kelley and Paul T. Zeleza show how some narratives are configured, how some historical voices, such as those speaking of diaspora in reverse, are silenced or systematically erased in order to illuminate other paradigms. These works focus on new models for exploring the processes and conditions of the African Diaspora and argue for the broadening of trans-national discourses. At the same time they highlight new migration trends and the incessant reinvention of African Diaspora communities. These scholars posit that the African Diaspora must extend beyond the Americas because it embodies multiple diasporas which have emerged elsewhere.

My dissertation demonstrates that the on-going relationship between the *Tabom* people and Brazilians is another element of unfinished migrations, and that this ongoing voyage in the diaspora falls under this historical tradition.[131] Recent trends in academia show that scholars who are interested in the African Diaspora continue to interrogate discourses that confine the concept within a traditional framework—the framework that

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[130] Ibid, 5.

[131] Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the Making of the Modern World Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 13, 1 (April 2000): 1-6; Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs* 104 (2005): 39-4.

determines who should or should not be included in the creation of African diaspora. The argument by Shepperson regarding the scope of the diaspora has been articulated in recent scholarship.

The conceptualization of the African Diaspora that has gained the attention of scholars, especially those who articulate that the African Diaspora, needs a new academic interpretation. Current intervention and academic ventures have sought to advance the conversation beyond historical timelines. These works attempt to dissect and challenge old definitions of African Diaspora, which are mostly centered on blackness and Anglophone models. This remains a subject of contention among many scholars including Zeleza.[132] How can scholars and intellectuals define the African Diaspora and its lasting legacy of the transatlantic slave trade without obscuring other historical elements that have a striking resemblance in the creation of New World blacks (black communities outside the African continent)? Three striking recurring themes have emerged in recent scholarship: defining the diaspora as a process, as a condition[133] and creating a new academic template to set rigorous standards to reconstruct what constitutes an African Diaspora.[134] These diverse definitions converge and diverge on many levels.

In "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the Making of the Modern World Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Modern World," Tiffany Ruby Patterson and

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[132] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting The African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs* 104 (2005): 42.

[133] Ruby Patterson and Robin Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the Making of the Modern World Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 13, 1 (April 2000): 11.

[134] Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 (2001): 195.

Robin Kelley explain the meaning of and reframe debates about the African Diaspora with emphasis on the significance of continuity. The authors give new models for unearthing the processes (events that led to the movements of black bodies across the Atlantic) and conditions (socio-political and cultural factors that determine citizenship and identity) within the African Diaspora.[135]

According to Patterson and Kelley, the historical construction of the African Diaspora must highlight the "continual reinvention of Africa and the Diaspora through cultural work, migrations, transformations in communication, as well as the globalization of capital."[136] There are striking similarities between the works of Paul T. Zeleza, Ben Vinson and Kim Butler regarding the urgency to gauge the diaspora from the lens of Patterson and Kelley— theories that emphasize on-going processes in the diaspora.

Like Patterson and Kelley, Zeleza is convinced that the African diaspora is a "state of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings."[137] Zeleza believes that the African Diaspora must extend even beyond the "Black Atlantic," because the Diaspora embodies multiple diasporas and conjunctures.[138] He claims that, because the African Diaspora has been placed in an "academic cage" in the past,

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[135]Ruby Patterson and Robin Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the Making of the Modern World Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 13, 1 (April 2000): 11.

[136] Ibid, 13.

[137] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting The African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs* 104 (2005): 41.

[138] Ibid, 63-64.

discussions on the African Diaspora have been "blackened" with themes about Black people, while the experiences of brown and yellow skinned Africans have been pushed to the periphery. To put it in another way, Zeleza calls for a Multicultural Atlantic diaspora that embodies the totality of the African experience.

Linguistically, Zeleza criticized works that only concentrated on Anglophone regions, but ignored multi-lingual experiences in other transatlantic stations.[139] The number of Ghanaian languages spoken by the contemporary *Tabom* people fits well in this academic discussion.

Zeleza also looks at the geographical implications and limitations on African Diaspora. In doing so, he theorized a definition that embraced procedures that led to the developments and congregation of Black bodies across the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean diasporas. Zeleza talked extensively about contemporary migrations within the African continent and others in Europe and North America that were prompted by economic need, by educational purposes, by civil wars and geo-political movements. He concluded that the African Diaspora should go beyond the Black Atlantic and the horrific experiences of African people in the New World because of the dispersals of Africans descended from people elsewhere.

Kim Butler and Ben Vinson also support the notion that the African Diaspora is a process. According to Butler, "the process of diasporization is the logical starting point for diasporian studies,"[140] because it aids in defining the diasporas as the "interconnecting

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[139] Ibid.

[140] Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 (2001): 197.

ideology that completes the wheel, linking the spokes to each other as well as to the center, thus creating the whole of this transnational community."[141] Butler is also concerned about the ramifications of multiple movements and identities, as people migrate to several locations over time.[142]

Vinson is somewhat convinced about the process within which other diasporas have emerged, especially in Latin America. He noted that there had been discontinuity in the process of carving various African Diasporas. Vinson blamed this on the attention given to racial and ethnic discourses in Latin American historiography, which overshadowed other significant themes visible in the fledgling movements which are part of reverse diasporas. Vinson claims that if the process of emerging diasporas were not silenced, discourse on blackness in the Andean regions would be more visible in academic writings.[143] He characterizes the local histories of the black presence in individual countries of Latin America as "the by-product of international debates,"[144] and concludes that as a result of the break in the process there is no direct link between Black Studies and Latin American research that interrogates emerging notions of blackness.

With respect to the concept of the African Diaspora as a condition, Patterson and Kelley assert that there is evidence of shared struggle among people of African descent who were scattered throughout the New World. For example, the Black untouchables—Dalits in India linked their struggles and common conditions with African-American

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[141] Ibid, 208.

[142] Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 (2001): 193.

[143] Ben Vinson, "African (Black) Diaspora History, Latin American History," *Americas* 63 (2006): 15-18.

[144] Ibid, 3.

campaigns for liberation, while Rastafarians and Orientals—Afro-Asian vegetarians shared common cultural habits. Patterson and Kelley made a compelling case that the condition of slaves and their descendants in the New World had a ripple effect on the formation of the African identity, European identity as well as the rise of republicanism and democracy in Europe.[145] Furthermore, they argue forcefully that the African Diasporic experience became the gateway for developing Europe. Patterson and Kelley added that there is mutual connection between the construction of blackness and whiteness. The authors declared later that, "Just as Europe invented Africa and the New World, we cannot understand the invention of Europe and the New World without Africa and its people."[146]

The interconnected nature of the African Diaspora and other geographical spaces is visible in the above argument.

Zeleza takes the side of Patterson and Kelley when he talks about the series of events and conditions that gave rise to contemporary diasporas, diasporas of colonization and global migrations.[147] Also, Butler shares similar theoretical platform with Patterson, Kelley and Zeleza and posited that local and international conditions of slaves influenced the process of dispersals,[148] however, she is careful with the ways in which the conditions

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[145] Ruby Patterson and Robin Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the Making of the Modern World Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 13, 1 (April 2000): 31.

[146] Ibid.

[147]Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting The African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs*, 104 (2005): 54-58.

[148] Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 (2001): 199.

of a particular ethnic group risked essentializing other diaspora experiences. Butler does this well by avoiding detailed discussions on ethnicity and cultural formations in specific locales in the Americas. In fact, the language she used in her analysis did not tie her to any specific argument that denied the significance of shared conditions of people of African descent. To put it in another way, Butler prefers analytic framework to ethnic labels. Based on this premise, Butler developed a complex framework to re-examine diasporas.

Butler pursues a daunting task as she examined converging thematic and theoretical approaches for defining the diaspora in general. She therefore developed a template that could suit many diasporic experiences. Butler proposes five different rigid formats which include: 1) Reasons for, and conditions of the dispersal. 2) Relationship with the homeland (ancestral location). 3) Relationship with hostlands (new location based on forceful or willful movements). 4) Interrelationships within communities of the diaspora. 5) Comparative studies of different diasporas.[149] Through this exploration she devised an avalanche of terms for the diaspora. They include, macro and micro, voluntary and involuntary, imagined communities, ethnonational and others. Also, Butler places herself in a position where she had to juggle between multiple events, processes and conditions that existed or continue to surface in the diaspora. Through this approach Butler had to illuminate or obscure multifaceted themes that intertwine or overlap with each other in her negotiation.

[149] Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 (2001): 192-195; 198-206.

Indeed, Butler's "academic hands" were restricted by her definition and as a result of her stringent conclusions that was intended to create a framework that sets her theory apart from all others. Butler concludes that, "Only comparative analysis will fully elucidate the hallmarks of diaspora,"[150] yet, her five point plan seems to contradict each other. For example she noted earlier that "Only communities imagined in certain way are diasporas."[151]

Butler does not, however, tell us what criteria should be used to determine who cannot be included in other flourishing communities in the diaspora. Another problem with Butler's project is that she selected what suited her definition and theory. On one hand, she denied the significance of ethnicity, but on the other hand she embraced, for example, the Yoruba Diaspora. Butler had to flush out the differences between Yoruba material cultures and Yoruba as an ethnic group in her ambitious project to create a template for discourse on the African Diaspora. It is unclear how the *Tabom* people fit into Butler's academic framework especially when it comes to issues relating to their multiple identities—ties to Ghana and Brazil.

The authors I have mentioned seem to sing a similar song, but they do so through different academic choruses. Just as similarities abound in the theorization so do the differences. While Patterson and Kelley argued that the invention of the African diaspora

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[150] Ibid, 194.

[151] Ibid, 192-198.

paved the way for understanding Europe and the New World,[152] Zeleza on the other hand, asserts that discourses on the African Diaspora are manipulated by African-American scholars and Black Studies with emphasis on blackness and centered on Anglophone themes.[153] Also, Butler argues that because most experiences in the diaspora are lumped together, it has obscured the formation of multiple diasporas elsewhere.[154] By and large, these theories have extended the dialogue on the African Diaspora, generating new questions about the complexity of the diasporas. The most common and significant indicator that flowed throughout the current tradition about the African Diaspora rearticulates Du Bois's notion of double consciousness or identity crisis which is visible in reverse diaspora migrations.

The arguments I have pointed out also add to the complexities in exploring African Diaspora studies and show the fluidity of middle passage experiences as Patterson and Kelley suggest when they examined the process. If the African Diaspora is "Simultaneously a state of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings as Zeleza proclaims;"[155] if the diaspora deserves a new methodological and

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[152] Ruby Patterson and Robin Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the Making of the Modern World Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 13, 1 (April 2000): 31.

[153] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting The African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs*, 104(2005): 63-64.

[154] Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 (2001): 192.

[155] Ibid, 41.

theoretical templates as Butler proposes; [156] and if the diaspora needs a new regional and geographical focus as well as unlimited bridges to connect "Black Studies with emerging Latin American research on blackness,"[157] as Vinson rightly suggests, then new scholarly works can point out emerging links elsewhere outside the radii of old traditional frameworks for theorizing the African Diaspora. This dissertation assert that the growing cultural dialogue between returnee communities in West Africa, as well as the *Tabom* people, Brazil and Ghanaians fits well into this emerging paradigm.

The position of other scholars in other disciplines has also provided engaging insights. For example, anthropologists Edmund T. Gordon and Mark Anderson contend that the concept of African Diaspora was designed in the past to satisfy political and intellectual projects. Therefore, they argue for new paradigms that could shift the focus towards analysis and processes that explored individual identity formation, especially a theory that permits Black people in the Diaspora to conceptualize the blackness or multiple identities within them.

The authors call for ethnographic attention to this new paradigm to embrace a thesis that underscores the importance of racial constructions, racial oppressions and racial identification in the making and the remaking of the African Diaspora—rather than creating a premise that imposes theories which somewhat dictate to people of African descent how to participate, or be excluded, in the making and the remaking of diaspora (as in the case of Butler). In the words of Gordon and Anderson, there is the urgency for

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[156]Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 (2001): 194-195.

[157] Ben Vinson, "African (Black) Diaspora History, Latin American History," *Americas* 63 (2006): 11.

an "ethnography of diaspora, conceived not simply as ethnography of various communities of African descent but, rather, as an ethnography of various forms of diasporic politics and identification."[158]

Gordon and Anderson strike a new cord in academia, declaring that racial and ethnic configurations should not be merely bestowed on others, but rather should be ascribed, affirmed and constructed by those who can relate to or identify with each other's experience as black or African, not as the lyrics of Peter Tosh proclaims. Despite theorization, the range of polemics and the streams of configurations from different academic fields that map out the African Diaspora, there is still work to be done on the boundaries, the rigidity or fluidity in defining dispersals, transnational movements, citizenship, the boundaries for establishing racial and ethnic discourses, as well as diasporas in reverse.

Besides the scholarly variations and interpretations, there has been a shift in focus as a number of scholars continue to underscore the importance of a multidimensional geographical scope to advance discourses about the African diaspora in reverse. For instance, Kristin Mann argues for an in-depth study of, "reciprocal effects of the Americas on Africa contrary to works that shows the opposite: African retention, survivalisms and contributions in the New World."[159]

Mann and Robin Law propose part of this theory in their analysis of the multiple linkages between Atlantic communities in Benin and Brazil. Mann in particular has

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[158] Edmund T. Gordon and Mark Anderson, "The African Diaspora: Toward an Ethnography of Diasporic Identification," *Journal of American Folklore* 112, 445 (1999): 282-289.

[159] Ibid, 10.

called for multilateral and not bilateral study of the diaspora because of its broad scope. His position about the "unending" length and breadth of the diaspora has two major influences in the study of Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana. First, it solidifies ties between returnees and Ghana. Secondly, it also makes room for the *Tabom* people to refashion their own identities based on their Ghanaian citizenship and their Brazilian heritage. This form of "liberated" diasporic approach resonates in recent studies. Mann has already given credit to Paul E. Lovejoy, J.E. Harris and John Thornton in this academic endeavor and called for other scholars to pursue a similar route.[160]

For Lovejoy and Law, they have established the need to refocus attention to contributions slaves and their descendants have made to socio-cultural, economic and political developments in Africa. The attempts by Mann, Law, Lovejoy and Thornton to expand the conversation have some things in common with other works that speak to the multiple dimensions of the African Diaspora. Scholars in heritage and tourism studies like Lovejoy and Law have underscored this component.

As I have stated earlier, various scholars have called for manifold reciprocal paradigms. My study, on the other hand, builds on existing works but moves the benchmark from the history of returnees in Nigeria, Benin and Togo to one that examines the history of returnees in Ghana who also maintained their Atlantic world identities while assimilating into local cultures or embracing both of heritages. It underscores reverse mobility by the *Tabom* community as they prepare a journey back to Brazil. This kind of approach not only takes into consideration the impact of slavery on free slaves

[160] Ibid, 17.

and their descendants in terms of their interest in reconnecting or visiting Brazil, but at the same time it explains how a section of the *Tabom* population has internalized memories of their ancestors participation in slavery along the Bight of Benin in redefining their identity. In other words, because of the bad image Afro-Brazilian returnees' involvement in slavery presents, a section of their offspring in Ghana has "rejected" their ancestral ties to Brazil. This group prefers to identify only as Ghanaians. (see chapter 3) Although the groups I have described are part of a Brazilian diaspora that emerged in Ghana, they have reconstructed a new identity or become part of a larger Ghanaian culture.

There are contestations within the Afro-Brazilian communities in Ghana regarding the position of various families or groups that trace their ancestral roots to Brazil. Indeed, paradigms in existing literature show how power is contested in the diaspora. Here, it is vital to add that diaspora, as applied in a number of literature studies has created a binary or hierarchy that treats myriads of mobility and movements as a subsidiary element of a larger culture or an offshoot of an existing sites or spaces.

Despite the fact that my study gives credence to movements to and from different locations on the African continent many centuries before the emergence of diaspora studies and discourses on the creation of new homelands, this approach does not place the emergence of diasporas on the African continent above contemporary studies. Neither does it elevate different communities, identities or branches under the larger "Brazilian tree," one over the other. Rather, my study compliments existing literature on this subject and draws on both chronology and historical evolution to underscore the importance of

African, Afro-Brazilian, Afro-Cuban diasporas which evolved into *Aguda* and *Tabom* identities over time. My analysis also underscores the emergence of other diasporan returnee communities to the study of the African Diapora in reverse. I posit that the different timelines and diasporas emerged simultaneously and therefore should be treated as part of the other in relative terms. For the history of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana, each generation possess unique qualities that compliment each other.

To understand fully the origins of diasporas in reverse, it is imperative that this study employs a broader academic lens to show how scholarship in the field of African and African Diaspora studies have evolved over time. I begin with one of the earlier historiographies. For instance, in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, Joseph E. Harris highlights the significance of African religious practices in the formation of African-American identity.[161] Michael A. Gomez follows a similar path in *Exchanging Our Country Mark: The Transforming of African Identity in the Colonial Antebellum South*, by showing how slaves' memories of their ancestral homeland contributed to a degree of consciousness for resistance in slave plantations.[162] More recent scholarship includes Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs's *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World*, which highlights Yoruba retentions and survivalisms in the Americas, and it explores

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[161] Joseph E. Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 299.

[162] Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Mark: The Transforming of African Identity in the Colonial Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 152.

their contributions to the formation of African Diaspora identities and resistance to oppression.[163]

Other studies have underscores the significance of Nomadic Diasporas,' 'Traveling Identities,' and 'Wondering Cultures.' By "Nomadic Diasporas" I am referring to evolving components of migrations, identities and cultures and their place in the study of diasporas. These nomadic diasporas, traveling identities and wondering cultures are all in continuum and follow some kind of progression—
one which ties these three important elements. Beginning with the history of returnees from South America in terms of the inter-continental and transnational approach to this study, it is equally important to point out those scholars who wrote about Afro-Brazilian returnee communities in Africa also depended on works written by Brazilian scholars.

The works share historiographical ties with new scholarship include: João José Reis, *Slave Rebellions in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835*; James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*; other Brazilian scholars such as Gilberto Freyre and his seminal piece, *Casa Grande & Senzala*; Mieko Nishida; Zephyr L. Frank's *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* and George Reid Andrew's *Blacks and Whites in Sao Paolo, 1888-1988*.[164] These studies of slavery, rebellions, and African religious and cultural practices in Brazil have created a platform for interrogating the

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[163] Ibid.

[164] George Reid Andrew, Blacks *and Whites in Sao Paolo, 1888-1988* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), Sweet, James H. *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003; and Zephyr L. Frank's book, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Sanford, C.A: Stanford University Press, 2004).

formation of slave communities in South America and Afro-Brazilian communities in Africa. At the same time, it has enabled scholars to interpret how their works coalesce with themes about race, identity formation, citizenship and religion among others.

Contemporary works on Afro-Brazilian communities in Africa consist largely of the works by historians Micheal J. Turner, Samuel Quarcoopome, S.Y. Boadi Siaw, Anani Dzidzianyo, Robin Law; Alcione Amos and Ebenezer Ayesu, and Kristin Mann among others.[165] Turner began his study by arguing that the exodus of Afro-Brazilian slaves to Dahomey is a story based on: "courage, self-sacrifice, danger, self-confidence, pride, deceit and pragmatism."[166]

The author provides a detailed historical overview to explain the genesis of African slavery in the New World, the oppression of the slaves in Brazil, and a chronology of slave rebellions especially in Bahia. Certainly, the narratives of Afro-Brazilians communities in West Africa, particularly, the *Tabom* people, and growing diasporan communities in Ghana—converge and diverge on many grounds.

In *Slavery and Identity: Ethnicity, Gender and Race in Salvador, Brazil, 1808-1888,* Mieko Nishida examines the processes in which the identity of slaves evolved

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[165] Michael J. Turner, *Les Bresilien: The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey* (Ph. D Dissertation: Boston University, 1975), 21-22; Samuel Quarcoopome, *The Brazilian Community of Ghana* (Dissertation: University of Ghana, June 1970), 5-8. S.Y. Boadi-Siaw, *Brazilian Returnees of West Africa*, in Joseph E. Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (D.C: Howard University Press, 1982), 299; Robin Law, *The evolution of the Brazilian Community in Ouidah*, in Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay (eds.), *Rethinking the African Diaspora: The Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (UK: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001); Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayensu, "I am a Brazilian: *History of the Tabon, Afro-Brazilian in Accra," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series* 6 (2002): 36; Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

[166] Ibid, 1.

during and after the period of slavery in Brazil. She explored how enslaved Africans and their descendants contested, negotiated, preserved their African cuture and re-created unique identities to establish their freedom, both in slave plantations in Brazil and when slaves migrated to their ancestral homeland in Africa. The process of deconstructing African identity and imposing western religious and cultural values in plantations in Brazil, as Nishida describes, was the bedrock for initiating African slaves into the state of servitude and at the same time for weakening any African cultural kinships between slaves in Brazilian plantations. As Nishida relates, such an approach could not prevent slaves from maintaining aspects of their African cultural practices.

Nishida's long narratives also discuss how African slaves survived attempts to deny them their cultural kinships. Also, she demonstrates how enduring cultural affinity between African-born slaves enabled them to organize strategically. Nishida argued that slaves were not passive. For example, cultural traits such as facial markings, tattoos, common languages and religious practices enabled slaves to mobilize and identify and relate to each other more freely. In urban areas, gestures, exchange of greetings and recognitions based on ethnicity were visible in forms of a salute, by removing their hats and by cracking the first two fingers of the right hand. Nishida showed that the expression of unity and ethnic pride among slaves went beyond ethnic lines. She did so by showing the significance of space—especially sites where slaves usually congregated to formulate ideas not only to stabilize unity between them but also to challenge white

oppression. Nishida characterized identity formations, ethnic solidarity, as well as the display of African retentions among slaves as the process of *creolization*.[167]

Other related literature and historiographic traditions took a different direction by focusing on Africa. This body of work largely underscored the significance of Africa to racial uplift projects in the United States as well as to African-American political and economic consciousness in the post-Reconstruction era. This tradition included scholars who wrote about mass migrations to create African-American and Caribbean settler communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone as part of colonization movements.[168] This aspect of the historiography is significant because it underscores historical developments embedded in slavery, emancipation, nationalism and other features that enable us to contextualize diaspora in reverse in the late 1800s.

Indeed, the second half of historiographical trend took a different turn. At the peak of reverse migrations to Africa, especially mass migrations to Liberia at the twilight of the nineteenth century, scholars wrote about colonization movements, identity formation, and matters relating to citizenship as diasporan blacks returned to their ancestral homelands. For instance, Nemata Amelia Blyden's *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880*, examines the various positions West Indian Caribbean returnees occupied in

[167] Nishida, *Slavery and Identity: Ethnicity, Gender and Race in Salvador, Brazil, 1808-1888,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 30-31; 56.

[168] Nemata Amelia Blyden's *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000), 7-15; Ibrahim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 9-13; Claude A. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African-Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African-Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4-5, 28-49.

Sierra Leone in the early stages of its formation as a colony.[169] Ibrahim Sundiata and Claude A. Clegg III, on the other hand, explored emigration to Liberia to underscore how African-American settlers became a separate, privileged diasporan community.[170] This trend persisted in the twenty first century within returnee communities in Ghana.

In *Righteous Propagation: African-Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny After Reconstruction*, Michele Mitchell also emphasized the significance of emigration to Liberia to racial uplift projects in the United States, to African-American's political consciousness and to their views of Africa at the twilight of the nineteenth century.[171] Kevin K. Gaines also highlighted the significance of racial uplift projects in America and to black American racial consciousness at home and to migrations to Africa.[172]

Besides the different degrees of diasporas and their characteristics that I have stated earlier, other scholars have examined the history of the African Diaspora in other constructive and complex ways. In general, there are four strands of thought in scholarship: first, scholars who emphasize African retentions, Africanisms and survivals in the New World; second, traditions that focus on mass migrations by African-Americans to Africa; third, scholars who argue that exoduses to Africa in the late 1800s,

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[169] Nemata Amelia Blyden's *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880 The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000), 12.

[170] Ibrahim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 9-13; Claude A. Clegg, *The Price of Liberty: African-Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 28.

[171] Michele Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African-Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 4-5; 28-49. See also Robert Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship: Africa, Africans, and Afro-Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Inc., 1973), ix.

[172] Kevin K. Gaines. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 32-41.

as well as twentieth century political activism—such as Black Nationalism at the height of colonial rule—shaped the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and Pan-Africanism; and fourth, ongoing debates in African and African-American Studies since the mid-twentieth century that seek to redefine the African Diaspora by reconstructing the discourse beyond the New World—focusing on diasporan enclaves within Africa.

James T. Campbell insightful work chronicles centuries of African-American migration to Africa and provides new interpretation to diaspora in reverse.[173] *Middle Passages: African America Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005,* trace trajectories of transnational migrations back and forth from Africa to North America to emphasize geographical routes and cultural roots in African Diaspora history. Campbell's work focuses on journeys that were undertaken voluntarily and involuntarily mainly by black American missionaries, scholars, activists and emigrants to Sierra Leone, Liberia and other locations in Africa for "civilization" purposes.

By highlighting the origins of the Middle Passage as well as interactions between African-Americans and Africans, Campbell underscores an aspect of reverse-migrations to Africa. In doing so, Campbell explores the role of African identity in African-American ideation and made the assertion that when Black Americans were examining their Africaness, they were partially questioning their Americaness.[174] Overall, *Middle Passages: African America Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005* underscores the complexity and broken ties between one generation and the other as well as communities and

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[173] James T. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African America Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005*(NY: Penguin Press, 2006), 155.
[174] Ibid, xxiv.

families from the onset of the transatlantic slave trade, especially how returnees attempted to mend their “broken wing.”

In the mid twentieth century, during the processes of desegregation in the United States and decolonization in Africa, and at the height of Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism, new scholars addressed these issues. In doing so, they underscored civil rights activism in the United States and how world events, such as the World Wars and the Cold War, created platforms for raising racial consciousness and for unifying people of African descent, as they forged international alliances to challenge oppressive systems and institutions worldwide. Black nationalist leaders, intellectuals and activists in this category appropriated notions of diaspora, resistance by slaves and pan-Africanism as stated earlier, for political purposes. They largely built upon Marcus Garvey’s “back-to-Africa” movement which emerged in the early 1900s. Notions of diaspora took on a new coat thereafter. As Penny Von Eschen and James H. Meriwether, in particular, related, Cold War hysteria could not prevent dialogue between New World blacks and Africans, neither was it able to weaken their resilient projects towards decolonization and desegregation.[175] This scholarship also showed how Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism at the dawn of the twentieth century unified blacks in the African Diaspora to end colonialism and segregation in America.

As the history of the African Diaspora in reverse has shown, the experiences of different diasporan communities have a number of things in common. For African-

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[175] Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black American And Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (NY: Cornell University Press. 1997), 118-120; James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa,1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 172-174.

American returnees, Kevin K. Gaines' well-crafted book *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* examines how interactions between Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana and African-American activists influenced the Civil Rights Movement in the US between the 1950s and 1960s. Gaines also chronicles the life experiences of African-American expatriates who migrated to Ghana at the height of the Cold War and civil rights movement and contributed to post-independence reforms in Ghana.

Gaines places Kwame Nkrumah and his "country" at the center of his analysis to explain the ways in which African-American returnees—radicals, intellectuals and volunteers participated in the exodus to Ghana to support Nkrumah's post-independent nation-building projects. Gaines' main argument is that African America expatriates saw Nkrumah's Pan-African role and his influences in Ghana's independence as well as his role in the demise of colonialism in other African nations, as a recipe for liberating African-Americans under Jim Crow laws. In doing so, Gaines shows how Ghana's independence had a humongous effect both on the civil rights movements and African-American political consciousness about Africa in the 1950s and the 1960s.[176]

According to Gaines, African-Americans who took part or witnessed Ghana's independence went back to the US to inject the ideas and radicalism in Ghana to fight even harder against symbols of Jim Crow, especially in the South. As Gaines stated, the "interwoven and anti-colonial routes of passage influenced the political formation of pan-African nationalist leaders and intellectuals, including Kwame Nkrumah, George

[176] Kevin K. Gaines. *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, N.C.:   The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

Padmore, and St. Clair Drake."[177] Also, Gaines cites Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who stood before a crowd in Montgomery and declared that,

> "Ghana tells us that the forces of the universe are on our side of justice…An old order of colonialism, of segregation, of discrimination is passing away now."[178]

Gaines also showes how the history of the people of African descent interlocks with each other by explaining how the demise of Nkrumah's rule in 1966 weakened fledgling relations between African-American expatriates and Ghanaians.

Gaines' analysis also outlines the position of a number of Pan-African organizations, including Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association to show how Pan-African ideals gained grounds across the African Diaspora and how Garvey's back-to-Africa made a significant impact on returnees. Garvey's provoking ideology underscores transnational connections across the African Diaspora, and how the back and forth movements of black bodies facilitates notions of multiple identity formations, citizenship and Atlantic dialogues that sought to reconnect people of African descent with their multiple roots and ties to Africa as well as to the Americas—hence, the formation of returnee communities in Ghana and other diasporan enclaves. Also, Gaines' book credits black consciousness that was cultivated during the era of slave rebellions, Pan-Africanism and post-independence eras. Gaines' previous scholarship also examined various exodus to Africa motivated such migrations.

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[177] Ibid, 17.

[178] Ibid, 84.

Through oral interviews in *Why Blacks Left America for Africa,* Robert Johnson Jr. carefully examines the inescapable elements that drove returnees to Africa between 1971 and 1999.[179] Ernest Dunbar follows a similar thread by thoroughly examining the flow of black bodies from the U.S. to West and East African regions in his book *The Black Expatriates: A Study of American Negroes in Exile.*[180] In his groundbreaking work, *Ebony Kinship*, *Africa, Africans and the Afro-American,* Robert G. Weisbord provides an in-depth analysis of the genesis of reverse diaspora migrations. Weisbord explores the ways in which different ideologies of the black diaspora changed between the nineteenth and twentieth century, describes various challenges and debates between pro-emigration and anti-emigration figures in addition to polemics regarding mass exodus to Africa.[181]

In *African-Americans in Ghana and Their Contributions to 'Nation Building' since 1985*, Kwame Essien also examined different waves of migration by African-American returnees to Ghana to show the various contributions they have made to Ghana's post-Nkrumah 'nation building' reforms.[182] All these works above somewhat highlight Du Bois' notion of double consciousness as returnees sought alternative ways to invert their repressive historical conditions to fulfill nostalgic sentiments and myths about

[179] Robert Johnson, *Why Blacks Left America for Africa: Interview with Black Repatriates, 1971-1999* (Westport, C.T.: Praeger, 1999), xviii–xix.

[180] Ernest Dunbar, *The Black Expatriates: A Study of American Negroes in Exile* (NY: E.P. Dutton & Company Inc., 1968), 25–88.

[181] Robert Weisbord, *Ebony Kinship: Africa, Africans, and Afro-Americans* (Westport, C.T.: Greenwood Press Inc., 1973), 12–19. For earlier works on emigration to Africa see Elliot Skinner, *African-Americans and US Foreign Policy Toward Africa, 1850-1924*(Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1991), 349-356.

[182] Kwame Essien, *African-Americans in Ghana and their Contributions to 'Nation Building,' since 1985* in Alusine Jalloh and Toyin Falola (eds.) *The United States and West Africa since 1985* (NY: Rochester University Press, 2008.

the motherland. In doing so, returnees brought to bear the significance of the African Diaspora in reverse in tandem.

In more recent times, two scholars who have enlarged Gaines' work, especially in the areas of culture, economics and social interactions between Ghanaians and returnees, are those of Sadiya V. Hartman and Bayo Holsey. In fact, my study of the significance of archaeological sites such as the slave castles and dungeons to the identity of the *Tabom* people in Ghana has been enriched by the recent works of these two scholars. Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* is about the author, a descendant of African slaves who like others before her turned backwards to explore an aspect of her memory of home.

Hartman embarks on a journey to find answers to missing historical linkages through the archaeological remains still standing along the West coast of Africa. As Hartman described the experiences, she set out "in search of people who left behind no traces."[183] Hartman provides a breath-taking narrative that moves the reader through a systematic story that reintroduces the slaves' "long walk" from the point of capture to embarkation. It is through these historical spaces in Ghana that Hartman firmly planted the lives of slaves and the horrors of their experiences. At the same time, in terms of diaspora in reverse, Hartman ties her experience to her own family history of slavery in southern plantations in the United States.

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[183] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (NY: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2007), 15.

Without a doubt, nostalgia and fantasy about home drove Hartman's reverse pilgrim to Ghana to find answers. *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade* by Bayo Holsey, on the other hand, explores causes and effects associated with silences that lie beneath Ghanaians understanding of the transatlantic slave trade. Like Hartman, Holsey also selected the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles as reference points and sacred sites for interrogating missing linkages connected with memories of the past (Africa) and present conditions (the African Diaspora). Clearly, historical memories and interactions with invisible ancestral figures that are tied to the slave castles and dungeons or other material cultures in Ghana in metaphorical terms demonstrate other components of the African Diaspora in reverse.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to explain different degrees of diaspora, reverse diasporas and how memory of home contributed to notions of a homeland and identity formation. It has also demonstrated the complex notion of return and degrees of mobility either to or from Africa. Disjointed memories, misinformed memory or memories based on illusion and fantasy have created a new awakening and prompted many numerous migrations to the motherland. In fact, the gap created by slavery is so wide and the emotional damage is so deep that it would take more than a physical movement to Africa or return visit to Brazil to fill up the historical hole. My intervention in this chapter is that an alternative approach is needed by scholars to replace the existing one-dimensional discourse on memory in order to create multiple trajectories for exploring multiple traffics of migrations in Africa and the African Diaspora.

The African Diaspora in reverse is situated in an Atlantic discourse that embodies more than one location. There are various schools of thought about the geographical range of the African Diapora. The first group traces the roots of the diaspora to Africa, while other traditions within this cluster contend that the notion of the diaspora is entrenched in messianic narratives with religious dimension worldwide. Another tradition holds that the African Diaspora emerged beyond the continent of Africa after the middle passage. Yet, others traced migrations back to Africa since the nineteenth century. My study, on the other hand, draws on these theories but focuses on the African Diaspora in reverse or concepts of "additional" migrations by descendants of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana and other locations in West Africa. They include descendants of Afro-Cubans, the *Aguda* people in Benin, Togo and Nigeria. As noted earlier, this orientation includes both movements and migrations within Africa and beyond.

Literature about the emergence of diasporan communities in the Atlantic world has reached an advanced phase. For the African Diaspora in reverse, it is in its germinating stages, because it has not gained sufficient attention as the former. My study endeavors to bring attention to other aspects of the diaspora in reverse to contribute to works that already exist. As I have shown, a critical assessment of the current stage of scholarship reveals that these academic efforts have gained currency as they seek to expand paradigms that confine the heterogeneity of African Diaspora communities to black communities in the New World

A critical appraisal of the current stage of thinking reveals that these academic efforts to explain motivations for a return to Africa have gained currency. Scholars

continue to seek ways to undo paradigms that confine the heterogeneity of African Diaspora communities to black communities in the New World. While a number of works have largely neglected important elements such as the yearning for an African identity and citizenship within new diasporan communities, more popular accounts have pushed the shifting nature of the African Diaspora and transnational migrations to Ghana and the *Tabom* people's future visit to Brazil to the periphery.

I posit that the growing cultural dialogue between the *Tabom* people, Ghanaians and the Brazilian Embassy fits well into this emerging paradigms, especially, those Zeleza describes as "simultaneously a state of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings."[184]

In short, the African Diaspora in reverse is also embedded in the notion of a journey to the known and the unknown. By and large, the phenomenon's of dual identity and the nostalgic tendencies of embracing one's ancestral heritage are somewhat informed by ideas of cross-cultural conditions that permeate this important historical juncture particularly in the post-abolition era.

The African Diaspora in reverse could be identified by the following qualities or characteristics. There are four elements: 1) Family history with the middle passage; 2) Evidence of return to Africa; 3) Proof of claims of dual identity or double consciousness; and 4) Assertive attempts to visit ancestral 'homeland' in the New World. All these

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[184] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting The African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs*, 104(2005): 63-64.

features and others have shaped the discourse of return and multiple movements in cyclical motions.

Chapter Two
Colônia de Brazileiros: The case of Afro-Brazilian Returnees in Ghana, 1820s to 1900

Introduction

> "Some time in the year 1836, Brazilians landed here [Accra], they came in one cargo ship; there were seven elders among them namely Mama Sokoto and others…that land was granted to them [by the Ga king]…the land remained the property of the Brazilian community."
>
> Nii Azumah III, 1953[185]

The previous chapter examined aspects of the African diaspora in reverse, including the reciprocal connections to multiple destinations in Africa and the Atlantic world and its implications to the study of Colônia de Brasileiros (Colony of Brazilians).[186] In this chapter, the two traditional Ghanaian symbols that are discussed in chapter one, *nkyinkyim* and *sankofa*, which evoke notions of multiple belonging in, are also discussed in more detail. The former means twisting and constant movements while the latter expresses notions of return to one or multiple roots or routes—familiar or unknown points of origin. Both symbols provide a backdrop for exploring the diasporas that were created voluntarily and involuntarily. Chapter two revisits these Akan emblems in order to showcase their relevance to the history of freed African slaves in Brazil who

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[185] CVA 12/52, Peter Quarshie Fiscian and Mary Fiscian v. Nii Azumah III, March 13, 1953, 42.

[186] Brazilian colony or colonies is used to describe the various areas of Brazilian settlements from the early 1800s through the twenty-first century.

migrated to their "ancestral homelands" in West Africa and later to other "foreign lands" on the African continent.[187]

The first Brazilian returnees, Afro-Brazilians who settled at the coastal town of Otublohum and other locations in Accra, Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the early 1800s, migrated mainly from the Bight of Benin to begin a new life.[188] The returnee populations are categorized into two groups, the coastal settlers and the inland settler communities, to show their unique characteristics as well as the impact of their settlement patterns on the ways in which they reconstructed their identities. This aspect will be discussed further in the next chapter. The topography of Accra had a striking binary: the coastline was ideal for fishing and mercantile activities whereas the inland, remote region was good for farming. These two natural features accommodated the skills of the Brazilians and their descendants and shaped their historical accounts over time as Brazilian settler colonies combined commercial activities and agrarian lifestyle to aid their patterns of settlements and to support their survival. Transformations that occurred between these two communities in the early 1900s were largely influenced by the availability of land and land tenure from one period to the other, as I argue in chapter four.

This important history of returnees did not develop in isolation. It instead evolved around and within numerous competing social and cultural dynamics: the existing cultural systems of the people of Accra, particularly the Gas, British colonial conquest from the eighteenth century on, and, most significantly, the long history of internal and

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[187] T.B. Freeman, "Life and Travels on the Gold Coast," *The Gold Coast Echo*, November 5, 1888, 4.

[188] SCT 2/4/59, June 17, 1915, 392; SCT 2/4/59, 223 Jemima Nassu Ore v. Basel Mission Factory, 392.

foreign migrations to the coastline of Accra from the twelfth century on. These migrations to Accra were driven by several forces, including commerce, the propagation of Christianity, the enslavement of the local people, the need to seek refuge along the coast during times of war, and the desire to acquire land and territories. The long history of movements to Accra, which became the capital of the colonial apparatus in 1877, and other areas, especially the Ga town of Otublohum, had an intrinsic value to both coastal and inland Brazilian migrant communities from the 1820s on. For instance, "it is said that being strangers themselves, the Otublohum people did not hesitate to invite slaves from Brazil who [were] deposited on the coast of Accra to join them."[189]

In *Making the Town:* Ga *State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*, British historian John Parker asserts that:

> "The insertion of the 'Brazilian' or 'Tabon' community represented a significant modification to Accra's increasingly diverse town quarters…The arrival of the Tabons from Brazil in 1836 represented the first influx of Muslims in Accra…These ex-slaves and their descendants while retaining a distinct identity based largely on the continuing adherence of Islam, became recognized as much a part of Ga community."[190]

The significance of Otublohum to early Brazilian settlements and the ways in which the town shaped aspects of Brazilian history and identities cannot be obscured. Put differently, Brazilian identities were constructed, expressed, represented and interpreted

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[189] Dinah Kuevi, "The History of Otublohum" Dissertation for B.A in History, The University of Ghana, Legon (1979), 13.

[190] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 2000), 14; 164.

around Ga and Otublohum socio-cultural norms. Indeed, the *Brazil House* and the first *Scissors House*, the two major historical monuments that embody early Brazilian presence and settlements in Ghana, are both located in close proximity at Otublohum. Parker's analysis of Brazilian people, especially the extent of acculturation and assimilation also commands attention.

This chapter argues that the first generation of Brazilian returnees made significant contributions in Ghana but they had modest spheres of influence in their new environment. One reason for this is that the Brazilians and their descendants who were selected as *Mantsemɛi*, kings and chiefs, had limited influence on the broader Ga population. This was largely due to their small population size and their locations of settlements. This chapter provides a chronological development and overview of Brazilian history in Ghana during the pre-colonial period and part of the colonial period. It underscores the history of the Afro-Brazilian returnees from the time the first generation arrived in the Gold Coast in the early 1800s until the period the second generation emerged close to the turn of the nineteenth century. It traces the movement of returnees and their contacts with others who settled along the coastline West Africa. For these returnees their major goal for migrating was to trade, to interact with other family members and to explore new settlement areas along the Gulf of Guinea.[191]

Chapter two also examines activities within the first Brazilian colony: how the first generation negotiated their presence and their interactions with the Ga people, especially with the leaders of Otublohum. I also explore interactions between Ga leaders

[191] RG 15/1/21 February 1, 1929, 38. See also RG 15/1/89, April 30, 1931, 47; 66.

and British colonial officials and the implications of these interactions to returnees, specifically how the Brazilians responded to British colonial presence. I briefly point out their motivations for preserving their cultures and identity (see chapter three for a more in-depth discussion). My primary objective here is to interrogate various interpretations about Brazilian colonies in Ghana to determine how they converge or diverge with my archival findings.

The first part of this chapter traces the reverse migrations of returnees to Africa and the initial contacts between the first settlers and the Ga people, particularly Ga leaders who offered Ga stool land (owned by Ga *Mantsemei* and the royal family) to the Brazilians.[192] The second section situates the Brazilian presence in a broader Ga history and the history of British colonial conquest, especially returnees' involvements in slavery and British anti-colonial campaigns. The final part compares interactions between Ga *Mantemei* and British officials with particular attention to dynamics of power. It examines how power was constructed, allocated and enforced by British colonial rulers. It ends with the reactions of Ga leaders to the shift of authority in Accra during the colonial era and what it meant to the position of Brazilian chiefs in the Ga paramountcy (the territories under the Ga king), most notably the *Tabon Quarters* at Otublohum. The *Tabon Quarters* was created by Ga leaders to foster relations with the Brazilian settlers.

[192] CVA 12/52, March 13, 1953, 42.

Re-versing/visiting diverse Roots and Routes

As noted earlier, part of this chapter briefly shows the premise for charting African diasporas in reverse, most notably the forces that prompted the notion of a return to an African "homeland" from one or more areas. As these returnees and their descendants traveled from one location to the other, they constructed and reconstructed their identities and established their own communities. What were the challenges for a returning community of former slaves, and how did they negotiate their return culturally, economically, socially and religiously after their agonizing experiences in Brazilian plantations?

Returnees did not forget where they came from when they settled at Otublohun in the 1820s. The Brazilians were *não satisfeito*, not totally satisfied with their new environment. Therefore, like the *sankofa* bird, they stretched their necks backward because of their long traditions of cyclical movements from Africa to the New World back to Africa. As described in chapter one, memory played an important role in the ways Brazilians reconciled their past with the present as well as the future of the colony, and the freed slaves did not forget their other points of origin. They engaged in routine visits to the Bight of Benin (Nigeria, Benin and Togo), especially Lagos and other territories in Nigeria where a body of court records show that most of their population settled first before migrating to Ghana.[193] Without a doubt, our understanding of early Brazilian presence and these constant movements, twisting and bending as the *nkyinkyim*

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[193]Upon settlement, Lagos and the Bight became synonymous with another home in Africa. Descendants often evoked these important locations in court to establish the fact that their ancestors routinely commuted between these areas and the Gold Coast for multiple reasons

and *sankofa* symbols demonstrate, could assist in explaining how often returnees traveled to different areas. Overall, such insight could also reveal the levels of acculturation or assimilation in their new or old places of settlements.

In terms of their movement to other locations, there is ongoing debate about when and how returnees commuted back and forth or moved from the Bight of Benin. In general, the "Tabom" history is "buried" within a broader historiography of returnee communities on the Bight of Benin. Current records about the community show that settlement patterns started from either Benin, Togo or Nigeria and gravitated towards the Gold Coast (outside-in) rather than the other way around (inside-out). My recent summer research and visits to the Brazilian Quarters and Cuban Lodge in Lagos, Nigeria shed light on this phenomenon and confirmed my earlier findings. According to Muneer Akolade, a resident of the area, the Brazilians (the *Aguda* people) had close contacts with their relatives in Dahomey, Whydah and other locations on the coastline, but most of them relocated to the Gold Coast to settle permanently.[194] References from court cases that are currently housed at the Public Records and Archives Administration (PRAAD) in Accra also show evidence of Brazilian merchants and returnees in the Gold Coast and their constant movements between places to forge stronger bonds between them.[195] The Brazilians made great strides in these endeavors. During the early stages of their arrival,

[194] Muneer Akolade, interview with Kwame Essien, July 3, 2009, 1. See also Mary Afua Nelson v. S.Q. Nelson, November 25, 1931, 107.

[195] NAG, Divisional Court, STC 20/7/45 Isaac Cobblah Fiscian vs. Henry Asumah Nelson and Sohby Baksmathy, 2.

"A number of *Tabons* emerged as wealthy entrepreneurs, having forged commercial links with fellow returnees in the Port of Slave Coast."[196]

A distinction should be made to establish the differences between the first generation (1820s-1900), the second generation (1901-1957) and the third generation (from 1957 on). This separation of Afro-Brazilians into three generations is significant because it allows me to chronicle the history of Afro-Brazilians by placing their account within a broader Ghanaian historical framework: the pre-colonial, the colonial and the post-colonial periods. These three important periods, particularly the pre-colonial period, enables the author to show how their history evolved over time.

For clarity, I use Brazilians, Afro-Brazilians and returnees interchangeably in reference to the ancestors of the current generation—the "original" people who established the colony—because the use of "Brazilians" carries a generic meaning that could also apply to Brazilians of European or other ancestries. Such an approach, the lumping of various Brazilian racial groups, overshadows the different layers of diversity among these groups. The other reason is that most of the descendants, beginning with the second generation, are often identified as "Ghanaian-Brazilians" because a large section of the group was born in the Gold Coast and not Brazil as in the case of the first settlers.

I employ "Tabom" people specifically to describe children, grand-children and great-grand children of the first generation. The word *Tabom/n* comes from the Brazilian Portuguese word, "tudo bom" which literally means "OK," "I am well/fine," or

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[196] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 2000), 16.

"everything is great." According to Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson and the *Tabom* Mantse, Nii Azumah V, the Ga people derived the name "Tabom" after they heard conversations between the local people and Afro-Brazilian returnees who only spoke Portuguese when they arrived in Ghana. The early settlers repeatedly used "Tabon/m" to express themselves since they could not understand Ga, the language of the people of Accra.[197] However, the returnees were often identified as Brazilians during the pre-colonial and the colonial periods rather than being called "Tabom." It is not clear why this happened.

Making a distinction between the old and new generations illuminates the identity of these groups that largely lived in three different colonial eras and under distinct historical conditions. Also, various generations interacted with both the Ga people and British colonial rulers in unique ways. This characterization becomes even more useful when examining how the identities of the early settlers developed from one generation to the next—from Brazilians to "Ghanaian-Brazilians"—the *Tabom* people. The new generation was able to relate relatively easily with local cultures and value systems in comparison to the "distant" cultures of their forebears.[198] Also, diasporan returnees and expatriates will be accustomed to describing returnees of non-Afro-Brazilian descent who migrated from North America and the Caribbean to the Gold Coast from the early

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[197] Elder George Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, 6 August 2008, 1, and Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, 6 August 2008, 2. See also Marco Aurelio Schaumloeffel, "The influence of the Portuguese Language in Ghana," *Daily Graphic*, 7 May 2004, 7. See also Schaumloeffel, "Tabon: The Afro-Brazilian community in Accra," *Daily Graphic*, 3 June 2004, 14.

[198] Elder George Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, 6 August 2008, 1.

twentieth century on, particularly African Americans and Caribbean blacks who share a common history of slavery and reverse migrations with the Brazilians.

I use the 1820s as the beginning of their arrival specifically because a number of Brazilians who gained manumission returned to the Bight of Benin and possibly to the Gold Coast prior to the 1835 slave rebellions in Bahia, Brazil.[199] This led to other movements to the coastlines of West Africa.[200] This way, I am able to account for both former and latter movements in court cases which cover a wider period beginning from the early 1820s rather than focus specifically on those who migrated after the revolts and after the demise of slavery in Brazil in 1888.

Chapter two contains a brief account of Accra to contextualize the history of the area and to show intersections between the first settlers and the early stages of British colonial rule at the beginning of the nineteenth century. I argue that the advent of colonialism was an important era and another watershed moment in Brazilian history because it shows how a section of the population, especially returnees who were selected as Brazilian chiefs, were overshadowed by other major actors in the Ghanaian socio-political and cultural landscape. Indeed, Brazilian chiefs used their limited power and influence to navigate their ways around colonial laws such the Native Administration Ordinance (NAO) of 1883 and Native Jurisdiction Ordinance (NJO) of 1927. The former

[199] João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835 in Bahia* (MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993),See also João José Reis, translated by H. Sabrina Gledhill, *Death is a Festival: Funeral Rites and Rebellion in Nineteenth Century Brazil* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 306-309.

[200] CVA 12/52, Peter Quarshie Fiscian and Mary Fiscian v. Nii Azumah III, March 13, 1935, 12.

gave chiefs in Ghana the green light to set tribunals within their courts and make laws while the latter stifled the power of Ga leaders.[201]

The epigraph in the beginning of this chapter speaks to the degree to which the Brazilians navigated their journeys and negotiated their settlements and relationships with the leaders of Accra. The audacious returnee population who came in small groups made other stops elsewhere, but they decided to relocate to the then Gold Coast. There are several interpretations that discuss returnees' motivations for establishing settlements in the Gold Coast in the early 1820s through the 1830s and beyond. Oral traditions establish that the Brazilians were familiar with the coastline of Africa because some of the returnees were captured as slaves from these locations and were determined to return "home."[202] Other historical evidence and narratives also show that freed slaves returned to the Gulf of Guinea in their sizable numbers to carry out legitimate commercial ventures and illegal activities such as slavery.[203]

Those who were employed by Portuguese merchants performed different tasks on ships or vessels that sailed across the Atlantic Ocean.[204] Indeed, opportunities for trading, the availability of large areas of farmland, and, perhaps, the possibility of indulging in slavery activities like other returnees in the Bight of Benin might have influenced their

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[201] Nii Amon, "Indirect Rule and Government in Gold Coast Colony, 1844-1954: A Study in the History, Ecology and Politics of Administration in a Changing Society" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1956), 38-47.

[202] George Aruna Nelson, interview by Kwame Essien, January 10, 2009, 1.

[203]"Whydah," *The Gold Coast Times*, Vol. 1, September 3, 1881, 2.

[204] Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c 1850 to Recent Times* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), 52

choice of the Gold Coast.[205] The consensus is that unlike the subsequent generations, especially the *Tabom* people who became Gas (citizens of Accra) the first generation had no intention of assimilating into local cultural traditions.[206] Most of these returnees were over forty years old and might have been searching for a space to amass wealth and to relax or settle in a kind of "retirement environment."[207]

The Social History of Accra in the Pre-Colonial Era

Before there was the development of the Afro-Brazilian presence in Ghana there was a vast open savannah which later became known as "Ga" or Accra. The Akans call this area *nkrang*. In fact, the name "Accra" was coined from "Ga" or *loebii*, a Ga word for a large army of ants. Obviously, the Ga people were not ants in the literal sense. But, since Ga is a category of ants, the word was used to describe the movements of the ancestors of Ga people to the area that became one of the epicenters of a modern Ghanaian urban sprawl.[208] In that sense, Ga or *gaga*—the mobility of ants—was synonymous with the migration of a large body of people who moved together in groups to the area. This name was introduced by the early people in the area to describe the first

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[205]"Slave Trade at Quittah, Gold Coast," *The African Times*, October 23, 1863, 44. See also *The West African Herald*, June 3, 1871, 6. See also RG 15/1/89, November 24, 1931, 107.

[206]In this context, the term "citizens" is applied to the second generation and those who came after them who were born in Ghana. They identified as the people of the Gold Coast or Ghana—as Ghanaians—while embracing their Brazilian roots alongside.

[207] Photographs of the early settlers and accounts of this group show that most of them were very old. See Appendix B.

[208] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 8, 2008, 1.

migrations from Nigeria to the coastline sometime between the twelfth and thirteenth century.[209]

The Ga people are a coastal minority ethnic group in southern Ghana who speak a language called Ga. From the sixteenth century on, the Ga's depended on the sea and the land on its banks as a meeting point for interacting with Europeans and other merchants in the area. Sometimes, the Gas acted as middlemen who traded in palm oil, foreign goods, slaves and other goods.[210] Today, rural-urban migrations to Accra and political changes in the country have weakened the influence of Ga people on the coast. They have lost a large portion of their land and have become a micro ethnic group that is embedded in macro migrant communities that are dominated by the Akans, the largest ethnic group in Ghana. Brazilian and Ga histories are inseparable because they intertwine on many levels.

The geographical region in Accra, where Ga leaders offered Brazilians land, was once called the "bush" area because it was further away from the coastal and urban towns that gradually developed in the late 1800s.[211] It is no surprise that most of the descendants left their remote communities temporally or permanently to go to the coastal towns. They returned immediately because they felt threatened by others who trespassed on their land.[212]

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[209]George Aruna Nelson, interview by Kwame Essien, August 8, 2008, 1.

[210]Eric Coleman, "Social History of Accra, 1900-1935: With Special Reference to the Role of the Educated Elite," Dissertation for B.A. History Degree, The University of Ghana, Legon (1980), 7.

[211]CVA 40/58, January 27, 1958, 31.

[212]In court, several descendants claimed that they left their remote farming communities temporally to pursue other careers as their population increased. Most of them returned to their farmlands when words

Those who joined the exodus to "urban" Accra lived mostly with the coastal population near Swalaba and Otublohum—the two main areas where it is believed that their ancestors landed first. Others established varying networks with residents around business centers in Accra. It was through these processes of intermingling, especially marriage, that the second generation assimilated and became engulfed by broader diverse cultures within Accra, especially the traditions of the Ga people.[213] Indeed, new members of the early Brazilian colony also married local women and men who included the Gas, the Akans and other migrants in Accra. However, there is no evidence suggesting that the first generation assimilated into local cultures to the level of their descendants.

In my interview with British scholar Robin Law, he stated that the Gold Coast and Accra in particular, was an important location for Brazilian returnees mostly because it was an ideal place for trading and settlements.[214] Accra was an important location in Ghana's history for other reasons as well. For example, colonial officials, European missionaries and explorers who visited the Gold Coast in the late nineteenth century had positive things to say about Accra, a busy urban center and the seat of the Ghanaian Government. Around the 1890s, a British colonial official described the Gold Coast in

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spread in the city that both members and non-members of the community were building houses on family lands that were supposed to be used for farming instead. CVA 40/56, January 24, 1958, 25.

[213]RG 15/1/89, April 23, 1931, 15-16.

[214]Robin Law, interview by Kwame Essien interview by Kwame Essien during the "Black Atlantics: An Urban Perspective, 1400-1900" Conference on April 2-3, 2009 at the University of Texas, Austin.

general and Accra in particular as "the best provisioned town on the coast" with emphasis on the Ussher Fort area where the first generation of returnees settled.[215]

Pan-Africanists also held similar views about Accra at the height of black nationalism and decolonization campaigns in the early twentieth century. According to Paili Murray, an African American activist, Accra was "a nerve center of African Nationalism and political seismograph registering every tremor of the struggle for black nationhood."[216] Others have described Accra as a "sleepy old-fashioned, haphazard sort of place, an ordinary West Coast trading town firmly rooted in the customs and traditions of the past."[217]

The social history and way of life of the Ga people, the "original owners" of Accra, can be traced as far back as the 1200s and 1300s, prior to British colonial rule. Ga norms were entrenched in long-held traditions and customs that required Ga *Mantsemɛi* or *Mantsemei*, kings and chiefs to render hospitality to both local people and outsiders, most notably *gboi*, visitors or new migrants. This tradition was in line with the warmth their ancestors enjoyed from the people in the area when they also settled there about eight centuries ago. Therefore, Ga leaders felt compelled to extend similar generosity and to preserve this rich tradition. In the nineteenth century Ga leaders had no problem

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[215]George MacDonald, *The Gold Coast, Past and Present: A Short Description of the Country and its People* (NY: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 199.

[216]Quoted from Pauli Murray, *The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, lawyer, Priest and Poet* (TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 338.

[217] Quoted from Eric Coleman, "Social History of Accra, 1900-1935: With Special Reference to the Role of the Educated Elite," Dissertation for B.A. History Degree, The University of Ghana, Legon (1980), 1

extending grace to the Brazilians and expatriates as they did to various migrants, especially the Akwamus and other ethnic groups who moved to their territories.

There are different interpretations about the origin of the people of Accra. These ranges of meanings remain a myth as this debate continues. Ga oral traditions claim that the Gas moved from Nigeria.[218] Yet, others suggest that the Gas came from Mesopotamia, Benin and Nigeria after Muslim *jihads* in the thirteenth century.[219]A number of studies also show that Gas originated from Bonny, Nigeria and other areas in Western Sudan in the fourteenth century.[220]

Another interpretation notes that Gas were originally from Akwamu and had stronger ties to the people of mountainous areas in the Eastern Region of Ghana. On other hand, some colonial accounts suggest that the Gas originated from Sarne, a town near Niger.[221] It is also believed that the Gas migrated from Abyssinia or Upper Egypt. While yet, other interpretations about their roots maintain that the Gas migrated to Accra to escape oppression under King Akpo of Dahomey.[222]

As stated earlier, there is ongoing debate about the origins of the Ga people. Based on recurring evidence, I argue that the Ga people originated from Nigeria or

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[218] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, August 7, 2007, 1.

[219]S .A. Nunoo, "The History of Ga Wulomo Institution" Dissertation for B.A Degree and Honors in History, The University of Ghana, Legon (1981), 2-3.

[220]Paulina S. Quist-Therson, "Chieftancy Among the Ga's," Dissertation for B.A in History, The University of Ghana, Legon (1972), 2.

[221] George MacDonald, *The Gold Coast, Past and Present: A Short Description of the Country and its People* (NY: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 195.

[222]Leslie Nii Odartey Lamptey, "The History of Osu (Kinkawe) from the Colonial Period to Date" Dissertation for B.A Honors, The University of Ghana, Legon (2006), 8-9.

communities that developed along the Bight of Benin. In the context of this study, there is no evidence to establish that the Brazilian returnees from Lagos migrated to the Gold Coast because they believed that the ancestors of modern day Ga people originated from Nigeria. Regardless of the outcome of this debate, it is clear that the Gas shared a history similar to the reverse migrations and movements of the Brazilian returnees. This fluidity of movement shaped the returnees' way of life in many respects.

The Gas are among other minority groups in Ghana whose territories have been threatened by the influx of migrants, especially rural urban settlements. Like others, the Ga people had to protect their coast, land and customs for posterity's sake. Some of these preservation or defense measures were conducted peacefully, but others were carried out via wars. The Gas lost some of their battles, but they won a number of these wars. For instance, the Akwamus from the hinterlands, who had a strong presence in Accra, defeated the Ga's between approximately 1677 and 1681 and ruled the Ga people for about 50 years.[223] However, victory was on the side of the Gas when they defeated the Ewes in the Accra-Anlo War of 1784.[224] The Gas also fought the Ashanti after the latter invaded Accra in 1826.[225] A year later, the Gas fought with the Ewes who settled along the Volta coastal regions in the Bame War of 1827. [226] It is clear that the Brazilians

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[223]Eric Nii Annang Akwa, "Chieftancy Among the Ga's: The Paramountcy of the Ga Mantse" Dissertation for B.A in History, The University of Ghana, Legon (1980), 2.

[224]Paulina S. Quist-Therson, "Chieftancy Among the Ga's," Dissertation for B.A in History, The University of Ghana, Legon (1972), 2.

[225]Eric Nii Annang Akwa, "Chieftancy Among the Ga's: The Paramountcy of the Ga Mantse" Disseration for B.A in History, The University of Ghana, Legon (1980), 8.

[226]T.M. Lamptey, "History of Osu: From the Earliest Times to 1854," Dissertation for B.A Degree and Honors in History, The University of Ghana, Legon (1972), 20.

arrived during a tumultuous period in the history of Accra. However, there is no substantial evidence that points to their involvement in these conflicts.

Also, there is no proof that the Brazilians fought with other groups in the Gold Coast. Their small population size in the nineteenth century and evidence of constant movements to and from Otublohum would have made such an endeavor very difficult. The Brazilians' ties to Otublohum will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

The Early Brazilian Presence in the Gold Coast: From 1820s

Information provided by descendants and my archival findings show that early Brazilian presence in the Gold Coast dates back to the 1820s. The importance of events that took place along the coastlines on the Bight of Benin, especially Lagos and Otublohum—the two locations where freed Brazilian slaves, their children, families and friends commuted regularly and settled in the early 1800s—cannot be over emphasized. As I have shown, the arrival of the returnees coincided with major wars between Gas and other groups. The foundation of these Brazilian settlements also coincided with the pinnacle of several colonial projects, including the introduction of British ordinances and anti-slavery campaigns. The Brazilians and the British did not cross paths in any visible or striking way. However, although their interactions occurred at distance, they contributed to the reconfiguration of Brazilian colonies in Ghana in significant ways that deserve attention. Why did the Brazilians choose the Gold Coast amid the facades of other settlements' locations?

Like other aspects of the Brazilian story, there are multiple versions regarding why the Brazilians made this choice and the ways in which they interacted with the local

people. This investigation will not only show why the Gold Coast was an ideal place, but will also explain how the returnees participated in economic, social, cultural, religious and political activities in the area. Such analysis positions the history of the Brazilians alongside European ventures and other ethnic groups during the pre-colonial and colonial periods when the English, the Danish, the Portuguese and other European powers competed with each other and with Ga leaders for control over trading posts in Accra from the fifteenth century on.[227] How did the Europeans perceive the returnees?

The Dutch, the British and the Danes knew about the Brazilian returnees. For instance, a letter by Edward Carstensens, a Danish Governor in Accra, stated that, "Dutch Accra has some time been the center for slave traders, especially emigrant Brazilian Negroes."[228]

Due to British imperial control of Nigeria, the British were also aware of mobility along coastal belts in West Africa, one of the focal points of transatlantic trading routes. Constant correspondence between British officials in the Gold Coast colony and Lord Lugard, the British official who invented a system of Indirect Rule, attest to this. Two key examples stand out: there was correspondence between Sir George Denton (Lagos) and Mr. Chamberlain regarding arrangements for Lord Lugard to train colonial troops to assist the British in one of their battles with the Ashante Kingdom.[229] Also, the British

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[227]CO 714/64, "Natives of Accra," September 16-17, 1846, 15. See also CO 714/64, Letters from Acting Governor Henry Connor to the Queen Victoria, April 4, 1856, 48.

[228]Quoted from Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayensu, "I am a Brazilian: *History of the Tabon, Afro-Brazilian in Accra," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series* 6 (2002), 41.

[229]CO 879/62, Gold Coast Telegraphs from April 6-December 31, 1900 Relating to Ashanti War, No. 13, Letter from Sir George Denton (Lagos) and Mr. Chamberlain, April 14, 1900, 5-8.

transported a number of "Alata" people from Nigerian to serve as laborers in Accra. These two examples, among others, confirm that the British were active in the affairs of their colonies. The gradual creation of Alata Nigerian towns around Otublohum by some of these immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century Accra speaks to the phenomenon of Ghanaian-Nigerian interactions which increased during British rule.

As oral traditions and existing records have shown, former Afro-Brazilian slaves who returned to the coastline of West Africa commuted between different locales along the Gulf of Guinea—a strategic location on the Atlantic Ocean where commercial activities and slavery transpired side by side between the sixteenth and the late-nineteenth centuries.[230] Historian Michael J. Turner, in *Les Bresiliens: The Impact of Former Brazilian Slaves upon Dahomey*, provides an important insight into the genesis of former Afro-Brazilian slaves' mobility along the Bight of Benin. Turner describes the various ways the returnees organized as a community, negotiated their presence, contested for space, power and commercial monopoly as they moved back and forth along various river banks in West Africa. He depends on ship records that documented the number of Afro-Brazilians who traveled to and from Africa.

According to Turner, "Afro-Brazilians who were able to leave Brazil in the period between 1850 and 1875 had been able to make the greatest financial progress and economic success on the African coast."[231] Clearly, his analysis focuses on the returnee population after the 1850s, but it is useful for this chapter since Brazilians' migrations

[230] CVA 12/52, November 15, 1945, 21.

[231] Michael J. Turner, *Les Bresiliens— The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey* (Ph. D Dissertation: Boston University, 1975), 370, 83.

occurred at different times. As Turner rightly points out, the success of returnees along the Bight of Benin did not depend on one particular enterprise. They included legitimate trading, the acquisition of land along the coast and investments in slavery especially in Whydah, Benin.[232]

Other explanations for the Brazilians' movements from Brazil to the coastline of West Africa, most notably the Gold Coast, have been confirmed by a number of scholars. In his study of ecological and social history of the Anlo-Ewe people in south-eastern Ghana, Emmanuel K. Akyeampong highlights the trading networks of Brazilian merchants along the Guinea Gulf coast to show how other returnees also navigated along the shores of the Gold Coast from Elmina, via Accra, to the eastern part of the Volta in the 1800s.[233]

What seems to be missing in existing literature in terms of its geographical focus of these movements is the overriding assumption that returnees likely had ancestral roots along the Bight of Benin rather than Angola, or other areas around the Indian Ocean where a number of studies have shown that slaves were captured and transported to the New World.[234] This is another area scholars have not fully explored. As Roquinaldo Ferreira rightly relates in his study of returnee communities in Angola, little work has

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[232] "Hope in Dahomey," *The African Times*, December 23, 1862, 66-67.

[233] Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c 1850 to Recent Times* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), 8; 44. A recent work by Marco Schaumloffel, a former attaché at the Brazilian Embassy in Accra and a Portuguese language instructor at the Ghana Institute of Languages provides a good overview of Brazilian history in Ghana in the nineteenth century.

[234]See TraJayasuriya, Shihan de S and Richard Pankhurst, *The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 2003); See Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 23-32.

been done on Brazilian returnee communities in Angola compared to other areas in West Africa.[235] A thorough study in this area could provide new avenues for tracing other roots and routes of returnees from Brazil.

The Brazilian "Family Tree": First Generation, 1820s-1900

Brazilian migrations to the Gold Coast spanned a wide period approximately between the end of the eighteenth century and the early twentieth century. In the case of the early settler groups, they started in the late 1700s. The Brazilian family tree refers to the original group of settlers who were offered land by Ga leaders somewhere in the mid 1800s.[236] As I will discuss in chapter three, the new generations have their family tree, the "Tabom Family Tree," and hierarchy as well.

To argue for the notion of a Brazilian family tree is not necessarily to argue that all freed slaves who came from Brazil were from the same blood lines. There could have been returnees who shared close kinships. However, others might have been friends from the same neighborhoods or total strangers who were traveling on the same ship in search of greener pastures or their roots.[237] The term family tree is largely used in this chapter to identify various population groups within a larger group. The term is also employed to emphasize evidence of communal lifestyles and a sense of collective relations that emerged during their early period of settlement.[238] Although it is feasible to create a form

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[235]Roquinaldo Ferreira, interview by Kwame Essien during the "Black Atlantics: An Urban Perspective, 1400-1900" Conference on April 2-3, 2009 at the University of Texas, Austin.

[236]CVA 12/52, February 28, 1949, 62. See also CVA 45/49 March 9, 1949, 57.

[237]CVA 40/56, Jemima Nassu Ore v. The Basel Mission, October 10, 1957, 42.

[238]CVA 40/58, January 27, 1958, 32.

of ancestral tree for both groups, it is not easy to quantify the Brazilians as the actual population of Brazilians and their ancestors is not known.

Wɔ wokumɛ fa is a phrase in Ga language which translates as "our ancestors" or "the branches of our family tree are uncountable." The number and names of the original settlers are relative; they depend on whom you talk to and what they know about their past. Sometimes, the number is exaggerated by those who claim they are of Brazilian descent to showcase the significance of the Brazilian presence. In fact, there is conflicting information about the number of Brazilians who were given land in Accra after their arrival in the early 1830s. The acquisition of land and the activities of Brazilian farmers are discussed in chapter three and four.

The descendants in general are unsure of the exact number of Brazilians who established their communities in Accra during this period. As in the case of some other population groups with limited access, distant ties to the past and faint knowledge about their ancestral roots, the social lives of descendants were shaped largely by the environment they were born into and raised in rather than their "distant" heritage.

There are multiple explanations regarding the number of Brazilians who migrated to the Gold Coast in the early 1830s. Accounts of the early settlers oscillate between five, six or more family groups.[239]Although oral traditions and the interviews I have conducted so far did not provide better answers to the inquiry, the latest findings at the PRAAD revealed relevant documents that speak to their origins. They show that the actual group

[239]CVA 12/52, February 28, 1949, 62; CVA 12/52, March 13, 1953, 42 and CVA 40/56, January 23, 1958, 1.

of people who arrived between 1830 through1835 was about six or more families, but there was no mention of how many other people accompanied each family group. The list includes Mama Nassu, Aruna, Maslini, Nakpala, Damburka and Abdulamu.[240] Another record revealed in a court dispute between two descendants, Peter Quarshie Fiscian and Nii Azumah III, a former chief of the *Tabom* people, from 1936-1961 provided a list of a different group of returnees. In his attempt to convince the court about original plans by the first generation to keep the community together, Nelson declared that: "Some time in the year 1836, Brazilians landed here [Accra], they came in one cargo ship; there were seven elders among them namely Mama Sokoto and others…that was granted to them [by the Ga king]…the land remained the property of the Brazilian community [and not for individuals]."[241]

Other colonial data confirmed the 1830s timeline. As this testimony related, "It appears that as far back as the thirties [1830s] a ship load of Africans were landed from Brazil and after they were land [sic] the Ga chiefs gave them land to build on the town Accra and also bush land to cultivate."[242] However, an account by Isaac Cobblah Fiscian, a descendant, moved the date back. Fiscian argued that his grandparents arrived in the mid 1820s. According to Fiscian, "the late Aruna was one of the Brazilians who migrated to the Gold Coast in or about 1826."[243]

[240]Peter Quarshie Fiscian and Mary A. Fiscian v. Nii Azumah III, CVA No. 12/15, March 13, 1953, p. 41.

[241]CVA 12/52, Peter Quarshie Fiscian and Mary Fiscian v. Nii Azumah III, March 13, 1953, 42.

[242] CVA 12/52, Peter Quarshie Fiscian and Mary Fiscian v. Nii Azumah III, March 13, 1953, 42.

[243]CVA 45/49, July 16, 1947, 9.

The obituary of Nii Azumah IV, a former Chief of the *Tabom* people who died on December 6, 1981 at the age of 85, shows that there were seven original family groups: Azumah We, Aruna We, Zuzer We, Lawrence We, Mama Nassu We and Manuel We. “We” is the Ga word for family. The *Tabom* Chief ruled from 1961-1981. This information is provided on the obituary that publicized his funeral. Another list of names in a recent publication points to the following people: “Azumah, Mahama, Nassu, Vialla, Manuel, Zuzer, Gomez and Peregrino.”[244]

Clearly, colonial court records and other information fill in these gaps and provide a means of reconstructing early Brazilian accounts. They also show that the Brazilians were not a homogenous group. They arrived on different ships at different time periods with different missions. The names from the court records also showcase differences among them. These names do not only include traditional Brazilian Portuguese names but also show Muslim and local names from across the Bight of Benin. For instance, the names Sokoto, Nakpala and Abdulamu show up. The latter lists have different names and spellings. Aruna and Lawrence on the first list were replaced with Gomez and Peregrino. The second list contains names with Brazilian or Portuguese roots. In short, it is difficult to tell whether these returnees were born in Africa, before their dispersal into the Americas and their later return to Africa, or Brazil. Indeed, this is part of the “mystery” of the Brazilian tree and the complexities of their ancestry.

[244]Marco Schaumloeffel, *Tabom: The Afro-Brazilian Community in Ghana*, 2nd Edition, Bridgetown, Lulu.com, 2008, 22.

Both the Brazilian and the *Tabom* family trees are significant for many reasons. First, they could aid scholars in locating both the exact region of Brazil in which former Brazilian slaves were captured before they were dispersed to various locations in the New World and reverse migrations back to Africa when they became free. Secondly, these names and their origins provide a base for tracing their ancestral origins in Brazil and their first points of settlement on the Bight of Benin. Thirdly, genealogists could trace the ancestry of various family members using what is currently available. As a descendant in one of court disputes stated passionately, we are "children, grandchildren and descendants of Aruna [one of the original settlers]."[245]

In terms of doubts about those who make claims to a Brazilian heritage, the family trees could clarify these contentions and establish a kind of template for the evaluation of present or future ties to Brazil. This could be achieved in tandem with the history of land tenure and property ownership in the *Tabom* history.

Wɔ dɛntsɛ wɔ shikpon nɛ in Ga literally presents the notion of ownership of or rights to national heritage or wealth. This is an excerpt from a popular patriotic song in Ghana that emphasizes the close connections between the country's resources and the right of its citizens to use them. In the context of this chapter it is employed for two reasons. On one hand, it suggests that the Ga leaders who welcomed the returnees gave them land, perhaps because they were convinced the freed slaves were members of the Ga population who were captured and sent into bondage in exile. On the other hand, Wɔ dɛntsɛ wɔ shikpon nɛ epitomizes memories of the first settlers and underscores the

[245] Samuel Q. Nelson v. S. Ammah and Yawa Aruna, CVA 45/49; CVA 947/1920, August 3, 1949, p. 40.

dreams of Brazilian returnees who were denied land in Brazil—hence, their yearning for land tenure for farming purposes and others.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century land in Accra was mainly used for farming, for housing, for creating wealth and for constructing colonial offices and institutions. Migrants to Accra sought land to facilitate their settlement. It is possible that Brazilians' nostalgia for land tenure and power over a territory in their ancestral homeland was a reason their relocation to the Gold Coast. Part of the population who had farming skills were determined to put the talents they cultivated in Brazilian plantations into good use as in the case of Brazilian slaves who used their skills and religious retention to survive harsh plantation life or urban slavery.[246]

There seems to be a level of agreement between the *Tabom* people and scholars about how the early settlers were welcomed to the Otublohum area, a fishing community and a major center for cultural activities, commerce and Ga nationalism. The consensus is that returnees who relocated to this geographical region were first welcomed around the 1830s by the then Ga chief, Nii Ankrah, who was responsible for the affairs of Otublohum. Ankrah was from the Dadeban "We" Dadeban family, one of the wings of Otublohum *Akutso*, a district of the Ga Paramountcy. He later introduced Brazilian leaders like Mama Sokoto to Mantse Komeh I, the king who was responsible for the entire region.[247]

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[246]See James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship and Religion in the African Portuguese World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[247]SCT 2/4/19 Vol. 8, September 29, 1892, 1.

Since King Komeh I ruled for 30 years, from 1826 to 1856, it is likely that the land was allocated at some point between these dates. However, there are conflicting records about how and why Afro-Brazilian returnees were given a vast area of land. Chapter four provides an in-depth discussion on land disputes and other features that are associated with them.

Land for "All"or for "Some"?: Confessions, Contentions and Conniving

Testimonies by descendants in court show that Mantse Nii Komey I provided the land as a gesture of good will and friendship between the local people and the Brazilians to stabilize the base of the returnees.[248] Other findings show that part of the land was offered to freed Brazilian slaves by Ashong Djamawoh, the Korle priest (spiritual leader) of a small coastal town in Accra.[249] Some of the interviews I conducted added a small twist to the narratives by suggesting that the Ga Mantse made promises to the local people who were captured on the Gold Coast in order to encourage them to return "home" after they had secured their freedom. This narrative does not say that any promises were made about land.[250] Which Ga leader made such claims is also missing in the story.

If this story is true then it means that some of the members of the first generation were originally from the Gold Coast and that their relocation was in response to some kind of a "homecoming." This interpretation is weak in the sense that there is insufficient

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[248]CVA 45/49, March 9, 1949, 57.

[249] CVA 45/49, Sackey v. Otoo, August 27, 1914, p.80.

[250]Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson, interview by Kwame Essien, January 19, 2009, 1. See also John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 2000), 62; 80-96.

evidence to establish any constructive or prior contacts between former Ga Mantse or chiefs and former slaves who were transported to the New World. In short, the involvement of Ga leaders in slavery contradicts this assertion.[251]

Another version of the story holds that returnees were given land because they were able to find the exact location of their home in Africa. According to this line of thought they were given a flag as a symbol of their ties to the people of Accra. They carried the flag with them until they arrived in the Gold Coast.[252] My opinion is that the story about the flag is a myth.

This chapter concludes that returnees were at the right place at the right time. In other words, the Ga people had a long history of providing hospitality to *gboi*, *nyanyemɛi*, friends, and even their local enemies. Returnees tapped into this custom.[253] It was within this cultural traditional framework that the earlier Brazilian settlers who were mostly merchants crossed paths with the Ga Mantse and chiefs.[254]

A more salient explanation to the early interactions between the returnees and the Gas is planted deeply in other court documents I found at PRAAD, Accra in the summer of 2009. These colonial records not only provided insight into the lives of the first generation but clearly showed the exact exchanges between the Brazilian returnees, the Ga people and their leaders.[255] However, the date for the exchange is not known. What

[251] Asua, interview with Kwame Essien, January 10, 2009, 2.

[252] CIV-APP No.45/49, March 9, 1949, 60.

[253] CVA 12/15, March 13, 1953, 40-44.

[254] CVA 45/49, March 9, 1949, 57.

[255] CVA 45/49, March 9, 1949, 60.

would motivate a Ga King to offer such a huge piece of land to Brazilian returnees? Was that prompted by gifts from the Brazilians in prior contacts?

Besides the provisions for *gboi*, there are other convincing explanations regarding why the Ga Mantse donated huge portions of Accra stool land (land tied to chiefs and the royal family) to the returnees. As court documents show, the friendships that were cultivated between Brazilian merchants, the Ga leaders and their people in the 1700s continued to develop. Regarding the gift of land to the Brazilians, my opinion is that it was largely colored by cordial relations that developed in the past between Brazilian merchants (returnees) who were regular visitors and the Accra people.[256] It was through this framework of interactions and dialogue that Ga Mantse, Komeh I provided the land in question.

Put differently, earlier gifts for Ga leaders influenced their decision to offer land to the Brazilians. Obviously, the early settlers, especially those who migrated to West Africa after slave revolts in Brazil in the early 1800s, those who had a degree of freedom and opportunities to work on ships that sailed along the Bight of Benin, as well as those who were born either in West Africa or Brazil were likely the first group to have been provided with land in Accra.[257]

Elder Nelson has his own interpretations about interactions between his ancestors and the Ga people. He believed that land was given to his forefather's because the Ga *Mantsemɛi* were aware that the Brazilians had skills in digging of wells which were not

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[256] CVA 40/56, January 23, 1958, 20-22.

[257] Elder George Nii Aruna nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, January 7, 2009, 2

common in traditionally Ga areas. Poor water and sanitation situations in Accra during this period particularly the health crisis buttresses this argument.[258]

The old man added that Brazilians' exposure to European ways of life, especially their dressing in suits, hats and other European dress, convinced these leaders that the returnees were highly "educated" and were capable of somehow transforming Accra.[259] However, Nelson's point about the influence of European dressing on Brazilian identity is debatable because the educated class and the local elites in Accra adopted Europeans cultures prior to the Brazilian presence. This requires further probing.

The Brazilians had a custom for showing appreciation for good deeds. Indeed, they did not speak Ga fluently or probably could not say a word in Ga, but they somehow improvised. In addition to the generosity that the Ga people bestowed on the returnees, the Brazilians also presented gifts in order to reciprocate the Ga leaders' generosity. According to a court account, the Brazilians "gave presents of brass calabashes, copper calabashes, clock and drinks."[260] Indeed, the Ga people were familiar with the calabash. They used this as a drinking cup and for pouring libations (a traditional ritual). Calabashes in Ghana are often made from a plant. Perhaps, the Ga leaders appreciated this gift even more because of the decorative ornaments or materials that were used to coat the calabashes. One could assume that the Ga leaders could not resist accepting the

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[258]A letter by Acting Secretary of Native Affairs A.G. Lloyd to Ga Mantse Tackie Obile, who reigned from 1904-1919, points to the outbreak of Babonic Plague and other forms of infectious diseases in Accra during this time. ADM 4/1/1, Letter from the Acting Secretary of Native Affairs, A.G. Lloyd to Ga Mantse Tackie Obile, April 23, 1908, 1.

[259] See Appendix B.

[260] CVA No. 997/36, Thomas Adu Hammond v. Isaac C. Fiscian and Titus Glover, September 3, 1949, p. 57.

clock and the drinks in addition to the calabashes because they looked "foreign" to them. However, this may not be the case considering the long history of contacts between the Ga people and Europeans along the coast.

There are uncertainties about the time period in which these gifts were given to the Brazilian and Ga leaders. The frequency of the exchange is also not known. Indeed, the Brazilians had access to resources, European goods, and essential commodities that were foreign to the people of Accra. This gave the returnees additional leverage. Based on a long history of interactions between the coastal people of the Gold Coast and Brazilian merchants, it is reasonable to conclude that some gifts were given to the local leaders earlier, perhaps by returnees who had visited Accra in the past. I argue that such routine ties may have influenced the exchange—gifts for land or land for gifts—depending on how one looks at it. I have not come across any evidence that shows that the Ga leaders offered such a large portion of stool land to any other groups of people who settled in Accra in the nineteenth century as was the case of the Brazilians.[261] This was likely an isolated case.

Obviously, the exchange of one gift for another is not a new phenomenon in African history. During the early contacts between Africans and Europeans prior to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the local people became attracted to foreign products such as rum, firearms, and other foreign goods. These mutual exchanges were conducted as barter; the Africans exchanged local goods for foreign goods. At the height of the trans-

[261]CVA No. 6/1947, 12.

Atlantic slave trade, large groups of Africans were exchanged for European goods such as rum, tobacco, weapons and other equipment.

There are a host of arguments between descendants (the branches of the Brazilian Tree) over the wishes of the first settlers. These contestations about how and why land was given to their forebears have revolved around issues of land tenure: which returnee got what portion of the land, and who did not own any land among the first generation? (see Appendix D) In other words, did Ga Mantse Komeh I provide land for the entire crew of Brazilians who got off ships in the early nineteenth century, or did he divide it among various returnees? Again, it is unclear if the land was given to them on one particular day or at different times depending on when they landed on the shores of Accra. From the court proceedings and the interviews I have conducted, it has become evident that there are some silences and contradictions in records relating to the source of Brazilian land. These silences and contradictions have become the central feature of conversations about returnees' origins and survival in the Gold Coast.

Another contradiction is that while Brazilian chiefs declared that the land was used for communal use,[262] they also stressed that they were the only ones who were given the "divine" right to sell or divide land among the descendants. According to *Tabom* Chief, Nii Azumah III, he was entitled to "sell or grant portions of said land."[263]

Looking at the allocation of land for communal use as most of the descendants have claimed also holds some truth but also has its flaws. For the inland settlers and those

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[262]CVA 40/56, January 23, 1958, 21.

[263]CVA 40/56, March 13, 1953, 47.

who subscribed to an agrarian lifestyle, the evidence they provided in court, which is covered in chapter 4, showcased the significance of communal activities, as well as the wishes of their parents and grandparents that members of the Brazilian colony would to work together as one community across any stretch of land without assigning a particular portion to any individual or family members.[264] As *Tabom* Chief Nii Azumah III forcefully stated, "the land remained the property of the Brazilians" and not individuals.[265]

This line of thinking was in direct opposition to a number of assertions that there was no such a thing as a communal land or land for the entire population—that each family was responsible for the specific piece of land that was passed on by their ancestors. Descendants with such convictions believed that their ancestors approved the use of farmland for building houses for rent or selling the portions of land they inherited to both members and non-Brazilians. They ensured that the debate was framed around the establishment of independent Brazilian family structures and not a Brazilian family network with a single collective identity.[266] In short, this group challenged the idea of collective ownership and promoted evidence of independent kinships with ties to Brazil.

On the other hand, in their bid to establish a sense of ownership and justify the selling of ancestral land, the latter declared, often brutally, the absence of any form of collective relations among their ancestors. Convinced that any admission to such practice

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[264]CVA 40/56, January 23, 1958, 21.

[265] CVA 12/52, March 13, 1953, 42.

[266] CVA 12/52, March 13, 1953, 47.

would lead to tragic results and possibly the end of their cause, they propagated exclusion rather than inclusion.

The flaws of each side are apparent. Since only one or two court cases assert that land was given to individuals rather than the whole Brazilian colony, I am convinced that returnees had multiple portions of land that stretched across coastal areas and central Accra, and that they were intended for collective ventures rather than separate projects. This chapter supports the first position, which emphasizes a sense of unity and the preservation of agrarian traditions, based on the evidence descendants provided during land disputes and because a large portion of the returnee population of about one hundred or more people seems to have congregated in the inland rather than on the coast. I discuss in further in chapter three.

This chapter also questions the idea that their ancestors approved the sale of land and the use of farmlands for building stores and houses for rent because most of the descendants established that their parents and grandparents farmed the land for many years before their demise. In my view, the use of Brazilian land for building houses for rent was an afterthought. This was a tradition orchestrated by descendants among the second generation, especially Isaac Fiscian and others of his ilk, so they could amass wealth for their individual families. As the next chapter will show, changes that took place after the demise of the first generation gradually shaped the trajectory of Afro-Brazilians history in Ghana. Besides generational differences over land tenure and its significance, how did the Afro-Brazilians relate to Europeans after their experiences with slavery in Brazil as well as land tenure in the Gold Coast?

Brasileiros e Escravidão

This section, "Brasileiros e Escravidão," Brazilians and slavery interrogates the degree to which free Afro-Brazilians participated in slavery both along the coast and within inland settler communities in the Gold Coast. Numerous scholars have raised important historical questions about the participation of local Africans and community leaders, especially chiefs, in the middle passage. This growing body of literature does not deny the extent of Europeans' involvement in slavery and how it escalated the slave trade. The chapter extends this inquiry into Afro-Brazilian's involvement in these inhuman ventures. This section briefly shows the ways in which the Brazilians and British officials crossed paths as slavery activities within Afro-Brazilian communities reached its zenith, especially at the twilight of the nineteenth century, and as the British were attempting to end the slave trade.[267]

Returnees' involvement in slavery had some consequences on their communities, especially descendants' ideation. Without a doubt, Brazilians who arrived on the Gold Coast either participated in slavery along the Bight of Benin or were aware of these inhuman activities that continued during the abolition periods from the mid 1800s on.[268] This chapter underscores the implications of slavery on both the local and continental level. The former enabled returnees to amass wealth, and through this process they were able to sustain class distinctions between themselves and the people of Accra. The latter, on the other hand, fueled the trans-Atlantic slave trade and, in doing so, complicated ties

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[267] Francis Agbodeka, *African Politics and British Policy in the Gold Coast, 1868-1900* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 56-57.

[268] "Stop the Cuban slave trade and Africa" *The African Times*, December 23, 1862, 67 3,.

between the current generation and their Brazilian heritage in terms of their silences about this subject.[269]

Historical conditions within the New World, especially the abolition of slavery in European enclaves in West Africa in the nineteenth century, had an impact on this narrative. British campaigns to end human enslavements both within the British Protectorate in south Accra and coastal regions and the Ashanti kingdom in the north in the late 1800s and early 1900s has a peculiar meaning to the Afro-Brazilian history.[270]In fact, antislavery campaigns extended beyond the Gold Coast. There were vigorous policies to weaken any form of slavery in any area where the British set up their colonial tent. The most crucial region was the Bight of Benin, most notably, Whydah, where notorious slave merchants such as Brazilian Francisco de Souza, Chacha and his ally Gezo, the King of Dahomey who reigned from 1818 to 1858 created their own enterprises to increase the transportation of "human cargoes" to the New World.[271] Along the banks of the Volta River on the Gold Coast, colonial authorities sought to arrest Geraldo, "a former servant of Lima, a Portuguese slave dealer" who resided in Keta, as well as several other slave traders in the area.[272]

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[269] Descendants are often reluctant to be open about the element of slavery within their past. Older members of the current generation have provided relevant information about slavery which occurred in the community, perhaps because they were old enough to place it in some kind of perspective. For the younger members, their lack of knowledge about this subject has also contributed to the silences.

[270]"Ashantee Defeated the British for the third time," *The West Africa Herald*, June 7, 1873, 2.

[271]CO 714/64, "The King of Dahomey" Governor Winnieth to Queen Victoria, May 5, 1832, 7. See also C. Curto and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (NY: Humanity Books, 2004), 193-205.

[272] *The West Africa Herald*, June 3, 1871, 6.

Brazilian scholar Florestan Fernandes has declared that "slavery had been a destructive experience for Brazil…which had left deep wounds and scars in Brazilian psyche."[273] These psychological impacts, as Fernandes explains, might have had an influence on Brazilian returnees in West Africa. Afro-Brazilians became involved in slavery on two fronts: a number of freed slaves worked on European ships that engaged in slavery along the Bight of Benin prior to the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, and others who relocated to the Gold Coast involuntarily or voluntarily became aware of the economic benefits of the trade on the local level from the late 1800s on. As those before them, other returnee groups were also determined to continue with the venture upon settlement. Slavery in the Gold Coast ran alongside the activities of other returnees in Benin, Togo and Nigeria as returnees engaged in local, regional and international human traffic after they settled in these areas.[274]

Brazilians in Ghana did not always use slaves as laborers or sell them to other people. In some cases, both Brazilians and their descendants married slaves in their communities. In one of the court cases, it was revealed that: "Oldman Asuma bought Nahfio's mother and lived with as husband and wife and they begat two male children…Yawanukpe's mother was also bought by Mama Nassu [one of the leaders among the first settler groups]"[275]

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[273]Quoted from George Reid. Blacks *and Whites in Sao Paolo, 1888-1988* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 10**.** See also Florestan Fernandes, *The Negro Problem in a Class Society*, in Arlene Torres and Norman E. Whitten, Jr, *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean: Social Dynamics and Cultural Transformations*, Vol. II (IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 100.
[274] CVA 12/52, November 15, 1945, 21.

[275] RG 15/1/89, April 30, 1931, 29.

Domestically, court proceedings show how returnees used slaves they purchased from various areas in the Gold Coast to perform domestic chores. In one of the author's interviews with Nii Azumah V, the *Tabom* chief made references to what he witnessed as a child regarding his contacts with local slaves who were known as "odonkor," meaning slaves captured from the hinterland or the northern territories of the Gold Coast. The current leader added that some of the slaves cooked, did laundry and had other domestic responsibilities.[276]

Archival documents in London also highlight the impact of slavery during this era. As a number of colonial newspapers reported, the enslavement of Africans by chiefs and perhaps returnees was very common both in the Gold Coast and other regions of West Africa.[277] According to front page report in *The African Times*:

> "The slave trade agent of the late Lima has renewed the slave trade vigorously. He is paying fifty dollars per head. It is nonsense to say that slaves are not shipped from Popo and Ahguay. The men and the women are neither bought to be eaten, nor to be employed on the coast, but for shipment to Cuba; and how they find their way there is certain. It seems scandalous if the Quittah Fort is not occupied."[278]

Unlike the late 1800s, when the British only had a Protectorate in the Gold Coast colony which prevented colonial officials from penetrating the Ashante Kingdom in the north to

[276] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 2.

[277] CO 714/64, May 16, 1844, 10.

[278] "Slave Trade at Quittah, Gold Coast," *The African Times*, October 23, 1893, 44.

regulate the slave trade.[279] The British defeat of the Ashante army during the Yaa Asantewaa War of Independence of 1901 created a new path that gave colonial officials the mandate to implement policies that affected the entire colony. This included the abolition of slavery.[280] This chapter raises two other important questions: what is the difference between the ways the British dealt with slavery in the southern and northern territories prior to and after the defeat of the Ashanti, and how did the British respond to slavery activities that occurred within Accra and the returnee community during this important historical period? Did such responses enhance or weaken these activities within Brazilian communities?

In addressing some of the questions above, my inquiry into this subject so far has not yet led to any evidence that slavery by returnees or within early Brazilian settler communities in the Gold Coast posed any imminent threat to British anti-slavery campaigns as other areas along the Bight, such as Whydah, Lagos and remote areas where slavery was rather intense, did. Put differently, "Brazilian slavery" on the Gold Coast and the Bight are not comparable. The degree to which slavery affected the local population in the case of the latter was more brutal than the "isolated" cases within Brazilian communities in the Gold Coast.

This appraisal in no way suggests that the British ignored slavery by Brazilians in the Gold Coast and other areas. They condemned slavery in its strongest terms whereas a

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[279]See slave labor in the Ashante Kingdom, CO 879/67, Gold Coast Correspondence…Governor Major Nathan to Mr. Chamberlain, April 27, 1901, 80; CO 402/4, October 30, 1855, 301.

[280]CO 879/41, February, 1900, 22-23. See also Walton W. Claridge, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti: From the Earliest times to the Twentieth Century* (NY: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1915) 173-184.

number of Europeans were at the same time promoting the slave trade during this time. Letters circulated by British missionaries brought the hypocrisy to the public arena. One such letter states that a British man, Henry Robbin, was arrested and put on trial in Abeokuta, Nigeria, another hub of the slave trade.[281] As *The African Times*, a colonial newspaper, publicized, members of the Brazilian colony in the Gold Coast made enormous profit from the sale of slaves.[282] In *The Gold Coast Echo*, a resident of Cape Coast blamed the Governor for sustaining slavery: "When the Governor is charged with buying slaves, anything [he says] is sufficient and satisfactory explanation. Will the Governor be satisfied with the same excuse if made by any private person who shall follow his example and buy slaves"?[283]

It is obvious that the returnees were not the only ones who were guilty. As the headline of *The West African Herald*, another colonial newspaper, also reported, British authorities sought to arrest Geraldo, "a former servant of Lima, a Portuguese slave dealer" who resided in Keta, in the Volta Region of modern Ghana, for enslaving Africans and for obstructing anti-slavery campaigns.[284] Another article in the *The African Morning Post* reported that slavery activities and public auctions persisted in Ghana even in the 1930s during the period of decolonization. According to the article, "A young lady

[281]"The Alleged case of Slave Selling by a British Subject at Abeokuta," *The African Times*, January 23, 1866, 73, 101. See also "The Charge of Slave Selling at Abeokuta," *The African Times*, March 23, 1866, 101.

[282]*The African Times*, Nov. 23, 1864, 3.

[283] J.T.A, *The Gold Coast Echo*, March 13, 1889, 3.

[284] *The West African Herald*, June 3, 1871, 6.

was sold publicly for £ 15. It is said that she became a *person non grata* and was hooted by her fellow villagers."[285]

Ending slavery along the Bight of Benin was a daunting task. In some cases, slaves who were freed in the Gold Coast were recaptured by other merchants. For instance, another letter from Reverend W. Locker, a British missionary, to other missionary organizations in England states that British anti-slavery campaigns were not very effective because a number of freed slaves were taken abroad after their emancipation along the Gold Coast.[286] The authors' findings have not yet led to any case confirming that a Brazilian returnee in the Gold Coast was arrested by the British for participating in slavery within British territories.

In some ways, slavery activities have tarnished the image of the community because it has complicated discourse about returnees' experiences as slaves in Brazil and what they replicated upon return.[287] Obviously, one cannot point fingers at the Brazilians without taking into consideration the historical conditions that existed in Accra during the early 1800s. Ga chiefs also supported slavery in diverse ways. British historian John Parker has discussed at length the dynamics of slavery in the Gold Coast, especially those among the Ga people of the coastal regions prior to the arrival of the returnees.[288] In

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[285] "Slavery in the Gold Coast," *The African Morning Post*, May 21, 1935, 4.

[286] "On Social Conditions of the Emancipated slaves in the Eastern District of the Gold Coast," *The African Times*, April 23, 1867, 122.

[287] King Prempeh returned to Kumasi in 1924 after twenty-eight years. He was converted to Christianity. Yaa Asantewaa and others died in captivity and were buried in the Seychelles.

[288] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 23-29.

short, this chapter argues that returnees did not invent slavery along the coastal areas of Otublohum, Accra or any other locations; rather, they took advantage of opportunities already available to achieve power and economic advancement.

The coverage of slavery is significant to subsequent chapters because it sets out a premise for explaining why some members of the contemporary or third generation, from 1957 and on, are not forthcoming about this "dark side" of their past. To some extent, they are reluctant to engage in conversations about the ways in which their ancestors contributed to slavery in the Gold Coast. Without a doubt, others had or have limited knowledge about the subject. This guilt about returnees' participation might be justifiable in recent times, but, as pointed out, various traditions in Accra in the nineteenth and early twentieth century cushioned returnees' self-reproach because it was part of the culture of that era. Returnees' involvement in slavery shows that not all of them were able to resist the temptation of selling Africans or those that they shared similar physical and historical ties for financial benefits.

The British did not consult Ga leaders about their strategies for ending slavery in Accra since both the British and these leaders had a vested interest in slavery at a point in time. By and large, British agendas and policies were intertwined with Ga customs and ways of life.

Ga Leaders and British Rule: Ripple Effects on Brazilian Colonies

As I have described in the beginning of this chapter, the history of Gas and their leaders was shaped by European imperialism on some level especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Ga leaders who played a pivotal role during the period of British rule

were selected mostly through family lineage. The general responsibilities have both spiritual and social implications. Part of the social job description of a Ga Mantse was to create an environment for promoting trading in Accra to generate revenue, jobs for the people in the area and to settle disputes.

As the section on battles between Gas and other groups has shown, the Gas have had a long history of resisting and rebelling whenever they felt threatened by any outside forces. They fought with local people including the Akwamus, the Ashantes, the Fantes, the Ewes and others to control land and trading posts around the coast. Other groups also showed their muscle. Like the Gas, the Fantes and the Ashantes clashed on numerous times.[289] Whereas the British and the Dutch also clashed over territorial space along the coast of Accra and other areas where they both sought to build forts to exert their authority and influence commerce.[290] It is not certain if the English or the Portuguese built or rebuilt James Fort in 1576; the Dutch built Fort Creyecoeur which is now called Ussher Fort in 1642. Both are located along the shores of Otublohum. The Portuguese, the Swedes and the Danes also controlled the Christianborg Castle between 1550 and 1652. The building is now the seat of the current Ghanaian Government. The latter castle sits in close proximity to those of the British and the Dutch.

On some occasions that suited their collective interest, the British and the Dutch facilitated unity among the Fantes and the Ashantes.[291] These two European nations later

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[289]CO 482/1, Letters of Secretary of State to Officers/Individuals.

[290]CO 714/64, September 16, 1864.

[291] CO 98/1A, Minutes of Council, April 4, 1829, 8. See also The West African Herald, Vol. IV, 2nd Series, June 13, 1871, 7.

formed an alliance with the coastal Fantes rather than the Ashantes to facilitate colonial projects. The British preferred the Fantes because they perceived them as lesser of the two evils—they were more accommodating of Europeans than the Ashantes. In Ghana, the inland dwellers characterize Fantes as traitors because of the close relations their ancestors built with Europeans along the coast.

The Danes, the Dutch and other Europeans who embarked on colonial conquest and Christian missionary ventures managed to settle along the coast with or without the approval of Ga leaders but they will be the first to admit that they had their share of these battles. Regardless of the tensions between Ga people and foreigners, Ga MantemƐi protected their people and economic interests. At the same time, they ensured that a safe climate was created along the coast to advance trading with locals and foreigners at tandem.

Although the Gas were very generous and took good care of their *gboi*, it is not always the case. Mantse Tackie Tawiah and other Ga leaders who reigned before or after him did not accept interference by strangers, especially colonial rulers. King Tawiah in particular had no qualms resisting British rule and motivating his Ga constituencies into action. In fact, the Ga King had his own way of confronting the British. Sometimes he ignored them, other times Mantse Tawiah responded when it was convenient for him. As a form of resistance, Mantse Tawiah regulated or did not use his limited residue of authority which was invented by the British. This was done strategically to irritate them.

Like the Ashante Kings and chiefs, the influences and popularity of Mantse Tawiah created a platform for mobilizing the Ga people and heightened concerns among

British officials who sought to strip the King of his power and influence. British officials were unsure of what to do with Ga King Tawiah when he was released from captivity because it became increasingly difficult to coerce him to bow to British policies. *The Gold Coast Echo* published an article about a statement by a British Commissioner who reminded other officials that the Mantse did not have a long time to live because he was old. He counted on divine intervention to end his reign: "King Tackie was a live King and that when it pleased the Almighty God in his mercy to remove him. It will then be a question to decide whether the government would allow his place to be filled or not."[292]

The angry outburst below which was expressed by Sir Matthew Nathan, one of the Governors, epitomized his frustration with the Ga Mantse for his lack of support during the Governor's long expedition to the Ashante Kingdom. This was during the final stage of the British-Ashante War at the turn of the twentieth century:

> "The first twenty miles of my march was through Accra country under King Tackie whose power for any useful purpose has practically disappeared. He no longer has a court in which to sell justice at Accra and so has no revenue. He also has no powers of punishment and so no means of making his nominal subjects obey him. He is an old man with the recollection of great former importance and of an influence extending over all the Ga-talking people and he naturally resents the new order of things and is not inclined to assist the government that has brought it about. He declined to help with carriers for the Kumasi relief

[292]"The Governor's visit to Cape Coast" *The Gold Coast Echo*, January 31, 1889, 3. See also John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 106.

expedition…When I asked Tackie for carriers for this journey he gave me four."[293]

This long quote illustrates how the British and Ga Mantse engaged with each other, how the British relied on or used local *Mantsemɛi* as vehicles for colonial projects, the limited powers of the Ga King, the significance of the King to the Gas, the King's apathy and his indirect ways of resisting British rule.

Ga women were also a formidable force. They accepted the traditional domestic role in Ga societies, but that did not prevent them from positioning themselves at the forefront of revolts against colonialism. They were aware of the constraint of Ga men and how their leaders were stripped of their power. For instance, when the British introduced the Town Council Ordinance (TCO) of 1896 to give the British more control of local affairs in Accra, especially municipal taxation—Ga women made their voices heard. When the male leaders were contemplating on when to challenge TCO, Ga women registered their grievances: "Our chiefs and headmen and general male population have become enervate and demoralized…They are afraid to speak their minds."[294]

The involvement of Ghana women in rebellions in no way suggest that they were more powerful that the men. Rather, they both complimented each other in the ways they resisted colonial rule.

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[293] ADM 11/1/1086, Dispatch from Governor Nathan, March 10, 1901.

[294] PRO; CO 96/298/386, Maxwell to Chamberlain, September 4, 1897.

Repercussion for Resistance

Throughout the Gold Coast, the British had a notorious reputation of embarrassing local leaders. Heavy fines were imposed on them and other local rulers who disobeyed colonial authority in their area especially Kings and chiefs (including Brazilian chiefs) by arresting them if they refused pay for the fines.[295] In the late 1880s and early 1900s a number of chiefs who prolonged conflicts between them and the British were sent into exile to intimidate or send a stern signal to others. Mantse Tawiah was one such leader who was incarcerated at the Elmina Castle from 1880-1883. He was isolated from his community for about three years. Others included Ashante King Prempeh II, Queen mother Yaa Asantewaah of Ejisu Ashante, and other members of the royal family who prevented the British from taking away the Golden Stool, a symbol of Ashante pride. [296]

The Cape Coast Castle, which once served as the dungeon for holding slaves prior to their dispersals to the New World was also the seat of the colonial government. It was the transitional point for holding chiefs who opposed the British as they prepared for exile in Sierra Leone, the Seychelles Islands or in the case of the Dutch, Holland.[297]

[295] *The African Herald*, April 18, 1859, No. 43, Vol. 2, p. 1.

[296]CO 879/67, Gold Coast Correspondence, January 1901-Febrary 1902, Administration of Ashanti and Northern Territories, June 7, 1901, xv. King Prempeh returned to Kumasi in 1924 after 28 years. He was converted into Christianity. Yaa Asantewaa and others died in captivity and were buried in Seychelles. See "Agyemang Prempeh," *The Gold Coast Spectator* (Editorial), May 16, 1931, 1.

[297]*The African Herald*, No. 43, Vol. 2, June 13, 1871, p. 7. The Dutch also committed atrocities against the people of the Gold Coast, especially the chiefs who resisted European imperialism. Nana Badu Bonsu II, an Ahanta chief in what is now known as the Central Region, was beheaded in 1830 by a Dutch official for leading an army to resist Dutch invasion of his territories. His severed body was taken to Holland and was later returned to Ghana on June 25, 2009 after 170 years. Musah Yahaya Jafaru, "The Netherlands Returns Head of Badu Bonsu II, after 170 Years," *Daily Graphic*, June 27, 2009, 47.

In the early 1870s through the 1880s, the British deliberately provoked Ga and Ashante leaders in particular to justify any reaction and punishment that followed afterwards. British officials, most notably Governor Ussher and George Cleland threatened King Tawiah consistently. In fact, the British perceived the removal of Mantse Tawiah as a vital step in their endeavors as they prepared to establish a lasting sphere of political control in Accra three years after the Ga territory became the new capital of the Gold Coast colony.

Mantse Tawiah's time in exile led to divisions within the Ga leadership and communities, especially the intrusion or trespassing on stool lands that were under the King's control.[298] This included conflicts between a section of the Brazilian population and King Tawiah over land tenure. (chapter 4) Indeed, when the King returned to Accra to take his throne again on March 9, 1883, Ga people gave him a red-carpet reception in Accra.[299] For the tension between the British and the Ashante's most of the conflicts or their differences stemmed from disagreements over slavery, colonialism and the future of the Gold Coast—especially desperate attempts by the British to take the "Golden Stool" a major symbol of Ashante nationalism, identity and pride.[300] The British sent a mixed signal. A dispatch from British Governor Nathan admitted various unjustifiable actions

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[298]SCT 2/4/19, Vol. 8, Tackie V. Nelson, September 29, 1892, 1-10.

[299]*Gold Coast Times*, March 24, 1883

[300]CO 879/67, Gold Coast Correspondence, Letter from Captain D. Stewart to Mr. Chamberlain, January 31, 1901, 13. Another letter from British Captain D. Stewart who led a series of battles against the Ashante Kingdom related that "While in Kumasi [the capital of the Ashante kingdom] we found out that [the] king was plotting with the Kumasi's against the Government…The Governor when he asked for the stool did not wait, but went and looked for it himself. During this search, guns were fired…the people then said they would fight. This palaver was settled and the young men went back to their villages. It started again when the white man attacked Ejisu [Queen Mother Yaa Asantewaa's territory].

against the Ashante's. He stated that: "I should say that the real origin of the uprising is the profound dislike on the part of the chiefs and leading people of Ashanti to British rule. The dislike is not unnatural. We take away from them all they care about and give them in place conditions of the life which have no attraction to them."[301]

Earlier, the British wanted a peaceful resolution between them and the Ashante's after they were defeated numerous times.[302] On the other hand, the British were very adamant. They braced up for war and persisted in campaigns until they conquered the Ashante's in 1901.

Although the Gas and the Ashantes did not get along, their leaders united on some levels to resist common threads of British oppression as the British and the Dutch did to facilitate European imperialism. When the British enacted the Compulsory Labor Ordinance (CLO) of 1895, which demanded local laborers to carry British officials around on long journeys and for colonial projects, Asantehene (King) Prempeh II and Ga Mantse Tackie mobilized their constituencies to rebel against CLO.[303] This came after King Tawiah returned from exile. Obviously, the heart of the old Ga Mantse became hardened after his three years in exile. As will be discussed later, Brazilian Chief João Antonio Nelson was arrested with other Ga chiefs were fined £25 for opposing CLO.

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[301]CO 879/67, Gold Coast Correspondence…Governor Major Nathan to Mr. Chamberlain, April 27, 1901, 8; 65;80.

[302]"Good Relations with Ashantee: How to Restore and Maintain them" *The African Times*, Dec. 23, 1867, p.68.

[303] See also John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 106.141-143.

This is an indication that early Brazilian settlers contributed to anti-colonial nationalist consciousness in Ghana.

This chapter continues to situate returnees' reverse migrations in a broader context of colonial projects, policies and the institution of a British Protectorate which evolved in 1874 along the coastal belts because of its significance of the Brazilian experience and its interwoven nature.[304] Prior to the official establishment of the Gold Coast as a British Protectorate,[305] the Ga people broke their old cordial relation with the Ashanti's and formed an alliance with the British in the early 1820s.[306] Indeed, this friendship did not last.

The notion of the Protectorate was contradictory. On the one hand it was designed purposely to serve British interest. But on the other, it was presented as if it was a benevolent policy to "protect" the people of the Gold Coast. One article in *The Gold Coast Echo* inquired:

> "Sir, we are called the Protectorate people and our country is called a 'Protected' Territory at the same time that is styled the 'Gold Coast Colony'…Let anyone presume speak and the all sufficient Governor can imprison or transport the

[304]See W. Walton Claridge with introduction by W.E.F. Ward, *A History of the Gold Coast and Ashanti*, Vol. 2 (NY: Barnes & Noble Inc., 1964), 174-177.

[305]Although the notion of the Protectorate gained grounds, it was very unpopular in some areas.

[306]John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 31; 118-123.

offender, without trial…These things are done in the name of England, and Lord Knutsford says [he] will listen to no complains."[307]

Despite criticism from the grassroots, the British Protectorate gained ground in the early 1900s when the entire Gold Coast became a British colony. As stated earlier, tension that developed between Ga leaders and British officials over power and political space lingered until the demise of British rule when Ghana gained her independence on March 6, 1957.

Letters and telegraphs that were exchanged between colonial officials and the English Crown confirmed that the British were very concerned about the influences of Ga leaders and Ashantes.[308] However, these documents barely interrogated the *Tabon Quarters* at Otublohum or the influences of Brazilians in this area. One such exchange on September 19, 1892 showed British apprehension for large public gatherings that were held by Mantse Tawiah for various cultural ceremonies including the swearing of oath of allegiance by new chiefs to the king.[309]

Some of the conflicts between Ga leaders and the British were not too different from those in other areas in the Gold Coast. In Accra, some of the tensions were sparked by attempts by the British to weaken the powers and influences of Ga leaders. They did so by regulating and passing ordinances such as Native Administration Ordinance 1883

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[307] "Colony or Protectorate?" *The Gold Coast Echo*, March 13, 1889, 3. Other commentaries associated the introduction of the Protectorate to the exploitation of resources in the colony. "The Gold Coast Government Prospecting for Gold," *Times*, July 13, 1897, 7.

[308] CO 879/9, Dr. Gouldsbury's Report of the Journey into the Interior of the Gold Coast, African, No. 95, March 27, 1876, 3.

[309]ADM 11/1/1086, September 19, 1892, 345.

and Native Jurisdiction Ordinance of 1927among others. The British also interfered with Ga cultural traditions such as the *homowo*, an important celebration which still exists. *Homowo* literally translates as hooting or making fun of hunger after the end of famine or dry seasons. During this festival, the Ga Mantse sprinkles *kpekpei*, a kind of food mixed with palm-oil as a sign of abundance. It is not clear how the Brazilians participated in *homowo*.[310] For *Tabom* communities they are still active participants of this annual festivity. (see chapter 3)

In the early 1900s colonial restrictions on Ga cultural festivals compelled Ga Kings to seek permission from British Governors before they gathered or prepared for any cultural occasion.[311] Indeed, colonial policies did not often accommodate local customs of the Gas but sought to manipulate the conditions and terms for celebrating this important festival in various areas within the Ga Paramountcy. British Ordinance 35 of 1878, specifically stated conditions for cultural expressions and rituals for all Ga communities or towns. These rituals formed an integral fiber in *homowo* celebrations. As the Ordinance clearly stated, "it shall be unlawful for any person, without permission…of [a] Governor or District Commissioner to assemble for beating any drum, gong or either instrument or dancing."[312]

A letter from John Maxwell, the Acting Secretary of Native Affairs to the Governor expressed such sentiments. In fact, Maxwell was described as, "A more

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[310] CVA 40/56, March 13, 1953, 42. See also CVA 40/58, January 27, 1958, 31.

[311] ADM 1/1, August 20, 1908, 110.

[312] CO 97/2, Gold Coast: Certified Copies of Ordinances 1865-1883, Miscellaneous-Unlawful Drumming, 35.

aggressive imperialist of the 1890s mould with little patience for dissenting African opinion." [313] This undermined any efforts to strengthen Ga nationalism or consciousness. He later denied a request by the Ga King and Chief's to gather or perform rituals that were needed for various cultural ceremonies.[314]

The British also determined the terms of their relation with the Gas. In fact, they kept the Ga leaders at a reasonable distance to ensure that there was a clear distinction between the two groups in terms of establishing and re-enforcing British authority. As in the case of Brazilians who were given land as a form of gift, the British did not take this Ga tradition of hospitality very seriously. For instance, another memorandum by Francis Growther, a British official to the Ga Mantse Tawiah underscored this boundary: "Both the Excellency and Lady Roger are precluded by the Colonial Office Regulations from accepting presents and that therefore your proposal in this connection, though the good spirit in which it is fully appreciated, cannot be entertained."[315]

Frustrated with rejection and constant British manipulation of Ga customs, Ga leaders were forced to ask for approval before they got into any trouble. A letter from Ga Mantse Tackie Obili (1904-1919) petitioned the Governor to approve various issues in Ga courts. They included the following: "1). Grant of personal interview to the Ga

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[313] Quoted from John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 141.

[314] ADM 1/1, April 23, 1908, 1.

[315] ADM 4/1, August 4, 1910, 5.

Mantse by the Governor periodically. 2). Power to be given to the Ga Mantse to compel the attendance of witnesses etc at the court."[316]

The fate of another petition for permission to begin drumming in preparation for *homowo* festivals which was sent a year before is not known.[317] It is uncertain if these petitions were approved. Moreover, the Home Office in London went beyond concerns about the power of the Ga Mantse. They concentrated on how periodic gatherings by the local people during the festivals could create a forum for resistance against the British.[318]

Although the British regulated and controlled affairs of Ga leaders they were reasonable sometimes. They "rewarded" Ga Mantse's and chiefs for "keeping order" or for "behaving" well as the British expected them to. A memo from a meeting between the British Governor and Commissioners reminded British officials to be mindful of ways to motivate the Ga leaders. One such letter read:

> "King Tackie came to see me yesterday…He desired to hold custom for certain fetish priests [Ga spiritual leaders]…I told him that this was a long custom and that in ordinary circumstances I should not permit it to be held…But as the town has been quiet and orderly during the Yam custom [one of the customs Ga people inherited from Akan migrants] and during the period for which I had acted as

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[316] ADM 1/1, November 16, 1909, 9.

[317] ADM 1/1, August 20, 1908, 1.

[318] Ibid.

Governor and as my period of service was coming to an end I would ask a favor to grant his application."[319]

Like a pendulum Ga leaders often played to the tune of the British to keep peace between them in order to provide suitable conditions for organizing their followers to rebel against colonial laws at the appropriate time.[320] It is uncertain whether Brazilian Chief's and the *Tabon Quarters* also needed permission to organize their communities. Such information is important to our understanding of proximity of British-Brazilian relation.

Tripartite Ripples in a Pond: Brazilian Land, Ga Mantsemɛi and British Intrusion

As stated before, there were ripple effects in the connections between the British, the Ga leaders and the Brazilians. A court case between Robert Nelson, a Brazilian and King Tackie Tawiah over who owned a portion of land in Accra surfaced after King Tawiah returned from exile in 1883. This is another example of how tensions between the British and the leaders had some repercussion on the Brazilians and their descendants. Conflicts between King Tawiah and descendants broadened the field of feuds in the community and drew others into it.[321]

The King might have had regrets for gifts of Ga stool land that was given to Brazilians prior to his ascendancy in 1862. A number of photographs that were taken between the first settlers and King Tawiah showed a level of friendship between them. It is ironic that this "close" relation was replaced by tension between King Tawiah and

[319] ADM 11/1086, February 1, 1890, 512.

[320]C.S.O 11/305, August 14, 1916, 1.

[321] SCT 2/4/19 Vol. 8, Nelson and Tawiah, 1-38..

descendants as they contested in court over the validity of their rights to various plots of land in Accra.[322] One of the greatest Ga *Mantsemei*, King Tawiah died on July 14, 1902 at the age of 68 years. (see Appendix B)

King Tawiah was not the only one who was confronted by the descendants. There were other disputes between descendants of Mantse Komeh I, who is believed to have allocated the vast area of land to the early Brazilian settlers somewhere in the mid nineteenth century. Some of the cases were presented at both the Native Tribunal and colonial courts. The descendants also dealt with British officials as well as European and other foreign entrepreneurs who did or attempted to occupy Brazilian lands.
(see chapter 4)

Brazilian/Tabom Chiefs and their Importance: Visibility, Invisibility or Bifurcation

Brazilian and *Tabom* chiefs were not very visible during their interactions with the Ga people and the British. In the case of Brazilian Chiefs, they did not have the same power or authority because they were selected purposely to lead or operate within a Brazilian communities or jurisdiction. The entire Brazilian colony was subject to both colonial ordinances and laws established by the Ga Paramountcy (territories under the Ga King or stool). NJO on the hand weakened the capabilities of Ga Kings and chiefs' to collect and use revenue without British interference. The creation of *Tabon Quarters* at Otublohum showed that the Brazilians were part of the Ga Paramountcy and were active in Ga societies culturally, socially, commercially and religiously.

[322] SCT 2/4/19 Vol. 8, September 29, 1892, 1-2.

There were *Mantsemɛi asrɔtoi*—variety of chiefs in Accra. Brazilians who served in these chieftancy positions were characterized as *gboi* –"visiting chiefs" or "honorary chiefs."[323] They were not chiefs in the traditional sense in Ghanaian chieftancy systems. They were leaders who acted as ceremonial chiefs or *Mantse ni bɛ hewalɛ*, a Ga word which translates as chiefs with limited authority. In essence, *Mantsei ni bɛ manbii*-leaders without much power or subjects. These leaders acted as the intermediaries between the Ga Paramountcy and the Brazilian colony. The positions of Brazilian chiefs gave them the mandate to settle disputes in their communities and promote good relations between them and the people of Accra. The role of these chiefs in Brazilian colonies made returnees visible among their people but it placed them in invisible positions in broader Ghanaian societies.

Six Brazilians and their descendants have been selected to occupy this role since 1836: Nii Azumah I who ruled from around 1836 through 1865; Nii Azumah II, between 1865 and 1900; Nii Aruna I, between 1900-1926; Nii Azumah III, about 1836-1961; Nii Azumah IV, from 1961 through 1981. There was a break in this tradition because of tension over selection of a new *Tabom* Chief between 1981 and 1997. The current *Tabom* Chief was nominated in 1998.[324] The first two Brazilians chiefs were born in Brazil.

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[323]Since the mid-twentieth century Ghanaian leaders and chiefs have used honorary titles such as Nkosohene (development chief) and Nkosohemaa (development queen mothers) to attract returnees from North America and the Caribbean, including Rita Marley, the widow of the legend Reggae musician Bob Nester Marley.

[324] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, August 7, 2007, 1. Marco Schaumloeffel, *Tabom: The Afro-Brazilian Community in Ghana*, 2nd Edition (Bridgetown, Lulu.com, 2008), 41-84.

Although the there is insufficient evidence to show that the Brazilians and their descendants who gained the positions as chiefs exerted any extensive amount of authority within the tripartite scope of interactions, it is clear that Brazilian Chief João Antonio Nelson, the second leader of the Brazilian colony joined Mantse Tawiah, and the Asantehene to oppose British ordinances such as CLO. As stated earlier, chief Nelson II was among Ga chiefs who were arrested and fined for "civil disobedience."[325] One can safely argue that Brazilian chiefs were somewhat involved in Ga affairs. From the author's research this was the closest public encounter between Brazilian chiefs and British officials in pre-colonial Accra.

In fact, the role of Brazilian chiefs in their communities was purposely created by Mantse Komeh I who welcomed the first returnees. The main reasons for initiating the first Brazilian Chief Nii Azumah I who reigned from 1836 to 1865 was to solidify the friendship that developed between the returnees and the Ga leaders as pointed out earlier. The other goal was provide a forum for the Brazilian colony to assimilate slowly via Ga cultural systems, especially the returnees' participation in *homowo* festivals.[326] This way, and with packages of land on the side, the Brazilians became convinced that they could make Accra their new home. This strategy opened doors for other waves of Brazilian migrations to Brazilian colonies in the Gold Coast. Brazilian merchants in particular joined the band-wagon to accumulate wealth. The constant traffic and travel routes that

[325] Nelson to Colonial Secretary, February 23, 1897, 1.

[326] CVA 40/58, November 27, 1958, 31. See also CVA 40/56, January 23, 1958, 21.

were created by Brazilians along the Bight and Accra solidify the success of King Komeh's initial plan.

This approach by Ga Mantse Komeh I was adopted by subsequent Ghanaian political leaders, including the first President of Ghana Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Jerry John Rawlings and others. In order words, Mantse Komeh's strategy, which was implemented over a century ago, influenced subsequent leaders including local chiefs to promote tourism, for revenue purposes and to provide jobs at various locales. Like the British officials who invited Caribbean blacks to the Gold Coast, Nkrumah, Rawlings and others also invited descendants of African slaves in North America and offered them various incentives including land and tax breaks to attract investors.[327]

The bold decision by the Ga King to attract Brazilian returnees from the Bight of Benin had a lasting impact on the current Ghanaian government and Brazilian descendants. The Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations was invented to serve the needs of diasporan returnees and expatriates who have relocated to Ghana.[328] This strategy or publicity has gained a great deal of attention from the current Brazilian leader, Nii Azumah V and the Brazilian Embassy in Accra, hence, the opening of "Brazil House" in 2007. (see chapter 5)

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[327] Tourism has become one of the growing sectors in Ghanaian economy. It has also drawn debates about the significance of historical monuments within *Tabom* communities to the tourism industry. See Kwame Essien, "African Americans in Ghana and Their Contributions to 'Nation Building:' 1985 through 2004," in Alusine Jalloh and Toyin Falola (Eds.), *The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations* (NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008): Chapter 8.
[328] Bridget J. Katriku (Chief Director: Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations), interview with Kwame Essien, March 8, 2007), 1.

Ga Paramountcy and Otublohom Area: Another Brazilian Colony

Ga Paramountcy, or the areas and towns that form the fibers of Ga culture is divided into seven districts: Otoblohum, Akumaji, Abola, Gbese, Sempe, Alata and Asere. Also the Ga people spread across Nungua, Teshie, Osu, Labadi, Tema, Jamestown and Gamashi. Ga Paramountcy has a *Wulomo,* a priest who is responsible for dealing with matters of spirituality and the affairs of fetishes in Accra.

Otublohum was believed to have been founded by Otu Ahikwa, an Akan warrior whose ancestors fled Denkyira with his troops and migrated to Accra in the 1700s to seek refuge along the coast.[329] Otublohum was an important historical landmark in both the history of the Ga people and the Brazilians. The Otublohum Divisional Council comprises of *Tabon Quarters*, Pokoase, Dzan-man and Afiama—migrant communities and settlements along the coastline of Accra. These divisional town councils appoint delegates to the Otublohum Chief's court for social and cultural reasons.

Otublohum had other channels for relating to the Ga Paramountcy. They included the selection of Heads of families to the Chief's court: Nii Kofi Apenteng We, Denson We, Asafoatse We, Dzase We and Nii Oto Din We. It is not clear how the early Brazilian group selected *We*—family Heads and how *Tabon Quarters* interacted with the Otublohum Divisional Council since they spoke Portuguese. Perhaps, the Brazilians played a minimal role in the Chief's Court than their descendants who became part of Ga customs.

[329] Dinah Kuevi, "The History of Otublohum," Dissertation for B.A. Degree, The University of Ghana, Legon (1979), 13.

Otublohum people have a mixture of Ga and Akan origin. The "Otublohumites" were descendants of the Akwamu's who intermarried with Ga people and adopted aspects of Ga culture. Most of the Akwamu people migrated to Accra to trade, to serve as a volunteer labor force during wars, and to rule the people of Accra after they defeated the Gas. They settled permanently after years of assimilation and adaptation of both Ga and Akan-Akwamu cultures which included funeral rites, food and festivals. Acculturation was gradual, but the Gas were able to dominate the Akwamu's because of their population size and the advantage they had because of their longer settlements in the area.

Tabon Quarters and Otublohum

The *Tabon Quarters* in Otublohum refers to one of the areas in Accra where freed Afro-Brazilian slaves settled upon arrival. Their acceptance into the area and settlements was influenced mainly by the history of the descendants of Gas and Akwamu's who also gained a similar attention in that location. Other foreign groups in the area included the Alata people, who are believed to be people from Yoruba land in Nigeria. There is limited documentation about the *Tabon Quarters.* This drawback may be attributed to the fact that they occupied a small landscape in the nineteenth century. However, it is likely that members of the Brazilian colony along the coast had a special place in the heart of Chief Ankrah, the Otoblohum leader who introduced the early settlers to Ga King Komeh I in the mid 1800s.

Without a doubt, Brazilian Chief, João Antonio Nelson whose stool title was Nii Azumah II who ruled from 1865 until 1900—the longest reigning Brazilian leader, had a

robust interaction and fruitful engagements with the Otublohum Divisional Council a wing of the Ga Paramountcy. It is also possible that João Antonio Nelson who was born in Brazil in 1826 and arrived in Otublohum at the age of three years assimilated quite easily to Ga cultural norms at an early age. Perhaps Nelson was one of the few early settlers who had such leverage among the older Brazilian settlers.

It is not clear whether Nelson identified as a Brazilian as most of the settlers who arrived around the same time did. Based on a photograph he took with Ga leaders in which he appeared in European suit and hat, one can only guess that he leaned towards his Brazilianess. On the other hand, one could argue that his long years in the Brazilian colony and his role as *Tabom* chief enabled him to combine both identities.

Brazilian and *Tabom* chiefs were not very visible during their interactions with the Ga people and the British. In the case of Brazilian chiefs, they did not have the same power or authority because they were selected purposely to lead or operate within a Brazilian communities or jurisdiction. The entire Brazilian colony was subject to both colonial ordinances and laws established by the Ga Paramountcy (territories under the Ga King or stool). NJO on the hand weakened the capabilities of Ga Kings and chiefs' to collect and use revenue without British interference. The creation of *Tabon Quarters* at Otublohum showed that the Brazilians were part of the Ga Paramountcy and were active in Ga societies culturally, socially, commercially and religiously.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to chronicle the history of free Brazilian slaves who migrated to the Bight of Benin and later relocated to the Gold Coast in the early 1800s.[330] It showed how the early settlers engaged with Gas and their leaders, especially how Ga Mantse Komeh I presented the early settlers with an area of land. The story goes that the returnees were offered a large virgin area of land for farming and for settlement purposes. Overall, land tenure formed an integral component of the *Tabom* identity. In the early 1900s as chapter 3 will explain, until the 1920s, the Brazilians and their descendants put the land to good use and contributed to food production in Accra and its neighboring communities. A reference by Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson and evidences that were provided by plaintiffs and defendants in various court cases between 1885 and 1964 established that the land was located around Fonafor Valley and Akwandor— which is now part of central Accra around Accra Polytechnic, The Examination Council of Ghana, the Ghana National Archives, Tudu, Adabraka and part of the Accra-Nsawam road around Kwame Nkrumah Circle.[331] Other areas of settlements include Otublohum a pivotal location in the socio-economic, cultural and political history of the returnees.

As emphasized before, Otublohum is significant to the study of the Brazilian presence in the Gold Coast because it was the epicenter of *Tabom* history in Ghana—the location where the current Brazilian House which was opened for tourism on November 19, 2007. Otublohum is also an important location because it was the same area that the

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[330] *The Gold Coast Echo*, November 5, 1888, 4.

[331] George Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, 6 August 2008, 2; STC 20/7/45 Isaac Cobblah Fiscian v. Henry Asumah Nelson and Sohby Baksmathy, 2.

First Scissors House was built in 1854. *Scissors House* is an embodiment of Brazilian tailoring and dress making skills, which the first generation contributed to their new urban environment.

The topography, especially the breeze from the Atlantic Ocean together with access to a large body of water attracted Europeans and maritime trading networks, migrants and freed slaves to Otublohum. This town also has important shrines for the Ga *Wulomo* (spiritual leader) and religious priests in Accra. The spiritual and cultural component of the Ga Wulomo provides a tangent that touches various fibers of the Brazilian and *Tabom* identity formations. (see chapter 3) The spiritual elements in Otublohum fostered or influenced the establishment of the *Tabon Quarters* during Brazilians gradual processes of assimilation into local cultures. This integration was done in tandem with Brazilians engagement with Ga leaders and the colonial apparatus.

Studies about the early years of Accra and British shows that *Mantse* Tawiah, was a controversial figure and a leading voice in what is now known in Ghana as the Greater Accra Region. *Mantse* Tawiah was an influential actor and a formidable advocate against colonial intrusion in the area. When the British defeated the Ashante's in the Yaa Asantewaa War of 1900-1901, the entire Gold Coast officially became a British colony. Unlike the period before the British controlled both the southern and northern protectorate thereafter.[332] Similar to the relations between the British and the Ashante chiefs, encounters between the British and *Mantse* Tawiah was tense to the extent that the

[332] Albert Adu Boahen, *Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante-British War of 1900-1901* with editor's note by Emmanuel Akyeampong (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2003), 173-178.

British sent the King into exile. The goal was to prevent the Ga people from further revolts against the colonial apparatus.[333]

Ga leaders installed members of the Brazilian colony as chiefs and leaders of their community as a means of bridging the gap between Ga people and the Brazilians. It was also meant to attract more Brazilians along the Bight of Benin to settle in Accra for economic investments and for creating a leadership in the Brazilian community to join forces with Ga leaders in their quest to resist British rule.

The first Brazilian, Nii Azumah I, was enstooled (coronation) to his throne in 1836 and ruled until 1865. Since then there has been five other Tabom chiefs.[334] The only time the Brazilian colony did not have a chief was from 1982-1997 after the death of Nii Azumah IV. One may wonder why the activities of Brazilian chiefs are muted in the archives or in colonial correspondence. The author's view is that although there was *Tabon Quarters* among the Otublohum wing of the Ga Paramountcy, this did not guarantee any power to Brazilian chiefs under British imperialism.

The selection of Brazilians and their descendants as chiefs by Ga leaders in the mid 1800s provided a cultural space for members of colonies to mobilize and to bridge the gap between them and the people of Accra. This chapter concluded that the British regulated the power of Ga leaders and interfered with traditional customs in the area to weaken the influence of the Ga leaders. British restrictions not only weakened these

[333] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 104-106.

[334] Marco Schaumloeffel, *Tabom: The Afro-Brazilian Community in Ghana*, 2nd Edition (Bridgetown, Lulu.com, 2008), 41-83.

leaders but it made Brazilian chiefs invisible in broader Ga societies. This had a ripple effect on Ga-Brazilian and British relations.

Indeed, Brazilians and their descendants made a significant impact on Ghanaian societies. Paradoxically, not all Afro-Brazilian returnees to the Gold Coast engaged in productive ventures. What could influence a group of former enslaved communities in Brazil to replicate a similar inhuman behavior and activity after their freedom? Whichever way one looks at it, conditions in the Gold Coast provided a recipe for returnees to benefit domestically and economically from the trade.

Slavery was another contentious subject that influenced relations between returnees, the British and the people of the Gold Coast. This phenomenon shaped contacts between these three groups in the seventeenth through the eighteenth century as the middle passage and colonialism evolved. In the late nineteenth century, while the British made a conscious decision to end transatlantic slavery, the returnees were ready to "promote" or to sustain slavery. In the Gold Coast, the returnees did so effectively in an environment in Accra that had participated in slavery for over a century.

It is documented that some Afro-Brazilians imitated their oppressive plantation owners and engaged fully in slave trading activities in locales such as Accra, Ada and

Keta along the South Eastern coast of the Gold Coast.[335] A number of court documents also show that descendants had some questionable contacts with slaves.[336]

Clearly, power or authority was distributed unevenly and enforced strategically as in the case of other areas with the imprint of colonial subjugation. As a result, the Ga leaders and the British had different degrees of power and influence. Obviously, the Brazilians had minimal power during the nineteenth century. They were below the power ladder. However, both the British and returnees had one thing in common: the determination to acquire wealth in the Gold Coast through any possible means. While the Ga authorities had to engage both the British and the Brazilians in a way that would "contain" the two "outsiders" they had no effective means of monitoring these two groups. Dispatches between British officials and the Home Office in London showed that the British transported a large quantity of silver and other minerals in the Gold Coast to England.[337]

The author has not found any evidence that says the same about the early Brazilian settlers. Like the *Tabom* chiefs, they had restricted access to resources.[338] This chapter showed that there were distinct differences between Brazilians and their

[335] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 7, 2007, 1. See also Sandra E. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 46. See also Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c 1850 to Recent Times* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001), 48.

[336]CVA 12/52, November 15, 1945, 2.

[337]*The Gold Coast Echo*, November 5, 1888, 4.

[338] *Government Gazzette*, Dispatch from the Earl of Carnarvon to Governor Freeling, Downing Street, UK,, February 28, 1878, 65.

descendants, especially after the demise of the first generation. It argued that this period marked a point of departure from the earlier traditions of communal relations that were established by the returnees. The next chapter explains the shift that occurred as descendants moved from farming traditions to rent-based communities.

Figure 2: Brazilian Chief, Joao Antonio Nelson (Nii Azumah II) in suit and hat on the far left. Mantse Tackie Tawiah is also seated three seats from the right (the old man with white beard).

Picture taken at the Brazil House Accra on July 21, 2008 during author's visit to the new tourist site

Figure 3: Part of the Ga Paramountcy showing Otublohum.

Picture taken from John Parker's book

Map 1.3 Kinka and Nleshi, c. 1908

Chapter Three
"Becoming *Tabom*:" 'Ghanaian-Brazilians' and their Ancestral Past from 1901

Introduction

"There is no Brazilian custom in Accra different from the Accra custom; the custom applicable to the Brazilian is the Accra or Ga custom in all matters."[339]

"I am a Ga woman of the Brazilian community."[340]

The process of becoming a *Tabom* did not happen overnight. Rather it took periods of reverse migrations and movements before reaching this important stage of Brazilian identity. The epigraphs by two descendants of a Brazilian colony in Ghana who trace their roots via Dangana *We* of the Brazilian tree, Enoch Cobblah Cudjoe and Mary Adisa Cobllah, speak to the ways in which Brazilian heritage became entrenched in Ga cultural norms. It also explains how descendants, especially Mary Adisa Cobblah, identified themselves in broader Ga society. As I have explained in chapter two, the early Brazilian settlers played various roles in the Ga Paramontcy and especially at the *Tabon Quarters* at Otublohum—one of the focal points of Brazilian early history in the then Gold Coast. Their involvements in these important social structures among others contributed to the process of "becoming" *Tabom*.

Furthermore, the epigraph also provides vital insight into and a synopsis of identity formation within the Brazilian colony. These settlement locations included the coastal communities and isolated forest regions which were founded by the returnees and

[339] LS No. 214/1956, Clegg v. Cobblah, April 1, 1957, 2.

[340] CVA 40/58, January 27, 1958, 32.

their descendants beginning in the mid-nineteen century. Both descendants showed some allegiance to Ga traditions and customs in variety of ways. It is obvious that one cannot properly engage with Brazilian history in Ghana without exploring how they intertwined with local and national history, especially after the end of the first generation.

Aspects of the epigraph also underscore notions of double consciousness—identifying either as Brazilians,*Tabom*, Ghanaians or a combination of both—that existed and continued to surface within the returnee community. Chapter three seeks to explore the differences between the first settlers and their descendants and explain how they fashioned their identities.

This chapter, which is an extension of the previous one, seeks to offer additional details about continuity in Brazilian colonies as the history of the first generation came to an end in the early 1900s. I point out that there were distinct features between the first and the second generation some of which were created by the transformation from an agrarian lifestyle to rental and land based economies in the early 1900s. This chapter argues that this period was one of the points of departure from the earlier traditions established by their forebears.

Indeed, the role of the Brazilians in Ga society, which evolved as a result of the friendships between leaders of the Brazilians and Ga *Manstɛmei*, left an indelible mark in the reconstruction of Brazilian history and served as an important feature of Brazilian colonies as its population also encountered aspects of British imperialism. Also, the legacy of the older generation, especially the ways in which they used their skills as merchants on the coastline to amass wealth and how they commuted between Ga

territories and the Bight of Benin to visit relatives as well as to expand their business ventures in tandem, added value to their rich history in the Gold Coast.[341]

This chapter highlights aspects of Brazilian life in the inland to explain transformations that took place in the locales where Ga king Komeh I offered Brazilians a vast area of land in the mid-1800s during his tenure as Ga Mantse. Those who settled inland depended on their farming practices and skills in digging wells to improve poor water situations in Accra. These groups of returnees were successful because this approach not only allowed them to contribute to the agrarian lifestyle in the Gold Coast; it also enabled members of their colonies to band together and live within a communal environment.[342]

I pay particular attention to the ways in which Brazilian returnees were given land by Ga leaders and how this offer shaped their interactions with each other. Land tenure in the Brazilian colony was a watershed moment in their history. While it was a blessing in terms of the way it united the community, it later became a "curse" after the demise of the first generation when arguments between new members of the community led to numerous court battles. The next chapter explores the conflicts that occurred after a number of descendants joined the exodus to various Brazilian enclaves along the coast and business centers in Accra around the 1920s. Excerpts from the epigraph and the next chapter demonstrate the extent to which descendants identified with Brazil and Ghana simultaneously.

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[341] RG 15/1/89, November 24, 1931, 107.

[342] CVA 40/58, January 27, 1958, 30.

Another section of this chapter examines activities within Brazilian communities from the colonial to the post-colonial eras. The transition from an agricultural-based Brazilian colony to a landlord-based economy and lifestyle in approximately the early 1900s had a significant impact on descendants. This assertion does not necessarily suggest that these two fields were the main professions that descendants from the coast and inland were involved in; there were range of occupations within the Brazilian community, but these two are discussed because of the focus of the chapter.

Due to the scope and complexity of the history of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana, this chapter is arranged in three main parts: reexamining the history of the first generation of returnees and how it tied in with the second generation; exploring how descendants negotiated their identities, how they became *Tabom* after they abandoned agrarian lifestyle and began a process of assimilation into Ga cultures; the cultural differences of the older and younger generations— how they converge and diverge at some points, particularly how immersion into Ga cultures enabled descendants to contribute to socio-economic and political structures in Ghana from the colonial and post-colonial periods.

This chapter will thus serve as preamble to the next chapter which concentrates mainly on land tenure, court disputes over land and how gradual divisions within Brazilian colonies sparked other conflicts among the *Tabom* people. It will briefly show how *Tabom* leaders positioned themselves in broader Ghanaian societies, especially in the tourism sector with the aid of the Brazilian Embassy in Accra. Growing tourism in Ghana and the attractiveness of these sites of memory to foreigners and people of African descent contributed to the renovation of historical monuments in Brazilian communities.

In fact, this awareness led to the opening of Brazil House near Otublohum in November 2007 with the goal of competing with other sites of slavery at the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles. This will be thoroughly examined in the last chapter.

In terms of the character of reverse diasporic peoples, I posit that there were multiple identity formations within the Brazilian experience. When these groups of Africans were enslaved and forcefully transported to Brazil they were called *negro* or *negra* escrava, African slaves or *preto,* black. However, those who were born in Brazil were called *cabra* or mulatto depending on their phenotype.[343] When they returned to the Bight of Benin and other areas in Africa after slave revolts and the end of slavery they were seen as Brazilians. They remained Brazilians between the early 1800s to the beginning of the 1900s; thereafter they became Ghanaian-Brazilians or *Tabom.* One may wonder what sort of name descendants will be called if they are able to visit Brazil for the first time. Will they be *Tabom*, Ghanaian-Brazilians, Ghanaians or a combination of these markers, or they will return to Ghana as Brazilians? It was through this constant shift in identity, as well as the change from an agrarian- to rent-based urbanized society where a good number of their population either became traders, landlords, proprietors or learned to be tailors and cloth-makers that the returnees and their descendants evolved from Brazilians to *Tabom*.

By exploring the shift from one historical condition to the other and the fluid interchange of

[343] João Jose Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835 in Bahia* (MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 8. In her analysis of identity formations in Brazilian plantations, Mieko Nishida asserts that "identity is not given. It is one's situational synthesis of self in relations to others." Mieko Nishida, *Slavery and Identity: Ethnicity, Gender and Race in Salvador, Brazil, 1808-1888* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1.

identity in the *Tabom* community, this chapter claims that the African diaspora stretches beyond slave experiences in the New World. As the changing characterization of Brazilians at different destinations show, there are multiple reverse diasporas to and from the New World. Put differently, the *Tabom* people's later effort to visit Brazil to come to terms with the "homes" of their ancestors is part of what historian Paul T. Zeleza characterizes as "multiple belongings" in the African Diaspora.

Certainly, João Antonio Nelson, who became a Brazilian Chief at the age of thirty-nine, is an embodiment of the multiple belonging that Zeleza identifies. Nelson, who held the title Azumah Nelson II and reigned from 1865-1900, was born in Brazil. He fits into the category of those who were called Brazilians when he arrived at the Bight of Benin with his parents, somewhere between 1826 and1829. In Nelson's case, he "remained" a Brazilian even when he was selected as chief at Otublohum. However, oral traditions establish that he spoke the Ga language. For Nelson, he enjoyed both sides of his two worlds.

In Paul Gilroy's debate over the construction of black identities either through the middle passage or via slaves' ancestral roots in Africa resonates in Brazilian colonies in Ghana.[344] In the case of João Antonio Nelson, he constructed his identity both through the routes that were created by the middle passage experience and the reverse diaspora routes he and his family embarked on their way back to the motherland to connect to their African roots in the 1820s. Although Nelson might have been too young to remember the

[344] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1-3.

oppression his forebears endured in Brazilian plantations, as Brazilian chief during British colonial rule, it is likely that he understood what it meant to be under European imperialism.

João Antonio Nelson cultivated enough understanding of cultural norms and knowledge of Ga Paramountcy and systems for accumulating wealth along the coast that he may have invited other Brazilians to the area. Also, Nelson's fluency in the Ga language might have enabled him to settle disputes between descendants during his tenure as Brazilian chief. Unlike his predecessors, whose names are not mentioned in colonial records I have identified so far, the data is not silent about Nelson, who remains as the longest ruling Brazilian chief. As explained in the previous chapter, he appeared in colonial courts to explain the origins and boundaries of Brazilian land in Accra. Indeed, the young Brazilian leader was very informed about the interference of the British in the Ga Paramountcy and traditional customs. Like other Ga *Manstemɛi* who opposed British imperialism in the late 1800s, Nelson was fined for his opposition to British imperialist policies after King Tawiah returned from exile[345]

Ga Paramountcy, Brazilian Colonies: Converging and Diverging Points

As I have shown in the previous chapter, the Ga Paramountcy, which has roots in Akan cultural traditions and systems of governance, shares a number of things in common with the Brazilian story. Ga *Mantsemɛi* are selected by *dzase,* which is comprised of a group of elders who assist the king or chief during his tenure in office.

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[345] John Parker*, Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 2000), 143. See chapter two.

These leaders are also selected either according to family lineage or through other forms. Ga customs allow succession from different lines—a kind of rotation that stretches across the length and breadth of different wings of the Ga Paramountcy.[346] The procedures for appointing Brazilian chiefs and Ga chiefs follow a similar cultural pattern except that Brazilian chiefs come from only one family line, the Nelson *We.*

According to Mantse Nii Azumah V, these directives are sacred rules that were laid down by their ancestors.[347] They are not negotiable. For over a century, all Brazilian leaders have followed this trend. Paradoxically, this is one of the contentions that have divided the *Tabom* people. In fact, objections to this tradition have contributed to their apathy about their Brazilian identity and heritage, hence their emphasis on a Ghanaian identity in most situations.

Another bifurcation within the Ga-Brazilian chieftancy traditions is the level of freedom Brazilian or *Tabom* chiefs enjoyed during colonial post-colonial periods. Prior to British rule, Ga people selected their leaders without the interference of Europeans. As pointed out earlier, beginning in the mid 1800s the British Crown demanded advance notification before people were allowed to congregate or select a chief. In short, without the rubber stamp of the British, the work of *dzase* did not amount to anything; they could select anyone they wanted to lead the Ga's, but the British had the last word. Brazilian or *Tabom* chiefs were outside the radii of colonial monitoring systems. Indeed, as Ga leaders, Brazilian chiefs also remained peripheral under British rule. In some ways, the

[346] Dinah Kuevi, "The History of Otublohum" Dissertation for B.A in History, The University of Ghana, Legon (1979), 9-10.

[347] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 8, 2008, 2.

selection of Brazilian chiefs did not include the same level of scrutiny as the selection of Ga *Mantsemɛi*.

In terms of *homowo* celebrations, colonial censorship affected both the Gas and the Brazilians. Also, Gas and Brazilians shared other things in common during these festivities. The *Mantsemɛi* in both constituencies used similar rituals. They were accompanied by the elders of the royal palace, they dressed in white clothes and warlike attires, they ate the same kind of food for the festivities, *kpekpei*, and they made merry with drumming and dancing across major streets in Accra. These two groups shared other things in common. When Brazilian chiefs were selected they would go through the same cultural purifications and were confined in a room for a number of days to prepare them to inherit the stool—or in Western sense, the crown. They have both adopted Ga and Akan names because of their long history with assimilation with other migrant communities along the coastlines of Accra. By and large, as part of this chapter will establish, Brazilian and *Tabom* customs were deeply entrenched in broader Ga tradition; they interlocked on many levels.

Although the Ga Paramountcy and the Tabom *Quarters* at Otublohum frequently interacted with one another, *Tabom* chiefs remained in the shadow of the Ga Paramountcy. Also, despite the fact that most of the descendants became totally immersed in Ga culture in the early 1920s, their position in relation to power did not change. By and large, *Tabom* chiefs have not gained any substantial power within the Ga Paramountcy; they still remain a distant wing under traditional Ga leadership. In essence, unlike what happened during the early periods of British rule, members of Brazilian

colonies gained a degree of access in Ghanaian society after the demise of British rule on March 6, 1957. They served as diplomats, government ministers, university professors, bishops in Christian churches, Chief Justice and important sports icons.[348]

One of the points of academic inquiry or significance of the Brazilian returnee and the British colonial timeline is in regards to wars in the Gold Coast during the nineteenth century. Oral traditions suggest that the Brazilians fought alongside the British during the Anglo-Ashanti wars in addition to other conflicts that ensued between the Ga people and the Akwamu's in the late 1800s through the early 1900s. However, there is insufficient evidence to support this assertion. There were other controversial claims.

Although there is evidence showing that the Brazilians or *Tabom* people formed a segment of the Ga Wulomo—*Tabon Quarters*, a wing of the Otublohum**,** there were no major conflicts between the British and the Brazilians as in the case of the British and the Ga people at least from the body of works that I have come into contact with or examined. Unlike the bloody battles between the British and the Ashantes, the Gas and the Brazilians did not go through such wars. It is obvious that since Accra was already under the Gold Coast Protectorate in the south, it was somewhat under the watchful eye of the British. Put differently in terms of British exploitation of minerals as gold among others, the *Tabon Quarters* and the vast land the Brazilians inherited did not have any resources that commanded attention, unlike the northern territories.

According to Elder George Aruna Nelson, the Brazilians ruled part of Accra in the late 1890s. The elder implied that his ancestors were selected by the Ga leaders to

[348] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 8, 2008, 1.

lead the community because of their skills in tailoring, the way they dressed and "behaved" as Europeans, as well as their knowledge in drilling wells.[349] In the author's assessment so far, there is no proof that this event occurred in the history of the Gold Coast before or after the capital of the Gold Coast colony was moved from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877. Even if this was the case, the elements Elder Nelson referred to would not have had any major effects on why such decision was made by the Ga leaders.

The elder was referring to the elites among the Brazilians who either gained favors or respect among the Ga *Mantsemɛi*—members of the Brazilian colony who played prominent roles in Ga societies in the early history of Accra. Among the elites was the Ribeiro family. As Roger S. Gocking has emphasized in his analysis of coastal communities in the Gold Coast, the Ribeiro's used their wealth to negotiate marriages between them and prominent people from Accra.[350] Poor members of the Brazilian colony could not afford this luxury. In terms of the emphasis Elder Nelson placed on Brazilian European identity or influences, studies conducted during this period show that the Ga leaders did not esteem European cultures above local norms, hence, resistance by Ga leaders such as Mantse Tawiah who opposed European dominance in the area in the early 1900s.

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[349] Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, August 6, 2008, 1.

[350] See Gocking, Roger S. *Facing Two Ways: Ghana Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule* (Laham, MD: University Press of America Inc., 1999).

The Tabom Family Tree

Like the Brazilian tree discussed in the previous chapter, the *Talbom* tree is an important way of reconstructing *Tabom* identity. As with other aspects of *Tabom* history, reconstructing or tracing the branches of the Brazilian tree that was planted by freed slaves has been daunting mainly because of the inconsistencies in their origins. Obviously, stems from the Brazilian tree which originated in South America were replanted along the Bight of Benin. In Ghana, the Brazilian tree expanded its base through childbearing with the women they married from Brazil, the Bight and the Gold Coast.[351] What set the latter generation from the earlier one was that the branches that emerged from the first tree bore different fruits that shaped and shifted the trajectory of their history and the community in major ways.

Like the Brazilian tree, the *Tabom* family tree has complex branches. The *Tabom* family tree includes the Nelsons, Lutterodts, Ribeiros, Mortons, Fiscians and others. These groups have individual heads of the families. The Fiscians trace their ancestry through the Abdulamu lineage[352] whereas, the Dangansis map out their lineage via the Aruna *We*.[353] Traditionally, as noted earlier, the Nelsons are the only family that is selected as *Tabom* chiefs or the leaders of the Brazilians.[354] For instance, Nii Azumah III was the Head of the Brazilian family because of his position as a chief. Currently, the

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[351] RG 15/1/89, April 23, 1931, 15-16.

[352] CVA No. 12/52, March 13, 1953, 4; 44.

[353] CVA 40/58, January 27, 32.

[354] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 8, 2007, 1.

position is held by Mantse Nii Azumah V. The *Tabom* chief continues to find peaceful ways of bringing the different family branches together to sustain their history.

Other descendants have served in various capacities. Ezekiel Fiscian was the Head of the Fiscian family, Liliki acted as the Head of the Aruna Yawafio family, and Ambah Fatuma was also the acting Head of the Aruna Dangana family in the mid 1900s.[355] There are other family lineages that are more difficult to trace.

The Brazilian family branches that I have listed in chapter two bore fruits and expanded the Brazilian base one decade after another. However, descendants had a complex way of relating to "extended" family members with ties to the first generation. This was not surprising because they were divided in other ways. In one of the court cases, the tribunal declared that, "this is a matter between members of the same family"—a reminder that like any other community there were internal struggles within the Brazilian population.[356] Disagreements and silences within the community after the demise of the first generation has made it difficult if not impossible to piece together how subsequent generations with a long history of assimilation are connected at various levels to the original settler groups or the Brazilian tree. In other words, it is becoming increasingly difficult to talk to the Ghanaians who are part of the *Tabom* family tree. With the exception of the Nelsons, descendents have been mute or only provided limited access to the information needed to reconstruct Brazilian history in Ghana.
(see Appendix C)

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[355] CVA 29/55, January 23, 1958, 23.

[356] CVA 45/49, March 23, 1940, 41.

In the process of highlighting notions of identity formation, I draw on the multiple ways in which the *Tabom* people "display" their identities. The strategic and interchangeable ancestral choices as well as the competing memories and challenges Brazilians and their descendants need to be underscored. In other words, the *Tabom* people—who are zealously claiming a Ghanaian identity and a Brazilian ancestral connection simultaneously; born Ghanaians, but somewhat demanding a relationship with Brazil at the same time; "consumed" by Ghanaian values and cultures but tirelessly incorporating memories of a Brazilian past.

In one of my interviews with George Aruna Nelson, the ninety one year old elder of the *Tabom* people passionately expressed his desire to visit Brazil to merge the history of his forebears with his own.[357] Indeed, the elder and others have perhaps settled in Otoblohum and other areas in Accra where their forebears settled, but perhaps they daydreamed about ancestral roots in Salvador, Bahia in Brazil.[358] How do the "pull and push" factors previously described contribute to the notion of a return to Brazil? As I have shown, as "flexible actors,"[359] descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves continue to enjoy the taste of two worlds: Ghana and Brazil.

In *Beyond Identity*, Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper suggest a more meaningful

[357] George Aruna Nelson, interview by Kwame Essien, 6 August 2008, 1.

[358] Cliff Ekuful, "The d-day is here: Ghana Brazilians Divided in Loyalty," *The Ghanaian Times*, 27 June, 2006, 1.

[359] Gina M. Pere, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families* (CA: University of California Press, 2004), 9-13.

clarification in the ways in which the word 'identity' is used.[360] In the context of this chapter, identity will be employed to describe the overlapping consciousness and constant ideological shifts that existed within Brazilian colonies. Borrowing from Samiri Hernandez Hiraldo's assertion that identity is embedded in a dynamic map of power I emphasize how the *Tabom* people are adopting a strategic identification approach that gives them the flexibility to determine when they want to be identified as Ghanaians and when they can claim their Brazilian ancestry simultaneously.

Also, leaning on Hiraldo's theory of managing identities in her study of the Loizan community, a marginalized African community in Puerto Rico,[361] and Paula A. Ebron's notion of performing and enacting of African cultures,[362] I argue that descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves in Ghana are also managing, negotiating and performing their identity, their cultures as well as their history in order to benefit from growing wealth and revenues that are generated through tourism in Ghana by returnees from North America and the Caribbean (African Americans, Jamaicans etc).

Identity as applied in this chapter could be seen as a temporal or permanent act. Depending on the situation or circumstance, diasporan blacks often identify with a "social-contracted" identity which is not only tied to memory of an ancestral past, but to sites of historical memory, particularly landmarks in Brazilian colonies in Ghana. This kind of identity is not fixed, but changes depending on

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[360] Roger Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity: In Theory and Society" *Renewal and Critique in Social Theory* 29, 2000, 1.

[361] Samiri Hernandez Hiraldo, *Black Puerto Rican Identity and Religious Experiences* (FL: University Press of Florida, 2006), 5; Samiri Hernandez Hiraldo, Translated by Mariana Ortega-Brena "If God Were Black and from Loiza:" Managing Identities in a Puerto Rican Seaside Town," *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 146, Vol. 33, No. 1, January 2006, 66; Samiri Hernandez Hiraldo, *Black Puerto Rican Identity and Religious Experiences* (FL: University Press of Florida, 2006), 4-6.

[362] Paula A. Ebron, *Performing Africa* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1, 27.

the agenda of the individual or groups involved in the negotiation of African traits. For others like the *Tabom* people this characteristic is first entrenched in their history with the transatlantic slave trade. Secondly, it is embedded in the *Tabom* people's drive to show how their identities are tied to sites of memories in their communities.

The formations of strategic identity among the *Tabom* people takes on different dimensions depending on the particular situation. How could these evolving identities which continue to gravitate towards a Ghanaian character facilitate future visits to Brazil or consolidate their memory of a Brazilian heritage in their future cultural frontiers?

The *Tabom* people have not expressed any interest in choosing one historical heritage or identity over the other. Rather, they have found creative ways of preserving both their Afro-Brazilian and Ghanaian ties. They have accomplished this daunting task through ongoing efforts to restore historical monuments such as the Brazil House and Scissor House while at the same time celebrating their Ghanaian heritage and cultural traditions.

A Colony of Brazilian Farmers and the Essence of Communal Activities

Brazilians have had a long history of an agrarian lifestyle which dates back to the time of slavery in Brazil when most of slaves were forced to work tirelessly on plantations across Brazil that were operated either by slave owners or by the Portuguese rulers.[363] Farming formed an interior component on Brazilian identity both during their time of enslavement in Brazil and upon their return to Africa. A number of researchers

[363] See Joao Jose Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835 in Bahia* (MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993).

have shown that returnees along the Bight of Benin continued this tradition.[364] In Ghana, there is ample evidence showing that returnees did not abandon this rich tradition after they were offered land by Ga *Mantsɛ* Tackie Komeh I. They carried their agrarian skills with them. In fact, according to historian Samuel Quarccopome, Brazilians shaped farming in some areas in Accra, especially the planting and cultivation of fruits like mango and other farm products. Without a doubt, a good portion of the second generation followed the footsteps of their ancestors.

Two Brazilian Portuguese words, *isolacao* (isolation) and *assimilar* (assimilation), are used to describe the degree to which the Brazilians and their descendants related to the local people of Accra and their own communities. One of the reasons why the first generation, especially those who invested in agricultural activities clustered in isolated communities such as Akwandor, Adabraka and other areas was to preserve their Brazilian cultural traditions and norms such as Portuguese language. The other reason was to promote communal activities within the communities as they preserved the base and stems of the Brazilian Tree.[365] Adabraka has become a thriving business district since the 1960s.

Indeed, a number of descendants saw some wisdom in the vision of their ancestors and were determined to safeguard the legacy of the first generation. They

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[364] Michael J. Turner, *Les Bresiliens— The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey* (Ph. D Dissertation: Boston University, 1975).

[365] CVA 45/49 March 9, 1949, 57. See also CVA 12/52, February 28, 1949, 62; CVA 12/52, March 13, 1953, 17.

opposed other descendants who sought to divide communal lands among different leaders or family members for self-serving reasons. In the words of Henry A.K. Nelson:

> "When the Brazilians arrived, each family did not carve ownership of a portion of land by occupation out of the common land of the Brazilian community. Mere cultivation of cassava on another's land [sic] does not create title or effect title...If a Brazilian occupies a portion of the communal land and later wishes to sell it he obtains the permission of the Brazilian Chief."[366]

This reference by Nelson underscores the spirit of oneness and the sense of territorial protection, security and sharing which the first generation sought to achieve within the community rather than carving or distributing their land during the initial periods of settlement. Conscious of the importance of unity within a new "returnee colony," the first generation was aware that dividing land among farmers within the first settler groups' descendants was not the wisest option.[367]

Brazilian farmers were determined to sustain their agrarian lifestyles and to forge unity among their children, grand-children and great-grand children. The controversies over whether the original land from the Ga *Mantsemɛi* was for the entire Brazilian colony or was intended to be distributed needs further probing. However, ample evidence suggests that the offer of land was specifically given to sustain the entire group of Brazilian returnees in their early years of settlement. Examples of farming activities in a

[366] CVA 12/52, March 13, 1953, 47.

[367] CVA 40/56, January 23, 1958, 21. The early settlers had other schemes for stabilizing their Brazilian heritage. Occasionally, they visited and traded along the Bight of Benin to reinforce their ties with both the new population group that emerged in the Gold Coast as well as the relatives they left behind in Nigeria and other coastal areas.

number of court documents suggest that, “all the Brazilian settlers who originally farmed on any portion continued [with] farming during their lifetime and on death their respective successors continued cultivation by farming”[368] In another court case, Mary Adisa Cobblah emphasized that her father, “Unisa Cobblah Dangana…who belonged to the Nii Aruna Family of the Brazilian community farmed the area [and] my brother continued to farm the land after my father’s death.”[369]

These two court documents, as well as others, provide a base for reconstructing the history of Brazilian farmers in Accra. As the years went by, Cobblah and her brother Emmanuel Drisu Cobblah sustained agrarian traditions by planting mango trees and foodstuff on land their forebears passed on to the subsequent generation.[370] The transition from an agrarian society to a land-based rental economy did not occur overnight. In fact, from the early 1900s through the early 1920s descendants continued to participate in farming ventures. In spite of descendants’ dedication to the legacy of their ancestors, there was a shift in their profession.

“It’s their Tradition:” Shift from Agrarian to Rental and Land based Economy

Descendants who took over their families’ land after the demise of the first generation did not always devote all of their time and energy to farming traditions. Aware of extended Brazilian colonies in other areas, especially Otublohum and some areas in the city of Accra, they often found ways of sharing their time between these two areas. These

[368] CVA 40/58, Suit No. 214/1956, December 5, 1956, 8.

[369] CVA 40/58, January 27, 1958, 32.

[370] Ibid.

descendants who were carried away by the attractive lifestyle outside the bush did not spend much time in agrarian communities. In fact, some of them were away for long periods of time and did not know much about where their family land was located inland. They returned occasionally to visit or to testify about their family properties in court. During their court appearances, those in this category had problems explaining who their parents' farming neighbors were.[371]

Children who spent quite a lot of time on the farmland did not encounter problems identifying the boundaries of their farmlands upon return because they frequently moved back and forth between the inland colonies and urban areas. These descendants registered their protest whenever they traveled back to these farmlands to evict intruders or when they joined litigations. In one such instance in court, Mary Adisa Cobblah provided details about her family agrarian lifestyle during her childhood. She asserted that: "I myself used to farm on this land. It is about 40 years ago since I last farmed."[372]

The information Cobblah provided clearly shows how descendants treated areas of land they inherited and how their attitudes towards farming converged or diverged from those of their ancestors. Staying outside for almost forty years was quite a long time to be away from one's family roots. It also demonstrates the descendants' attitudes towards land tenure in the early 1900s.

Indeed, city life was more rewarding than life in the inland areas. It was rewarding and beneficial in terms of the skills descendants acquired in urban areas or

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[371] CVA 40/58, January 1, 1958, 31.

[372] CVA 40/56, January 27, 1958, 32.

along the coast compared to an agrarian lifestyle. For Cobblah's brother, life in the city opened other doors such as the opportunity to serve in the colonial army in the 1930s. Indeed, his commitment to the army did not prevent him from returning to Brazilian lands to protect it from trespassers who were mostly of non-Brazilian descent.[373]

In a number of court cases, other descendants also noted that the choices they made between sustaining farming practices and continuing new professions as tailors, dress makers or as traders in areas along the coast, especially Otublohum and Swalaba, made it challenging or impossible to commute regularly between these "distant" Brazilian colonies. This was because each profession required a good deal of time to accomplish a particular task. To resolve this problem most descendants who had closer ties to agrarian communities sought the service of younger family members who had remained on their farmland or had no intention of moving. In some situations, descendants paid caretakers to groom the land until they were able to return.[374] As archival documents show, these arrangements were often unreliable and contributed to the shift from land-based traditions to a rent-based Brazilian economy as well as new identity formations as assimilation became the dominant norm during this period.

Movements to the coast or the city played a vital role in the changes that occurred in Brazilian history in Accra. The transformation of agrarian communities to land-based rental properties was not facilitated by descendants' decisions alone. Non-Brazilians who encroached or had access to Brazilian lands legally or illegally were not concerned about

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[373] Ibid.

[374] CVA 40/58, January 27, 1958, 30.

protecting features of the Brazilian presence in these isolated areas. If descendants would not do more to protect their heritage who would? As one of the witness in court claimed during his settlement in the area: "I saw cassava, ground-nuts and mango trees on the land…I destroyed some of the cassava trees."[375]

It is obvious that new occupants of the land did not share the same values as the descendants who had invested in the preservation of Brazilian land and agrarian traditions. Descendants became vulnerable from two other fronts as they gave less time to the farming traditions of their forebears; by gradually embracing professions they planted themselves deeply in Ga culture, particularly along the coast, and created a niche for outside interference. Regardless of which way one examines this trend, both cases created divisions rather than unity. Indeed, by involving outsiders in Brazilian land, descendants opened their communities up to a number of disruptions or interference that resulted in series of court cases from the 1920s through the 1960s. These issues are discussed extensively in the next chapter.

The shift from an agrarian to rental- and land-based community or lifestyle was not embraced by all descendants. Whereas a section of the population continued with the long tradition of farming within the area, others held on to the new move which occurred in both the inland farming territories as well as the coastal areas of Otublohum, Swalaba and in some areas in the city of Accra. In essence, descendants who remained in agrarian communities modified Brazilian farmlands to construct buildings for rent. Those who traveled outside this area traded in beads while others learned tailoring and dressmaking.

[375] CVA 40/56, January 28, 1958, 34.

A number of descendants also moved away from farming regions to pursue education in Accra or traveled back and forth from inland farming areas to the Bight of Benin.

Although Brazilians in the inland did not live together on the same farmland in one particular location, their agrarian lifestyle often allowed them to share common space. The same cannot be said of the population that incorporated other professions or used farmlands for housing or rental purposes within the same geographical farm areas. As Benjamin Addison asserted in his description of the land in his community, especially where his family lived, "this area now, has become a building area."[376]

The gradual shift Addison described opened up new forms of interactions between descendants who lived mostly with their aged parents in remote areas of Accra. In short, the incorporation of other professions into Brazilian societies led to other forms of integration with and exposure to outsiders.

This shift was mainly made to ensure that descendants gained some level of prestige and wealth—something that was available in urban areas but was often unavailable in agrarian areas. Another group did not embrace either farming lifestyles or the shift to a land- and rental-based economy. This group did not have any qualms as long as these changes benefited most of the descendants rather than a small group. In other words, contestation over land or whether to abandon farming practices for other professions was not always about how much space one could occupy or protect for posterity's sake. It was also about who did or did not benefit from the money the Brazilian properties produced.

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[376] CVA 40/58, January 24, 1958, 28.

In one of the court cases, Madam Yawah defended the communal customs which were promoted by the descendants' ancestors. Yawah later pointed out that she did not have a problem with the new order or lifestyle which was introduced by some members of the second generation. For her, the new arrangement was largely about a few individuals who amassed wealth at the expense of the Brazilian agrarian colonies. Yawah was of the opinion that, "J.E. Maslieno has been receiving rent from the tenants of the building on the property in dispute and his been enjoying it alone."[377]

Maslieno was one of the descendants who claimed that Brazilian land was not meant to be used collectively and that individual families had the option to use it for their own interests. The self-appointed leader of the Brazilian community, he was very adamant and forceful in his beliefs. In fact, as a number of cases shows, Maslieno got into a number of disputes with other descendants and even the Brazilian chief over land in other areas. Maslieno felt a sense of entitlement, and as a result he did things his own way and made demands in court.[378] According to Maslieno, "I am exclusively entitled to the whole of the rents collected and that I make this affidavit in support of a motion for directing the District [commissioner] to turn over the whole of the rents collected on house Nos. 137 and Nos. 138 block 6 to me."[379]

It is vital to note that the suggested period of transformation from an agrarian society to a land-based rental economy coincided with important historical events such as

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[377] RG 5/1/56, Madam Yawah v. J.E.Maslieno, July 30, 1930, 35.

[378] See chapter four.

[379] RG 5/1/56, Madam Yawah v. J.E.Maslieno, July 30, 1930, 35.

the strategic migrations of European merchants and other expatriates to the Gold Coast during the pre-colonial period. Their major goal was to amass wealth and to prop up colonial ventures. Since coastal Accra was not very developed in the early 1900s, some of these investors and entrepreneurs sought land, affordable housing and stores to rent for their business activities. As colonial officials who used Brazilian land for their projects, these expatriates also became attached to properties belonging to the Brazilians. Some of the disputed Brazilian properties were rented to expatriates, including Syrian, Lebanese and European merchants. These merchants had access to buildings that were managed by both inland descendants and those close to urban Accra.[380]

The lawsuits show that some descendants went after other members, such as Maslieno and Ribeiro families, who acted as self-appointed leaders of the community. Descendants also challenged go-betweens or "agents" who sold farmlands to outsiders and those who built on these farmlands or rented Brazilian properties as housing and stores to expatriates, the Gas, and migrants in Accra.[381]

The price of houses on Brazilian land varied depending on their size and who rented them. The price for stores and housing differed from one location to the other. In 1931, small store rooms cost £ 1.10 per month, a bedroom cost £1.00 per month, and a chamber (bedroom) and a hall were about £3.10 per month.[382] During the early 1900s, as a good portion of the second generation began to abandon agrarian lifestyles and focused

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[380] RG 15/1/89, April 22, 1931, 4;12.

[381] See chapter four on land disputes.

[382] RG 15/1/89, July 12, 1931, 112.

on renting properties descendants received financial support from other relatives at the Bight of Benin, particularly Nigeria, to expand their new ventures.[383]

Community Fragmentation: When the Taboms became Ghanaians, 1901 on

There were many achievements and unproductive events in the Brazilian colony after the demise of the first generation. The high and low points in their communities included the transformation from an agrarian lifestyle to a rent-based society, disputes over land and the selection of leaders.

To rearticulate my earlier analysis, there is a faint line between the traditions and cultural values of people of Brazilian descent and Ghanaians. The transformation between being a Brazilian and becoming a local person began in the early nineteenth century when the early settlers married women in Accra.[384] These relations gave rise to the emergence of the *Tabom* generations who gradually embraced a Ghanaian identity in every fashion and form. A number of works point to the similarities between *Tabom* and Ghanaian. For instance, in *Drink, Power and Culture Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to recent Times*, historian Emmanuel Kwaku Akyeampong underscores the significance of alcohol and the vital position it occupies in Ghanaian social and religious customs.[385] *Tabom* cultural traditions in general are embedded mainly in Ghanaian cultural norms as the rituals in Akyeampong's work show.

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[383] RG 15/1/89, July 12, 1931, 112.

[384] RG 15/1/89, April 23, 1931, 15.

[385] Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Drink, Power and Culture Change: A Social History of Alcohol in Ghana, c. 1800 to Recent Times* (Portsmouth, N.H: 1996), 12-15. See also Steve J. Salm and Toyin Falola, *Culture and Customs of Ghana* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 128.

During my first meeting with the *Tabom* chief, which lasted for about two and half hours, I was instructed by the linguist, the chief's representative, to present a bottle of schnapps (alcoholic drink) and to perform rituals such as the pouring of a libation.[386] With the aid of a questionnaire and a tape recorder, I was able to conduct this important interview. This became the initial path towards a journey to reconstruct Brazilian history in Ghana. Because the traditional protocols of the contemporary generation intertwine on many levels and are rooted in Ghanaian cultural rituals, I was required to speak to the chief indirectly—meaning, I had to address the linguist who in turn repeated what I communicated before the chief responded to me directly.

These shared cultural traits between Ghanaians and the *Tabom* people are significant because they support part of the thesis of this chapter. They also highlight the ways in which the current generation leans more closely towards a Ghanaian identity and cultural practices than their forebears did. This chapter emphasizes these cultural traits to show the differences that existed between the first generation and subsequent ones, especially how acculturation gave way to integration into local cultures in the late 1800s.

Post Independence: Tabom Autonomy and Self-Assertion after 1957

On a larger scale, it is not known if the second generation participated in any fashion in the colonial regiment that was created by the British to defend England and its allies during the world wars. However, a number of court documents, including Akua v. Nelson, clearly show that some descendants were drafted into the British colonial army

[386] The linguist, the late Samuel Nelson, a former Minister for Sports in the 1980s was another prominent branch of the *Tabom* tree.

around 1939. In response to a question about where he was during the early stages of a land dispute, Enoch Cobblah Codjoe responded forcefully that, “yes, I also went to the 1939-1945 War.”[387] Codjoe also mentioned that his family lost their land after he left to serve abroad. Upon his return in the early 1940s he sued to reclaim the land his Brazilian ancestors entrusted into his family's care.

It is also not clear how the *Tabom* people participated in nationalist movements or Pan-African projects to end British rule in the Gold Coast. It would be interesting to know how the community participated in nationalist rebellions and protests, especially during the imprisonment of Nkrumah at Ussher Fort Prison between 1947 and 1951 for his radicalism and his opposition to British rule. The prison is located next to Brazil House at Otublohum and Swalaba, Accra where it is believed that the “First Scissors House” was established by Brazilian returnees with skills in tailoring.

The period between the 1950s and the demise of Nkrumah’s government in 1966 was another pivotal moment in the *Tabom* chronology. Ghana’s independence on March 6, 1957 opened a new niche for expatriates, returnees and their descendants from the African diaspora to contribute in one fashion or the other—especially diasporan returnees. They were invited by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah to contribute in various ways to post-independence nation building reforms.[388] This was part of a long tradition

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[387] See CVA 40/56, January 27, 1958, 30.

[388] Osagyefo in the Akan language means the savior or messiah. See Kwame Essien *African Americans in Ghana and Their Contributions to ‘Nation Building:’ 1985 through 2004.* In Alusine Jalloh and Toyin Falola (Eds.), *The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations* (NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008).

that was initiated by the British colonial rulers as they "exported" the skills of diasporan blacks in one colonial region to the other to stabilize their interests.[389]

In spite of uncertainty about the role of the *Tabom* people in the decolonization campaigns, as in the case of other diasporan returnee communities, ample evidence shows that some members of the community played various roles in post-independence reforms. Like their ancestors who made significant contributions to agrarian activities and the construction of wells in Accra beginning in the mid 1800s, the *Tabom* people made their presence known after the demise of British colonial rule. They participated in social and economic activities similar to other diasporan returnees who embarked on various exoduses to Ghana with Pan-African orientations, especially from the 1960s on. For instance, Elder George Aruna Nelson asserted that he was employed to make suits for Kwame Nkrumah because of his skills in tailoring.[390]

Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayesu have provided a long list of developments within the community during the 1940s. This includes the various positions the *Tabom* people occupied in different institutions as bishops, diplomats, educators, entrepreneurs and others.[391] This will be discussed in detail in the next half of the chapter.

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[389] As blacks from the Caribbean did by contributing to colonial enterprises in the early 1900s, African American expatriates and returnees also made substantial contributions both to the decolonization processes and post-independence nation building projects. They included political activists, intellectuals, students and others. See also Kevin K. Gaines. *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 17.

[390] Elder George Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, 6 August 2008, 1.

[391] Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayensu, "I am a Brazilian: *History of the Tabon, Afro-Brazilian in Accra," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series*, no. 6, 2002, 39.

One could safely argue that the younger generations were influenced by the achievements of the older generation to some extent. However, these positive features of Afro-Brazilian history could not “redeem” the community from its “troubled” past. Rather, progress created class and religious disparity among them and widened divisions in the community even farther. In other words, descendants’ failure to preserve the communal relationships and family traditions that the early settlers practiced has blurred their history and bolstered silences about their past connections to Brazil.

The *Tabom* people were also affected in other ways, especially their ties with other descendants elsewhere. As I have pointed out earlier, a number of Brazilians and their children who were born in either Brazil or the Gold Coast traveled back and forth between inland agrarian areas and the Bight of Benin in an attempt to maintain aspects of their Brazilian identity such as the use of Portuguese language.[392] The same cannot be said of the current generation. According Nii Azumah V, one of his future goals is to restore these connections by creating dialogue between descendants of Brazilians in Benin, Togo and Nigeria where they are known as the *Aguda* people. A similar plan is in place to stabilize relations with Afro-Brazilians in Brazil through the Brazilian Embassy in Ghana.[393]

In the mid 1960s through the late 1970s, there were a number of tumultuous events in the Ghanaian political and economic landscape. When Nkrumah was

[392] RG 15/1/89, Mary Afua Nelson v. S.Q. Nelson, December 7, 1931, 112.

[393] Ibid.

overthrown by the military, Ghana experienced four other changes in government.[394] Political and economic instability gave rise to the June 4 Revolution of 1979, which was led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, a former president of Ghana who later became known as "J-J" or "Junior Jesus." After the 1980s, at the height of the revolution and the Golden Jubilee celebration of Ghana's 50th year of independence in 2007, two things stood out in the *Tabom* community.

During the 1980s, at the height of the revolution and frightening moments in Ghana, three things stood out in the *Tabom* community. First, Azumah Nelson, a descendant of Afro-Brazilian slaves—from the Nelson pedigree on the Brazilian family tree, began his journey in the world of boxing. Nelson won a number of local bouts and became a national and world hero when he won the World Boxing Council Featherweight championship after defeating Wilfredo Gomez on December 8, 1984. Nelson's victory gave Ghanaians something to celebrate and produced public solidarity, especially among students and young people who had been drawn to the charisma and the youthful image of Rawlings.

A striking event that coincided with the ascendency of both Rawlings and Nelson was the economic "stability" in Ghana in the late 1980s. Political stability improved a number of sectors in the country, including tourism, and created a platform for the *Tabom* community to showcase other positive elements within their communities, besides Nelson's victory. For instance, as the country made strides in the area of tourism, there

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[394] Emmanuel Doe Ziorkli, *Ghana: Nkrumah to Rawlings, a Historical sketch of some Major Political Events in Ghana from 1957-81* (vol. 1) (Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1998), 312. See also John Westwood, *J.J. Rawlings: From Schooldays at Achimota to Castle* (Blue Volta: Ghana, 2001; Kevin Shellington, *Ghana and the Rawlings Factor* (UK: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992).

was increasing interest in tourism within *Tabom* communities in Accra—hence, the opening of Brazil House in November 2007. Third, in 2000 former President John Agyekum Kuffor selected Georgina Theodora Wood, a *Tabom*, as the first female Supreme Court Justice Judge of Ghana in 2007. Wood traces her ancestry through *naarbi*, her mother's lineage—the Lutterodts pedigree on the Brazilian family tree. These three elements and others reshaped the history of Afro-Brazilians, especially the drive to enhance tourism in the *Tabom* communities.

Although the *Tabom* colony expanded during the early 1900s, very little is known about their exact number. There are still ongoing debates about the population size of descendants in the twenty-first century. According to Nii Azumah V, the actual population of the *Tabom* people today is not known.[395] This is due mainly to intermarriages between the local people, the first generation and their descendants. Also, the chief pointed out that improper documentation by the Ghana Statistics Service has complicated the problem. Nii Azumah suggested that approximately two million people are descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves in Ghana.[396]

The number could be less because the Gas, the ethnic group that welcomed the first Afro-Brazilians in the Gold Coast, comprises eight percent of the current population of Ghana, which was approximately twenty million in 2005-2006 and about twenty four million in 2009.[397] Statistically, since the *Tabom* community forms a fraction of the Ga

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[395] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien on 15 August 2005, 2.

[396] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien on 15 August 2005, 2.

[397] http://www.appliedlanguage.com/country_guides/ghana_country_people.shtml

population, my conclusion is that their current number is around 500,000. However, this number is open for debate.

Despite uncertainties about the population of Ghanaians of Brazilian descent, there are other important features about their history that deserve attention. There is a long held belief that powerless groups "create rich meaningful lives in marginal circumstances."[398] The same can be said about members of the Brazilian colony. The first generation and their descendants sought creative ways of elevating their image despite evidence of divisions among them. Nii Azumah V claims that new generations of the *Tabom* people depend heavily on oral history, dairies, letters and historical monuments, such as the *Brazil* and *Brazil Lane*, as means to understand their roots and trace their ancestry.

These landmarks still stand in their community, along with photographs passed from one generation to the other. This archival information has been used to explain the *Tabom* people's Brazilian roots.[399] Just as he worked to restore the *Brazil House*, Mantse Azumah V is working tirelessly to raise money to restore the first Scissors House, which was burnt down to the ground after an electricity problem in the complex. The destruction of the property occurred about a month before the "Brazil House" was opened for tourism. There was no indication of foul play despite the disputes in the community about how to manage properties that were passed on to the current generation. (see chapter 5)

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[398] Gina M. Pere, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families* (CA: University of California Press, 2004), 7.
[399] Nii Azumah Nelson V, interview with Kwame Essien on 15 August 2005, 1.

The various attempts by the *Tabom* leaders and the Brazilian embassy to restore some elements of Brazilian heritage in Ghana, such as the Portuguese language, which has faded out in the *Tabom* community since the early 1900s, have not been very successful, primarily because of a lack of interest and problems with organizing the members of the community who are scattered or assimilated into various regional ethnic groups in Ghana.[400] The educational systems in Ghana and the Brazilian embassy have a share in the blame as well. The former has failed to include the history the *Tabom* people in school curriculums in Ghana while the latter has not yet provided the *Tabom* people with historical information about slavery in Brazil and its long-term effects on people of Afro-Brazilian descent.[401] According to Nii Azumah V, the influence of English and Ghanaian languages on the *Tabom* community also makes it difficult for the *Tabom* people to study Portuguese.[402]

Contributions of Brazilian Colonies: Pre Colonial, Colonial and Post Colonial Eras

In their interrogation of the distinction between transnational and transcultural connections to old communities and new communities, Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Fouron forcefully argue that a clear distinction should be made between the role of

[400] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 3.

[401] Not only that the Brazilian Embassy seem to connect to the community and its people in their own terms. It was rather ironic that there was no official or significant representation of the Embassy at the funeral services of Elder Nelson—the old man who worked so hard with the current *Tabom* Mantse to create viable ties between the community, the Brazilian Embassy and the Brazilian government. This is another example of the inconsistencies in the relation between descendants and the Brazilian Embassy.

[402] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 3.

notions of ancestral ties, yearnings to visit the homeland, and the involvement of returnees in social developments.

This chapter acknowledges that Brazilians made substantial contributions to the Gold Coast and also gained prominent positions in Ghanaian society and their communities in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. It is important to add that neither the first Brazilian settlers nor their descendants were homogenous societies. They possessed multiple identities, cultures, and unique skills that they introduced to their communities. The returnees later extended these professions to those they came into contact with and those of society as their history and population progressed over time. In the pre-colonial period the early settlers made their presence felt. It is held that upon arrival in the 1820s on, returnees introduced new technology in Accra, especially the digging of wells to improve the quality of water in the area.[403]

Historian Sandra E. Greene talks about the introduction of similar innovations in the Anlo, a coastal town in the Volta region of Ghana in 1840. According to Greene, Baeta, a Portuguese who settled in a town called Akoto, constructed a number of wells. These wells were not necessarily intended for local consumption, but instead for Brazilian and Cuban slave ships that landed in the area.[404] Considering contacts between Brazilians and the Portuguese in the past, and with evidence of technological transfers one can argue that well drilling was a common feature in the interactions between slaves

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[403] Kwame Essien, "A abertura da casa Brasil: A History of the *Tabom* People, Part 1" in Kwesi Kwaa Prah *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 183.
[404] See Sandra E. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

and their captors, hence, returnees' interest in establishing this tradition in communities in Accra. Although wells are still common in small towns and villages in some areas in Ghana today, standing pipes have taken over this technology in Accra and other locations.

Additionally, during the pre-colonial times, Brazilians contributed to trading activities along the Bight of Benin and Gold Coast. They also spread their skills in tailoring and other forms of cloth making. In terms of Otublohum and other coastal areas in Accra, Brazilian merchants contributed to the maritime trade and revenue that was controlled by Ga *Mantsemɛi* prior to the introduction of NJO. During the colonial period they used their farming skills and technology to improve the quality of drinking water in the area.[405] In the post-independence era they served as diplomats, politicians, government ministers, church ministers, educators, tailors, entrepreneurs and sports icons. Indeed, the *Tabom* people's role in nation building is in line with Schiller and Fouron's position on the topic of reverse migrations and the role of returnees in shaping the environment to which they relocate.

During the colonial period, when both the southern and northern protectorate came under British rule in 1901, descendants made contributions similar to their ancestors' during the pre-colonial era. In inland agrarian communities, the early Brazilian settlers contributed their skills through various farming activities. This included the introduction of farm products such as cassava, a carbohydrate called *mandioca* in Brazil, *bankyi* in the Akan and *dwade* in Ga language. A tradition holds that this important crop

[405] CVA 45/49, March 9, 1949, 57.

was introduced around the late 1800s after returnees were provided with a vast area of land. If this theory is true, then it implies that the planting of cassava began in the south, especially Accra, and spread into other regions in Ghana. However, the abundance of cassava outside the Greater Accra region seems to suggest that the crop spread into Accra through rural urban trading.

Aware of the advantages that education and trading gave the wealthy class during their plantation experiences in Brazil, some Afro-Brazilians also invested heavily in the economy of West Africa through entrepreneurship while others focused on their children's education.[406] As underscored before, the decision to invest in their children's education bore fruit many years later. This included the appointment of Francisco Ribeiro, who became a Ghanaian diplomat to the United States.[407]

According to historian Samuel Quarcoopome, although descendants, most notably the second generation, were mainly occupied with assimilating into the local cultures in the Gold Coast and selling the land that was passed on to them rather than continuing with farming practices, they thrived in other areas.[408] During this period of assimilation, descendants integrated into local cultures and devoted their time to tailoring and petty trading, and a number of adults pursued higher education and professions. Education was

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[406] S.Y. Boadi-Siaw, *Brazilian Returnees of West Africa*, in Joseph E. Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 37, 298-303. See also Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayensu, "I am a Brazilian: *History of the Tabon, Afro-Brazilian in Accra," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series*, no. 6, 2002, 37.

[407] In Togo, Sylvanus E. K. Olympio, a grandson of Francisco Olympio da Silva, an Afro-Brazilian slave returnee became the president of Togo, a French colony in 1960.

[408] Samuel Quarcoopome, *The Brazilian Community of Ghana* (Dissertation, University of Ghana, June 1970).See also Roger S. Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule* (Laham, MD: University Press of America Inc.,1999), 70.

also important in the pre-colonial era. In 1894, George Akotey Nelson, one of the members of the second generation, encouraged his children to make education their priority because of the incentives that come with education. He stated that:
"I'd like you to open your eyes well and complete your schooling so as to be able to attend to my needs."[409]

Meeting the needs of one's parents is a common Ghanaian tradition. This cultural practice places responsibilities on adults to fend for their aged parents. There are other problems in broader Ghanaian societies that had effects on Brazilian communities. As in the case of Ghanaian history, division based on class and the rise of the Brazilian and *Tabom* elite groups also caused division within the community.

Clearly, assimilation planted the *Tabom* people deeply in post-colonial structures. In Ghana descendants of Afro-Brazilians have also occupied prominent national positions, including Azumah Nelson "the terrible warrior," the three-time former world featherweight and lightweight boxing champion (1984-1988; 1988-1997). The selection of Mrs. Georgina Wood in June of 2007 as the first Chief Justice of Ghana and the rise of other *Talbom* people to famous positions in Ghanaian society add to this phenomenon.

Similarities and Differences: Identity, Citizenship and Inheritance

For the first generation of Brazilian returnees in the Gold Coast, the situation was no different than it was for other returnees along the Bight. Their assimilation into Ghanaian cultures was difficult, especially regarding language. However, because of

[409] RG 15/1/89, Yawah Per J.M. Aryeequaye v. Joseph Edmond Maslieno, February 27, 1931, 56; Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 3.

similarities between their plantation experiences and the culture of the Gold Coast, it was relatively easy for returnees to adjust to their new environment. For example, both Ghanaians and Brazilians have similar foods, such as cassava (which is called mandioca in Brazil and bankyi in the Akan language in Ghana), beans, plantain and spices. As others have observed, both Ghanaians and Brazilian traders "carry their shops over their head or simply install it over a box or small table"[410] in open spaces at the market. Among the Afro-Brazilian returnee population were masons, carpenters, tailors and shoe makers—professions that were common in Accra during the pre-colonial era.

There were some forces that blurred the identities of different generations that evolved over time and continue to obscure the historical links between *Tabom* communities and Brazil. According to Nii Azumah V, as the new generation of Afro-Brazilians assimilated even deeper into local cultures, and as trading ventures and other forms of activity that fall under a land-based rental economy intensified from the 1920s, a great gulf was created between descendants. Most of these differences were entrenched in social status.[411] All these issues I have outlined, including intermarriage, led to a very important subject of future uncertainties that continues to complicate the notion of voluntary return to Brazil.

Five other key factors help explain similarities and difference between the earlier and contemporary generation and why the history of the *Tabom* people has not become a part of Ghanaian historiography and public school curriculum. These include a lack of

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[410] Marco Aurelio Schaumloeffel, "The links between West Africa and Brazil in the Culinary Art," *Daily Graphic*, 27 May 2004, 14.

[411] Nii Azumah Nelson V, interview with Kwame Essien on 15 August 2005, 2.

continuity in the relationships between returnees across Africa and Brazil, the correlation between intermarriages with the local people and assimilation, the conversion of *Tabom* Muslims to Christianity, [412] the failure by the Ghana Tourist and Monuments Board to preserve "Brazil House" and the "First Scissors House"[413] and the failure of the Board to underscore the *Tabom* people's historical past and their contributions to Ghana's history.[414]

One outstanding ingredient that sustained the base and united the Brazilians and *Tabom* communities in the1830s, and even today, was the decision by the Ga Mantse to appoint Nii Azumah I, a leading member of Brazilian returnees, as the first chief or official leader of the community in 1836.[415] As Ga customs demand, the Brazilian elder was presented with a traditional stool to symbolize the local people's acceptance of the returnees into the Ga traditional area. The initiation also symbolized Asuman's liberation from slavery and ascension to a new throne as the first Mantse of the Afro-Brazilian community. The title of his crown was Nii Azumah I.[416] This tradition of enstoolment has

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[412] The situationfor Brazilian Muslims in the Gold Coast was different from other returnees in other areas of West Africa. For some, a return to Africa offered an ideal opportunity for spreading Catholicism and assisting missionaries to convert Africans to Christianity. Silke Strickrodt, '*Afro Brazilians' of the Western Slave Coast in the Nineteenth Century* in Jose C. Curto and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (NY: Humanity Books, 2004), 227-228.

[413] Marco Aurelio Schaumloeffel, "Tabon: The Afro-Brazilian community in Accra," *Daily Graphic*, 3 June 2004, 14.

[414] Nii Azumah Nelson V, interview with Kwame Essien on August 15 2005, 3.

[415] See chapter two, "The Role of Brazilian Chiefs and their Importance."

[416] Elder George Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, January 7, 2009, 2. For succession of *Tabon* chiefs see See Marco Schaumloeffel, *Tabom: The Afro-Brazilian Community in Ghana*, 2nd Edition, Bridgetown, Lulu.com, 2008, 41 ; Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayensu, "I am a Brazilian: *History of the Tabon, Afro-Brazilian in Accra," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series*, no. 6, 2002, 50-52.

become a vehicle for uniting the *Tabom* community and for forging alliances with other ethnic groups in Ghana. As stated before, descendants from other family trees have challenged the selection of only the Nelsons as chiefs in the community. Since 1839, five *Tabom Mantse* and *Manye* (queen mothers) have occupied this prestigious traditional position.

Although it is uncertain how the first generation of Afro-Brazilians differed in terms of ethnicity and race, it is clear that in the subsequent generations the *Tabom* people were not free from the class and religious conflicts that their ancestors dealt with. For instance, in Ghana, both generations created a social class system within their communities in which the wealthy class disassociated themselves from the working class. A somewhat similar argument could be made about the first generation, especially the merchants among the population. However, this would not be very visible in Accra considering their small population size at that time.

As other population groups from diverse class or social backgrounds, Brazilian colonies were also confronted with divisions along class lines. However, both the upper class and lower class among the population embraced education to some extent. The wealthy merchants who were part of the first generation were identified by their European clothes and hats and enrolled their children in European schools, while children of poor returnees and those who objected to European education attended Islamic schools in their communities. It is important to note that Brazilians with no formal education ensured that their children became educated so they could serve their parents in some capacity, especially in their old age. Descendants who got this kind of motivation moved

to the city or abroad to acquire education. One of the descendants asserted that he traveled to the Bights in 1920 to learn Engineering.[417]

Due to class disparities and other issues in Brazilian colonies, the second generation in particular became entangled in various legal disputes over land in some areas of Accra. In addition, members of both the second and third generations disputed the validity of their leaders and contended over inheritance when it was time to select a new *Tabom* Mantse after the death of their former leader. Due to divisions among them, the stool (traditional throne of a *Tabom* Mantse) remained vacant for eighteen years.[418]

The *Tabom* people did not think along the same lines as their ancestors. Their understanding of land use was different and they saw the connection between power and land somewhat differently. On the one hand, there were the early settlers who perhaps went through a form of trauma and oppression as slaves; and, on the other hand, the next generation only experienced British colonial rule at the dawn of the twentieth century. Indeed, the two experiences or circumstances cannot be directly compared. As slaves in Brazil, the early settlers were well informed about how slave owners exploited their captives and denied them access to land and property.[419] It is apparent that a number of the descendants saw the intrusion of others into their community for land and the endless

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[417] RG 15/1/89, April 23, 1931, 56.

[418] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, January 10, 2009, 1.

[419] Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A study in Development of Brazilian Civilization* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), xxvii, 107. See also Hebe Mattos, "*Terras de Quilombo: Land Rights, Memory of Slavery and Ethnic Identification in Contemporary Brazil* in Livio Sansone et al (Eds.), *Africa, Brazil and the Construction of Trans Atlantic Black Identities* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2008), 295-304; Frank L Zephyr, *Dutra's World: Wealth and Family in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro.* Sanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004, 70.

conflicts in court as a threat to their own survival. Therefore, they ensured that a clear distinction was established between various families with ties to Brazilian returnees to protect their inheritance.

This meant that instead of thinking broadly as a unified community, descendants from the 1920s on sought radical ways of identifying both as Afro-Brazilians and as citizens of Ghana. Literally, this way they could benefit both ways. As a result, the traditions that had elevated communal relations began to erode. A degree of apathy surfaced thereafter. For instance, farming activities placed their forebears on the pedestal of agricultural economy in most areas in Accra, especially Adabraka where it is believed that they planted a large mango plantation. However, their influence began to dwindle as a number of descendants sold greater portions of the land that was originally meant for farming to non-*Tabom* people who had migrated to Accra to learn skills such as tailoring, among others.[420]

Part of this section shows distinction between the ways in which the older people and the younger ones constructed their identity and accounted for their history. Based on the central thesis of my study, a larger portion of the younger generations is more removed from the history of their forebears. One of my arguments is that assimilation obscured *Tabom* people's knowledge of their ancestral past and widened the gap between their experience as Ghanaians and their heritage. The second generation as well as their children and grand-children have made Ghana their home for over a century. Most of the integration has been influenced in areas of marriage and socialization. The unsuccessful

[420] NAG, Divisional Court, STC 17/4/12; 22/08/1888, Mattier v. Aryichoe.

attempt by the elders of the community to visit Brazil for the first time has also made it difficult for the younger generation to fathom the reality of a second ancestral homeland in Brazil.

As this section articulates, there were other major cultural differences between the Brazilians and their descendants. Regarding the issue of citizenship, the author in no way suggests that the descendants of Afro-Brazilians have given up their Ghanaian citizenship for a Brazilian one. Rather, the goal of this argument is to show that descendants are not homogenous. They have a range of views about their past and the *Tabom* people also hold a stream of ideas about their future. Stark diversity within the community is reflected in the ways they identify. Indeed, the first generation identified or presented themselves as Brazilians and not the people of the Gold Coast. Their descendants did the opposite. Oral traditions frequently use Brazilians to describe returnees and their children who were born around the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Court cases such as Plange v. Brazilians, J. E. Maslieno v. J. A. Nelson in November of 1945 and others have shown a similar trend.[421]

As noted in chapter two on oral traditions, it has been established that the name "Tabom" emerged during the early interactions between the people of the coastal towns in Accra and the returnees. Although it is believed that the word *Tabom* was derived upon arrival in the early 1800s, this explanation is inconsistent with the names that were used to describe the first generation in various court documents. They were simply referred to

[421] NAG, Divisional Court, STC 2/4/21, case of Plange v. Brazilians and NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Fiscian v. Nelson and Basmaty, 20/7/45, 8.

as the Brazilians. In other words, there is no correlation between the use of Brazilians and that of *Tabom*. Earlier scholarship used Brazilians (Afro-Brazilians is used by the author to fit into recent terminology for black Brazilians), but recent work employs *Tabom/n*. However, a number of those who were born in Ghana between the late 1800s and the 1940s testified as Brazilians.[422] It is uncertain why these variations exist.

According to the late George Aruna Nelson, a leader of the *Tabom* community, his father, Henry Azumah Kwaku Nelson, of Brazilian descent who was born in Ghana often identified as Brazilian but practiced the culture of the Ga people. Elder Nelson, who is part of the second generation, was born on April 6, 1917. He recalled that his parents did not speak Portuguese but Ga and other local languages. Brazil and Portuguese were therefore two intertwined mythical spheres of influence in Elder Nelson's life as a teenager. They shaped his memory. The elder claimed he heard about Brazil, but as a child he knew more about the Gold Coast. As an adult, Nelson saw himself as a Ghanaian of Brazilian descent or part of the Ga community rather than a "direct" member of a "remote" culture in Brazil. Indeed, he, like many others embraced their Brazilian identity as well.

Elder Nelson was 91 years at the time of the interview and during this time he was recovering from a short illness. He pointed out that one of his immediate wishes was to visit Brazil before his death.[423] Because Elder Nelson was so frail, I was assisted by his son, Ricky Nelson, his grand-daughter, Aishatu Nelson and one Asua, a representative of

[422] NAG, Divisional Court, STC 2/4/59, Jemima Nassu Ore v. Basel Mission, 3.

[423] Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, January 7, 2009, 2.

the chief. Sadly, the elder did not see his dream come true. The old man died on April 7, 2009 a day after his 92nd birthday—about three months after my last interview. Elder Nelson was another important figure in the community. His death was a pivotal point in the *Tabom* story. This important interviews that covered issues ranging from the origins of the first settlers, land disputes, significance of the remaining or new historical monuments in the community, the future of the *Tabom* people and scores of others, was arranged by the *Tabom* chief. Perhaps he was aware that the elder was in the last stages of his life. The old man's information has enhanced this chapter and others immensely.

There are other ways Brazilians differentiated themselves. It is significant to note that Afro-Brazilians dressed in European attire such as suits and hats. From 1900s on their descendants—the *Tabom* people did not always follow all the tenents of their forebears in terms of their religious beliefs or the ways in which their ancestors lived. In fact, since the current generation have immersed "completely" into Ga cultures, it is sometimes difficult to separate a Ghanaian of Brazilian descent from those who are not.

Like most Ghanaians, descendants of Afro-Brazilians often use or have three names. For a Ghanaian, the first name is often has Christian or European origin. Middle names such as Ama, Kofi, Esi, Kwame, which are associated a day of the week the person was born, or names of a relative or family friend are also used. The surname or last name is often traced through the patriarchal lineage. For most *Tabom* people, the first

name follows the Ghanaian tradition. Brazilian names such as de Souza, da Silva and others are also common as in the case the *Aguda's* in Benin, Togo and Nigeria.[424]

In terms of the names of Brazilians and the *Tabom* people they come in all shades and form. According to Aishatu Nelson, the eloquent 26-year-old granddaughter of Elder George Aruna Nelson, the easiest way to differentiate a "Tabom" from a Ga person is to ask for one's middle name.[425] What one of the outspoken descendants is suggesting is that every "Tabom" carries Muslim middle names. In fact, this is not always the case. The name "Aishatu" itself is used by both Muslims and non-Muslims, especially people from the Northern Region of Ghana who have no ties to the Brazilian tree. During my first interview with Aishatu Nelson, she did not agree with the Elder, her grandfather, about some aspects of their history regarding how or why the first settlers chose the Gold Coast. The 26 year old descendant has become the leading voice among the current generation. Based on my numerous interactions with the *Tabom* people in Accra, it will be safe to conclude that Aishatu has developed more passion and interest in her Brazilian heritage than any of the descendants her age.

For religion, it is significant to underscore both Islamic and Christian traditions in Brazilian colonies in Ghana. My interactions with *Tabom* Muslims in both Accra, Ghana

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[424]Ubiratan Castro de Araujo, *The Atlantic Connection: History, Memory and Identities* in Livio Sansone et al (Eds.), *Africa, Brazil and the Construction of Trans Atlantic Black Identities* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2008), 323,327. See also Solimar Otero, Orunile: *Heaven is Home*, 2-8; Robin Law, *Francisco Felix de Souza in West Africa, 1820-1849* in José C. Curto Paul E. Lovejoy (Eds.), *Enslaving Connections…,* 187-198, 230-234.

[425] Aishatu Nelson, interview by Kwame Essien, January 1, 2009, 1.

and in Lagos, Nigeria as well as my participation in the burial service of Elder Nelson in a Christian church provided useful insights.

Afro-Brazilian slaves in Brazil did not only carry their skills and work ethics from Africa with them, but they preserved their Muslims identity and used it as an instrument for mobilizing, congregating for worship and rebelling in the plantations. A number of Brazilian scholars have underscored the significance of African retentions to the survival of slaves in Brazilian plantations, especially the slave rebellion of 1835.[426] After returnees were deported to various locations in Africa, they did not have to revolt as they did in Brazil. In the Gold Coast, they continued practicing as Muslims without any restrictions. [427] As in the case of Brazil and the Gold Coast, Muslim religious practice persisted in Lagos, the Brazilian Quarters at Bamgbose Street and other locations in the Bight.[428]

For the *Tabom* people's religious identity, aspects of these practices such as *Shango* have been preserved. According to Elder George Aruna Nelson, this religious ritual, which was passed on by the first generation, is still practiced by some members of the community.[429] The *Tabom* people's Muslim identity, especially their middle names—which include Mama, Salami, Abiana, Azumah have also been preserved for posterity

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[426] João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835 in Bahia* (MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993) 38-47.

[427] João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835 in Bahia* (MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), xii, 40-52; 139-151.

[428] Muneer Akolade, (a member of Brazilian Olosun Social Club/Brazilian Gees, Lagos-Nigeria) interview by Kwame Essien, July 2, 2009, 1.

[429] George Aruna Nelson, interview by Kwame Essien on August 3, 2008, 1.

sake. Certainly, a larger portion of descendants are Christians although they maintain some names as Mama or Mahama, Aishatu, Aruna and others that are typically associated with Hausa or Muslim names in Ghana.

In the Gold Coast returnees did not compromise their religion despite the dominance of local religions and the emergence of Christianity along the coast. During my earlier interviews with Nii Azumah V, he made it clear that although a good number of descendants embraced Christianity in the early 1900s because of the strong Christian presence, that transition could not erode their Muslim identity that was passed on from one generation to the next.[430] British historian, John Parker, has emphasized that "the arrival of the Tabons from Brazil in 1836 [a year after the uprising] represented the first influx of Muslims in Accra."[431]

Although some elements of Brazilian heritage, such as their Muslim identities were preserved by the first generation of returnees as Parker points out, this vital identity began to crumble when their offspring became consumed or overwhelmed by local Ghanaian and western cultures after the death of the older generation.[432]

One of my visits to the community in Accra brought me into contact with *Tabom* Muslims who either became Christians at one point or embraced Islam when they were growing up. This population worships with other Ghanaians in mosques that have been built for followers in the community, or they have their own private places of worship on

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[430] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 1, 2007, 1.

[431] John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000), 164.

[432] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 2.

their compound. A similar visit to the Brazilian Olosun Mosque on King Street, Lagos, Nigeria which was built by Brazilian returnees in 1865 and was rebuilt by their descendants in 1966, confirmed how former slaves preserved an aspect of their religion which they carried back to Africa. According to Muneer Akolade, the *Aguda* people in Lagos and other areas along the Bight of Benin not only safeguarded their faith but they converted people in Lagos and its surrounding neighborhoods.[433]

During my participation in the late Elder Nelson's funeral service which was held at St. Mary the Virgin Anglican Church, Asafoatse Nettey Road, Accra on July 10, 2009, I found out that in 1917, Elder Nelson was baptized at the same church where the service was held. According to Mantse Nii Azumah V, who is also a Christian, an Anglican, there are many *Tabom* people who either identify as Muslims or as Christians. In fact, the *Tabom* people boast of one of the members of the community who became the Anglican Bishop of Accra. Other studies have provided a good coverage on this subject.[434]

As part of the ways in which people of Brazilian descent perform their identities or make strategic choices when it comes to choosing or embracing their ties with Ghana or Brazil, it is important to re-examine the position and motives of the *Tabom* people again this time through the arena of sports. The engagements between the *Tabom* people, The Brazilian Embassy and the Ghanaian government took an interesting twist in the summer of 2006 during the World Cup Soccer tournament in Germany when the Ghana

[433] Muneer Akolade, (a member of Brazilian Olosun Social Club/Brazilian Gees, Lagos-Nigeria) interview by Kwame Essien, July 2, 2009, 1, interview by Kwame Essien, July 3, 2009, 1.

[434] Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayensu, "I am a Brazilian: *History of the Tabon, Afro-Brazilian in Accra," Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series*, no. 6, 2002.

national team, the Black Stars, played Brazil in the elimination series. Although Ghana lost to Brazil in her first World Cup appearance, the splendid performance by the Black Stars and the fact that Ghana was the only African country to qualify to the knock-out level, gave the country a great deal of respect all over the World. During this period, Brazilian media outlets discussed the interesting connection between Brazil and Ghana in the context of slavery and abolition in Afro-Brazilian history.

In the past, Ghanaians were known for supporting the Brazilian national soccer team because of the popularity of Pele, the legendary Afro-Brazilian player whose skills have influenced soccer in Ghana and other parts of the globe. The other reason is that the Ghana Black Stars are referred to as the 'Brazil of Africa' due largely to their imitation of the Brazilian soccer style. The story was different when Ghana had to play Brazil in the elimination series. Indeed, many Ghanaians showed their support for the Black Stars. Which side did the *Tabom* people take? Is it fair to expect the *Tabom* people to make a choice or is it possible for them to embrace both teams?

A number of journalists from Ghana and others including Monica Yanakiow from *Oglobo* newspaper in Brazil visited the *Tabom* people to find out the significance of the game to the *Tabom* people. During an interview, Nii Azumah V related that, "As a chief, it was difficult for me to declare his support for either Ghana or Brazil." According to Nii Azumah V, he and some members of the community were "torn" between the two nations because of the history the *Tabom* people have with both countries. Nii Azumah V put it simply this way, "Born, bred and educated in Ghana all my life, my mind is on

Brazil but my heart is in Ghana."[435] The position of the chief in some ways amplifies the idea that there is a multiple strategic identity in the community—one that was torn between the mind and the heart as the *Tabom* Mantse contends.

Indeed the *Tabom* leaders have successfully completed one of their economic goals after convincing the Brazilian Embassy, the Ghanaian government and foreign donors to rebuilt the old Brazilian House which is now "Brazil House: Cradle of Tabon People." However, the *Tabom* people's future visit to Brazil as they continue to imagine the "fatherland" will require a great deal of adjustment and a great deal of awakening, which can be quite disturbing to them.

A compelling observation is that the current descendants of Brazilians in Ghana have ample knowledge of their ancestral past but their assimilation into Ghanaian cultures makes it difficult if not impossible for the communities to refashion their identity as both Ghanaians and Brazilians. It is important to add that although a section of the current generation aspires to embrace both identities, they do not deny that they are Ghanaians first. My findings have led to the conclusions that a disconnection was or has been created by what seem like a "distant memory" of Brazil: there is a lack of deep rooted details about their ancestors. This has made this research a daunting undertaking.

Inheritance in Brazilian colonies follows the traditional customs of Ga people. Men take the role of leaders of the family after the death of a father or a husband. They

[435] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 5, 2007, 2. I am yet to inquire about how the *Tabom* people reacted to the 2009 World Under 20 Youth Soccer match in Egypt. Ghana beat Brazil this time.

use the properties they inherit to provide basic needs of the family. In some cases, the brother of the deceased takes care of the family when there is no male child. Women were not assigned this role because of the position they occupied particularly in broader societies in general. Men who took over this position used any form of wealth or properties in their care to support the family. They are also required to take care of the widow.[436]

In situations where a will was not made, descendants and various family members gathered around the father on his sick bed to ask questions about his properties and how they should dispose them. These men were also asked if they owed anyone money or any form of debt. This was important to avoid future disputes or litigations of any magnitude after his passing. During the final days of George Akotey Nelson, one of his children, who had immersed into Ga cultures asked his father to disclose a private transaction between them. He asked in Ga, "Ata negbɛ nsika lɛ yɔ"?
This translates: "father where is my money"? Apperantly his son gave him some money to keep so he wanted to ensure that the transfer was settled or clarified in the will he left behind to his brother, S.Q. Nelson .

Who is an 'Authentic' or 'original' Tabom in the twenty-first century?

In the early 1900s, especially during the latter stage of the first generation, a number of non-Brazilians who aspired to associate with the rich Brazilian history adopted innovative strategies to meet these goals. As court records show, some local people took

[436] RG 15/1/89, April 30, 1931, 26.

advantage of land disputes to claim ties to the Brazilian tree because the name "Brazilians" had become a buzz word that was synonymous with land acquisition, amassing properties and court disputes.[437] Indeed, those with true ties to the Brazilians were able to show their heritage in some cases, while others made up stories with the goal of gaining access to resources, especially land at Akwandor and other isolated areas in Accra.[438] A similar trend emerged in the mid-1940s as the second generation had to challenge other local people who trespassed on Brazilian lands.[439]

In the post-independence era, especially from the 1970s until today, these contestations persisted as the new generations sought to control properties that once belonged to their forebears. A more recent example, which I discuss in detail in chapter five, is the tension that developed after the "Brazil House" was opened for tourism in November, 2007.[440] As this chapter pointed out, the current generation's continuing claims to their Brazilian heritage has opened up other doors. As a result, a number of Ghanaians with no evidence of any ancestral connections to Brazil have "infiltrated" the *Tabom* communities for self-serving reasons.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to show another chronological development in Brazilian history from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods in Ghanaian history

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[437] CVA 45/49, March 8, 1949, 10.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Ibid.

[440] There is ongoing debate about which *Tabom* family has to manage the Brazil House (see Appendix F and the chapter on tourism).

particularly transformations that took place in Brazilian colonies after the demise of the first generation. The focus was on the ways in which the first generation created a separate nation or colony within Accra and supported the communal endeavors of different family members in the initial stages of their settlements.

As an extension of the previous chapter that underscored the history of the Afro-Brazilian returnees from the time they arrived in the Gold Coast in the early 1800s, I highlighted socio-economic and cultural transition from the first to the second generation—most of the members of this population were born in Ghana. How the first group related to their children and passed on their skills in farming, fishing, tailoring, digging wells and transferred their properties and Muslim religion to the second generation is also discussed in this chapter.

I briefly showed how the early settlers engaged with Gas and their leaders, especially how Ga Mantse Komeh I presented the early settlers with an area of land which formed an integral component of the *Tabom* identity. The story goes that the returnees were offered a large virgin area of land for farming and for settlement purposes. In the mid 1800s until the 1920s, the Brazilians and their descendants put the land to good use and contributed to food production in Accra and its neighboring communities. A reference by one of the leaders of the community and evidence that was provided by plaintiffs and defendants in various court cases between 1885 and 1964 established that the land was located around Fonafor Valley and Akwandor. This is now part of central Accra around Accra Polytechnic, The Examination Council of Ghana, the Ghana

National Archives towards Tudu, Adabraka and part of the Accra-Nsawam road around Kwame Nkrumah Circle.

The chapter also traced the life of the Brazilians along settler communities on the coast and those in inland areas. Also, it examined activities within the community itself, motivations for preserving their Brazilian cultures and identity—and lack of interest thereafter; and how the first generation negotiated their presence and interactions with the people of Accra. Excerpts from the epigraph, "Brazilian community of Accra has been at all times subject to Ga customary laws" sums up the general feelings of Brazilian descendants.[441] This provoking comment among others demonstrates the extent to which descendants identified or connected to Brazil and Ghana simultaneously.

In my endeavors to reconstruct Brazilian history in Ghana, I show how the subsequent generations' pursuit of land titles created tensions among them. Aspects of the chapter mainly examined the processes by which descendants gradually abandoned their ancestor's tradition of living on farmlands where they practiced agrarian lifestyles rather than living in coastal areas of Otublohum as other returnees. Indeed, living further away from busy coastal towns and business metropolis promoted a sort of social detachment which influenced this group of returnees and descendants to live as a separate community from the Ga people and other neighbors.

This analysis does not deny that a number of settlers lived along the coastline in close proximity with the Gas. Rather, I placed emphasis on descendants' systematic shift from farming practices which their parents and grand-parents sustained, to landlords, rent

[441] CVA 40/58, January 27, 1958, 32.

based communities and property managers on the land they inherited. Migrations to urban areas to learn tailoring and trading in beads in order to make better income also took place. Acquiring education in Accra and other cities also shaped the tempo of multiple movements and settlements in Brazilian colonies as well as their legacy.

To take this issue further, ample evidence shows that as the elders of the community passed away most of the lands which they possessed with the agrarian traditions they maintained for a period of time gave way to new professions that included tailoring, trading in beads which were imported from Europe and the Bight of Benin, and for the latter generation house rentals and property management.[442] Put differently, the decision by the succeeding generation to migrate and learn new skills in Accra, instead of continuing their farming traditions, in my opinion altered the legacy of the Brazilians. Moreover, skills in tailoring benefited just a small portion of the descendants—especially, Elder Nelson, the Morton's who have two major cloth making businesses in Adabraka and other locations in Accra: Dan Morton Tailors Limited as well as Isaac Morton and Sons Tailoring. Clearly, the dedication of the Morton's to their ancestral inheritance benefited them in major ways, particularly financially.

In terms of diversity within Brazilian colonies, it is significant to note that Afro-Brazilians dressed in European attires such as suits, hats and used their skills in farming as well as their knowledge in digging wells in order to provide the community with good drinking water.[443] As the court cases show, a good number of their descendants worked

[442] Nii Azumah V, interview by Kwame Essien, August 5, 2007, 1.

[443] CVA 45/49, March 9, 1949, 57.

side by side with their parents on farmlands and other jobs such as tailoring or dressmaking. From 1916 on their descendants—the *Tabom* people—did not always follow all the tenet of their forebears in terms of their religious beliefs or the ways in which their ancestors lived.

Indeed, there was a shift in the *Tabom* history in Ghana in the early 1900s. The original Afro-Brazilian settlers who migrated to the Gold Coast retained most of their slave plantation features such as the Portuguese language and welcomed their kinfolks who relocated to other countries in West Africa. They also assisted new Brazilian returnees and visitors to the Gold Coast, but the same thing cannot be said of the new generation. A striking difference between the first generation Brazilian returnees and those I characterize as the Ghana's Brazilian group (contemporary descendants) was that, while the former maintained aspects of Portuguese and Brazilian traits in terms of language and dressing, the latter group integrated fully into Ghanaian languages and cultures through decades of intermarriages. The divergence is unmistakable today in their adoption of the Ga language and how they embraced Ga festivals such as *Homowo*. *Homowo* is an annual cultural celebration by Ga people and their neighbors in the coastal regions of Ghana.

This chapter also explored aspects of Ga culture and tradition of the subsequent generations. Descendants were much more aware of the impact of local Ga cultures on how they refashioned or negotiated their identities. One of the descendants, Enoch Cobblah Codjoe who is believed to be a veteran of WWII, placed the subject of identity in a proper perspective. In effect, he evoked the influences of Ga cultures on descendants,

and in doing so he likened his generation Brazilian identity to a kind of mirage when he declared forcefully, that, "there is no Brazilian custom in Accra different from the Accra custom; the custom applicable to the Brazilian is the Accra custom in all matters."[444]

This statement demonstrates the consequence of mobility to a returnee community. Clearly, Codjoe was only confirming some realities within the community—the fact that returnees and their offspring did not share the same experiences and cultural aspirations. They lived distinct lifestyles. The testimony also sets up a dialogue for examining how close or distant returnees and their descendants associated with Ga cultures. Additionally, this conversation is necessary for understanding transitions that occurred in their history when the first generation ended.

Although this chapter raised more questions than it provides answers, this chapter is significant for various reasons: First, it allows for the reconstruction and the continuation of the history of the first generation to show how their patterns of settlements and migrations differed from their descendants. Secondly, a lucid understanding of life within Brazilian colonies provided a space for our understanding of how the Afro-Brazilians used the land Ga *Mantsemɛi* gave to the returnees, how both the early settlers and the second generation organized their communities particularly and how they related to Ga leaders and Ga people in general. Thirdly, it showed how Brazilian chiefs carried out their authority and how their power and influences differed from the roles of the Ga Mantse and chiefs, particularly how British rulers responded to or ignored these two groups. The third element was treated in depth in the previous chapter.

[444] CVA 40/58, December 31, 1956, 12.

A component of the Brazilian and *Tabom* tree as well as the branches that sprouted from the early period of settlements was emphasized to show their converging and diverging points. Variations in the Brazilian tree and the *Tabom* tree were explored to shed more light on the multifaceted components and how this history evolved in the twentieth century on. By and large, the complex ancestral lines of Brazilians—the Brazilian tree, intertwined by different branches and cultures made the process of identifying the actual populations of Brazilians problematic.

On the other hand, the constant movements of descendants allowed the local people of Accra to witness multifaceted trajectories of the Brazilian presence in the area—either from Lagos to the coastline or from Brazilian farmlands in remote areas to the coast—and vice versa. In this regard, the history of Accra was vital in the reconstruction of Brazilian history because it showed how it shared a striking resemblance with the Brazilian story. Put differently, Brazilian settlements and the growth of both the Brazilian tree and the *Tabom* tree in Ghana, the British presence, and the "politics" of Accra gave these three dynamic forces a character of its own and shaped Brazilian and *Tabom* accounts.

The converging and diverging trajectories between the first generation and their descendants were also explored. In a profound way, the diverging point marked the end of one generation and the beginning of another. For instance, unlike the first generation, who preserved their Brazilian cultures and traditions such as the use of the Portuguese language and names as well as the wearing of European suits, hats and dresses, their descendants did not continue the traditions. According to Ghanaian historian Samuel

Quarcoopome, the subsequent generation assimilated into the cultures of the then Gold Coast around the early 1920s, intermarried with the local people and, as a result they became Gas more than Brazilians in many respect.[445]

Indeed, as Brazilians married Ga women children in this union were raised mostly in Accra where they gradually became Gas. The adoption of Ghanaian cultures and traditions in general brought a great deal of comfort to the *Tabom* people. In fact, it offered them the opportunity not only to inherit properties but to bring lawsuits against members of the community, Ghanaians, colonial officials and expatriates who took over Brazilian lands.[446]

There were positive sides to assimilation especially in the ways in which Brazilians and their descendants challenged those who intruded on their lands, how they made contributions to Ghanaian societies and the prestigious positions they occupied in Ghanaian religious circles, educational institutions, sports and politics. In both colonial courts and the Native Tribunals—legal stations which were established by the British in the late nineteenth century, descendants' fluency in the Ga language enabled them to contest with local Ga people who threatened to take their inheritance. The chains of lawsuits and counter-lawsuits extended to other territories as well. Even the Ga Mantse Tackie Tawiah, who according to the Brazilian narratives was aware of land Mantse Komey I offered to the first generation had to appear before both court systems to show

[445] Samuel Quarcoopome, *The Brazilian Community of Ghana* (Dissertation, University of Ghana, June 1970).

[445] LS No. 214/1956, November 21, 1956, 1.

why he had the right as the king of Accra to reclaim stool lands that descendants claimed belonged to their forefathers.[447] (see chapter 4)

Despite misgivings about transformations within Brazilian communities after the demise of the early settlers, both Brazilians and their descendants made strides in other areas which include farming, technology and tailoring among others. Descendants on the other hand, contributed to socio-political structures of Ghana after the end of British colonial rule. These achievements brought a great deal of respect and attention to the *Tabom* people. For instance, when Georgina Theodore Wood was selected as the first female Chief Justice in Ghana, the leaders of the community and the Ghanaian media highlighted her Brazilian roots. At the new Brazil House at Otublohum, Wood's picture is included among a host of prominent people from the Afro-Brazilian community.

In terms of religiosity in Brazilian colonies, as this chapter demonstrated about religion among the population, the *Tabom* people are not a homogeneous society. They came from diverse religious, social and cultural orientations and their identity largely depended on how a particular family preserved or passed on the history of their forebears from one generation to the next. *Tabom* families with Christian influences used their Brazilian names, but because of ongoing assimilation, such prominent names as the Ribeiro, de Souza and others are also gradually fading out.

Despite the availability of information about the religious identities of the Tabom people some questions still remain. As noted earlier, for future research, scholars have to identify the actual origin of the first generation of returnees and find answers to questions

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[447] SCT 2/4/19 Vol. 8, Tackie v. Nelson, September 29, 1892, 1-4.

regarding their actual ancestral location prior to being captured to Brazil. This would enable scholars to locate the actual identity of the returnees—in terms of their African origins and how that informed their identities and locations of settlements. Were they originally from the Gold Coast or were they part of another community in Africa? What portion of the returnee population were Muslims before, during or after their captivity?

For the effects of silences on the reconstruction of the Afro-Brazilian experience in Ghana, these omissions or attempts to sever the past from the present have a lasting impact or limit the methodological approach in the reconstruction of the *Tabom* history.

This chapter faintly highlighted how descendants became divided after lingering lawsuits and counter-lawsuits as they sought to reclaim portions of land that were legally or illegally sold to non-members of the Brazilian community. The next chapter provides details about conflicts over land and how they created ripple effects for future problems within Brazilian communities. Part of the argument in chapter four is that conflicts within the community, beginning at the dawn of the twentieth century, set up grounds for future disputes over the selection of leaders to represent the community and the management of property such as the *Brazil House*. Current conflicts have also created apathy in the community –hence, a lack of interest a large portion of the population about the importance of their history. The next two chapters provide insights into this discourse.

The next chapter clarifies how Brazilians carried out commercial and farming practices which a number of Ghanaians of Brazilian descent often made reference to during their appearance in colonial courts and Native Tribunals.[448] During this time, the

[448] CVA 45/49, March 8, 1949, 40.

acquisition of land and other properties became synonymous with a Brazilian heritage. In some cases, witnesses were forced by the judge to establish the authenticity of their ties to a Brazilian family tree. This approach prevented non-*Tabom*'s from making false claims to inheritance to land and other properties.

Figure 4: Nii Azumah V (third from left) with the elders and some members of the Tabom Royal 'Family' dressed in traditional Ghanaian royal costume.

Picture taken at the Brazil House Accra on July 21, 2008 during author's visit to the new tourist site

Figure 5: Members of the Nelson family dressed in a traditional Ghanaian kente

Chapter Four
Myths and Realities: Court Cases, Lawsuits and Disputes over Land

Introduction

"Land granted to Brazilians has not been apportioned to groups or families, or heads of such groups or families and that the whole land is vested in in him as Chief of the Brazilans…Since 1946 he as a Chief of the Brazilians has distributed and shared Brazilian land among them."[449]

"All Brazilian settlers who originally farmed on any portion of the land granted to the Brazilian community continued the farming during their life-time; and on death their respective successors continued cultivation by farming."[450]

"No, it is not true that when the Brazilians were given the land [by the Ga king] it was given to them as one group; they were five groups. Yes, the five groups together constituted the Brazilian community."[451]

"I myself used to farm on this land. It is about 40 years ago since I last farmed. Yes, I heard about the suit…I know that litigation affected all Brazilian Families which owned land North of Farrar Avenue, where the land in dispute is situated"[452]

Chapter four examines the origins of Diaspora in Reverse with a focus on the Afro-Brazilian community, the *Tabom* people in the Gold Coast. The epigraph provides a backdrop for the complex exchanges and relations that existed within the Brazilian communities during the transition from the end of the first generation in the early 1900s

[449] CVA 40/58, March 13, 1953, 43.

[450] CVA 40/58, Madam Sarah Clegg v. Emmanuel Drissu Cobblah, April 12, 1956, 8.

[451] CVA 40/58, January 23, 1958, 21.

[452] CVA 40/56, January 27, 1958, 32.

to the subsequent generations. It also provides an insight into the role of the Chief, the leader or king of the community, and it pays particular attention to the myths and realities within the community, especially multifaceted issues relating to land acquisition, distribution and transfer.[453] This chapter argues that the first generation had a different ideology about family and communal relations and that conflicts in the past help to explain current disputes within the *Tabom* community over which family owns the new *Brazil House*. It posits that these lawsuits, especially, those that were brought before colonial and local courts, shows unity among the first generation. It also shows how this sense of harmony evolved into conflicts over time that had ripple effects on the subsequent generation. The first generation banded together in terms of the way they related to each other in some situations, perhaps because of the shared struggle and experiences with oppression in plantations in Brazil.

The chapter intends to critique the illusion of creating a separate Brazilian community in the mainland and the intersection between a degree of unity among the early settlers and their descendants. The chapter continues from the previous one and makes references to a number of conflicts within the community. First, a section on memory is included to show the meeting point between fantasy of an imagined ancestral homeland and the reality of the tension and rejection by the local people. My study of tensions in the past provides a context for explaining disputes within the *Tabom* community after the demise of their forebears.[454] The chapter argues that the *Tabom*

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[453] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Nelson v. Ammah and Aruna, 14/10/39, 28.
[454] NAG, Division Court, STC 2/28/ 1949, Nii Azumah III v. Larikie Aruna and Kankle Kofi.

people's assimilation into Ghanaian societies beginning in the 1920s weakened communal activities and obscured their ancestral history after the demise of their forebears. This phenomenon is not unique among descendants of African slaves who gained their "freedom" in the Atlantic world after the demise of slavery.

Another section documents a number of court cases over land and other properties that the second generation inherited. (see Appendix D) These conflicts not only assist in the construction of a chronology about the returnee community, but it provides a path for our understanding of the distinction between the first generation (1835-1915) and their descendants as viewed by their cultural and traditional norms. Descendants either trace their roots through *Naabi* or *Kyerbi*, a Ga word which means matrilineal linage or patrilineal lines, respectively. The characterization about inheritance is important, because it shows how gender lines were constructed and how power and space were also allocated. Divisions within the community after the demise of their ancestors also helps to explain the foundation of lingering differences over leadership roles and properties— between various families that form the "Afro-Brazilian tree."

Overall, this chapter provides a prism for understanding how both the Ga people and non-Gas attempted to occupy part of the disputed land. Legally, a number of non-*Tabom* people gained access to land in this area by purchasing them from heads of *Tabom* families or *Tabom* chiefs, who were the rightful representatives of land sales.[455] Also, the land dispute began when other heads of family or individuals, who traced their

[455] NAG, Divisional Court, STC 15/1/89; 27/2/31 Nelson v. Nelson.

ancestry to Afro-Brazilians, ignored long held traditions that were passed on by the first generation.

Based on my interactions with some mebers of the community, I characterize an aspect of the Brazilian experience in the Gold Coast as myths, because the narratives presented often by the descendants do not have strong historical evidence. Some of these testimonies are not only inconsistent, but they are sometimes fabricated for various, self-indulgent reasons. Sometimes these sequence of events and stories about their past, which are largely entrenched in oral traditions, are overstated to draw more attention to the community. Paternalistic attitude and responses during some of the interviews also show attempts by some members of the community to showcase the history of a particular family. The responsibilities of the historian to reconstruct the history of the *Tabom* people using broader interpretations and analysis.

This chapter highlights accomplishments by the early "settlers" who are believed to have been born in Brazil, but who relocated to the Gold Coast after the official abolishing of slavery in Brazil in 1888. Most significantly, the study specifically explores conflicts within the various families that formed the Brazilian community from the early 1900s after the death of most of the leading members of the first generation. They include the families of Mama Nassu, Alluna, Maslieno, Nakpala and Danberka.[456] Unlike other settlements in Benin, Togo and Nigeria with Portuguese names, the names provided to the court did not have any distinct Brazilian or Portuguese characteristics. In fact, besides

[456] Ibid.

Maslieno, which is a name the closest to Lusophone African roots, from a contemporary lens the remaining names could be placed within Islamic
religious categories or within a Hausa ethnic cultural framework.

The section chronicles disputes that emerged over inheritance and property that are significant in many ways. The reconstruction of disputes also helps to explain the genesis of Afro-Brazilian history in the Gold Coast and further clarifies the transformation and transition that took place as the new generation sought to refashion their identity both as descendants of Afro-Brazilians and as people of the Gold Coast. Furthermore, these court cases, especially lawsuits that were carried out by the *Tabom* people against one another and against non-members of the community, provide a sketch of the Afro-Brazilian family tree in the Gold Coast. Furthermore, it shows how along with the Ga people, the local people in Accra also made attempts to reclaim some of the lands that Nii Tachie Ankrah, the Ga chief, allocated to the Brazilians, when he welcomed the first generation to the Ga traditional area in the mid 1800s. Overall, this analysis provides researchers and Ghanaians an insight into the complex history of the *Tabom* people.

Oral traditions and interviews conducted so far show that most of the returnees settled in the Gold Coast at the dawn of the twentieth century. They moved back and forth along Afro-Brazilian communities around the Bight of Benin (Benin, Togo and Nigeria) for various reasons which included trading and visits to other family members

along the West African coastline.[457] In the Gold Coast, the Brazilians or the *Tabom* people, as they were called during that period, became aware that a return to their ancestral homeland did not necessarily guarantee an acceptance by the local people who spoke different languages and had different cultures. Existing literature and oral traditions converge and diverge on some levels in terms of the reasons for why they chose the Gold Coast instead of other regions in the Bight of Benin. One version holds that they made this decision because of trading opportunities. Another school of thought uses the transatlantic slave trade to explain migrations to the Gold Coast. This group claims that ancestral ties to Africa were the driving forces that influenced the first generation to join the exodus to the Gold Coast. For the current generation, ties to Afro-Brazilian ancestry are based either on *Naabi* or *Kyerbi*.

The demise of the first generation of Afro-Brazilians, which could be dated to around the early 1900s in the Gold Coast, gave rise to conflicts and disputes over land and other properties that were either given to the Brazilians voluntarily by Nii Tackie Ankrah or those that were accumulated by their ancestors through their hard work as farmers, tailors, technicians and as entrepreneurs.[458] There are other explanations to the conflicts that erupted among the descendants. The idea of offering free land to the returnees is based on Ga people's long history of hospitality in the area. This aspect of the Ga culture might have convinced the first generation that its community and offspring could carry the same generosity by extending it to the future generation of Brazilians in

[457] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Fiscian v. Nelson and Basmaty, 20/7/45, 8.

[458] Alcione M. Amos and Ebenezer Ayensu…, 42.

the Gold Coast. Other reasons for creating stringent boundaries among the first Brazilian communities might have stemmed from an illusion that their descendants would follow in the footsteps of their ancestors. This dream was short-lived as the second generation became divided, self-centered and turned against each other, and as they contested with migrants and local people in the Ga traditional area.[459]

For the current generation, inheritance was not necessarily a curse in every situation. To some degree it was a blessing in disguise for it motivated a number of the descendants to seek other innovative paths to amass wealth outside the community. As stated earlier, some of the descendants flourished in a wide range of fields, though there were a variety of conflicts. Lawsuits were multifaceted and consisted of a number of land sales, purchases and entangled family disputes. Witnesses who purchased or were given free land included both descendants of Brazilians and people of the Gold Coast, who seemed to be unaware of the complex history of Brazilians and the intricate court procedures until summoned to testify before a Judge. Most of the local witnesses were migrants or those who either migrated to Accra from different regions, especially the Akans, and the Ga people who were the original owners of the land in dispute until their Chief gave it to the Brazilians about a century earlier.

In some cases, these “innocent” migrants who were entrapped in the land disputes shared stories about how they lost lawsuits over land they purchased from descendants of Brazilians or Ga people, who had had access to land in the disputed area. They had to repay for the same land through a different sales person until they were able to acquire

[459] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Fiscian v. Nelson and Basmaty, 20/7/45, 34.

some legal documentation.[460] In short, descendants washed their "dirty linens" in public courts, as each group attempted to prove their blood-ties to Brazilian returnees to the Gold Coast.

Few of the court cases were presided over by British colonial officials and lawyers from the Gold Coast as well as Sierra Leone. The colonial representatives sent a mixed signal about the role of a Brazilian Chief, the leader of the Brazilian community. Sometimes these chiefs are accorded high respect and power. On some occasions their traditional authority—the ability to use their power to settle or make decisions about land issues—was placed on the backburner.

As pointed out, disputes over land varied and they ranged from intra-conflicts—ones between Brazilians and Brazilians—to those between Brazilians and non-Brazilians. Court cases between 1889 and the periods prior to Ghana's independence in 1957 provide details about land disputes as the current generation sought to reclaim lands that were legally or illegally sold to both *Tabom* and non-*Tabom* people. The documents also explain how the older generation amassed wealth through farming and other activities, as well as the kinds of crops they cultivated both for sustenance and for sale in the market.[461]

The litigations that were brought before the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast, Eastern Judiciary public lands division and the Native courts had a number of things in common. They often challenged the defendants for trespassing and for claiming lands,

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[460] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Luttrodt St. Yawah v. Maslieno,15/1/56, 13.

[461] Ibid.

which the Plaintiff's, most of them, descendants of Afro-Brazilians who claimed ownership to land, passed on to them through inheritance. Some of these cases were based on multiple transfers and purchases with or without a land title or deeds. Other disputes were created after the British colonial government took over some of these contested lands for social infrastructures such as roads, government buildings and for other public use, either with or without the consent of the original owners.[462] What seemed like unjustifiable colonial policies forced some landowners to make claims of other nearby lands. This also generated new disputes and heightened existing tension.

Aspects of these court cases highlight attempts by the descendants of Afro-Brazilians to explain the significance of documents or the justification for not having a land title or deeds. Oral tradition shows that the first wave began in the early 1800s on through the end of the nineteenth century—about 50 years before Europeans met at the Berlin Conference in 1888 to split the entire African continent into pockets of "regions" for Western imperialism. Although the Gold Coast did not experience colonial rule officially until the dawn of the twentieth century, the British had a "permanent" hold of the area that became known as the Gold Coast (excluding the Northern territories), which they controlled and influenced socially, economically and politically. However, there is no evidence suggesting that the British made any official laws that regulated the ways in which the Ga chiefs related to their neighbors or foreigners in their community in terms of how to share their wealth, especially land in the area under Gold Coast territory.

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[462] Ibid.

I argue that land titles and deeds are part of colonial inventions, one of the policies that were enforced after colonial rulers created institutions like Native Courts, schemes such as "indirect rule" and devised the idea of a Chief.[463] Indeed, one could argue that local chiefs in the area did not foresee British colonial intrusion, and therefore they did not make provisions for documents that would suit the colonial standards and policies of the Native Courts that would become the instrument for colonial projects. The point is that descendants of Afro-Brazilians, who petitioned the courts for the right to keep their land, property and other inheritance that they claim were passed on to them, explained that their forebears were not bound by any laws before the emergence of colonial rule requiring owners to carry titles for the land they owned. According to one of the court accounts by Henry A.K. Neslon, who inherited land from his father, "when the Brazilians arrived each family did not carve ownership of a portion of land by occupation out of the common land of the Brazilian community. Mere cultivation of cassava on another's land [sic] does not create title or effect title."[464]

For the descendants, they were more interested in winning their cases and negotiating or navigating through the colonial system than they were in preparing legal documents to protect their properties in the future.[465]

Lawsuits and the court narratives were often incoherent: there are complications over land that according to oral traditions was given to the first generation upon arrival;

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[463] See Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizens and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[464] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Fiscian v. Nelson and Basmaty, 20/7/45, 32.

[465] Ibid.

and there is ambiguity in the court cases under this study, especially the exact location of the land that was offered by the Ga chief and the actual size of these plots. A number of cases suggested that the land that was allocated to the Brazilians stretched across the Aburi-Accra road. Most of these arguments were presented by representatives of the Aruna family. Others point to a location in central Accra. Structural issues that complicated court cases include the role of colonial policies and Native Courts, especially in the proceedings and interpretations of colonial and local laws.

The court cases had different components and covered a broad spectrum of issues among various families with ties to Brazilian returnees. There were two dominant family groups, the Nelsons and the Aruna's. Both made a claim that they had the right to regulate Brazilian land or lead the community. The Nelsons were more concerned with cultural traditions such as the role of the Brazilian Chief, the main leader of the entire community, and his authority. The chiefs were selected in the Nelson family based on some form of arrangement by their forebears. The Aruna family, on the other hand, occupied themselves with land issues and as such took on the responsibility of "policing" intruders and regulating land sales. They initiated most of the lawsuits in court and Madam Hawa a member of the Aruna family is believed to be the first woman in the community who acted as the Head of the family. It is believed that Hawa could not reign for a longer period mainly because of her gender and her old age.

Lawsuits included but were not limited to failure by one party to allow the other to carry out their responsibilities. For example, Maslieno from the Aruna family sued Chief John A. Nelson, for selling land to people after providing Maslieno with Power of

Attorney—the permission for people to carry out a task on another person's behalf. Intra-family conflicts in particular suggest that subsequent generations did not necessarily have close relations with others with ties to Afro-Brazilians. Nelson and Fiscian, for example, could not completely agree on their common lineage though they belonged to the same Brazilian stock. There were disconnections between descendants in agrarian communities too. In some cases, descendants acknowledged that other families lived close to their land, but they had a little to say about their common ties to the Brazilian settlers.[466]

There are complex interpretations to the role of a Chief and the Head of families. Witness accounts, like the one by Charles E. Reindorf a medical practitioner who bought a piece of land from Maslieno, suggest that although the Brazilians had a Chief other land transitions were carried out with the approval of Heads of family. In the case of Fiscian and Maslieno, they often ignored this traditional protocol and appointed themselves as the leaders of the Aruna family concurrently. These two individuals, the self-appointed land agents, got along very well when it served their self-interest, but they opposed each other whenever they were unable to have more control over land sale.

Since land title and deeds were not introduced to the Brazilians when they first arrived most of the members of the first generation did not pursue or acquire any legal documents mapping out the exact boundaries of the land. Because of these nuances, Judges who handled cases about land disputes were compelled in some situations to either adjourn a case before them or request a long line of witnesses to testify until they achieved a level of clarity. As a result, most of the lawsuits were postponed many times

[466] Ibid.

until a compromise was reached or a judgment was passed by the court. A more complex case was sometimes tossed back and forth between colonial legal institutions, Native Courts and Public Land Tribunals, which are often supported by local Ga chiefs until a fair compromise is reached.[467] These "recycled" cases often ended up before the colonial Supreme Court again. Other problems that delayed the cases include the authenticity of some of the exhibits that were presented before the courts. Intense interrogations showed that most of these photographs, maps and documents were "contaminated" creating various doubts about their validity.

The courts cases under this chapter will include but not limited to King Tachie v. Nelson, Millers v. Victoria Van Hein, Nassu v. Basel Mission, Nelson v. Ammah and Aruna, Luttrodt St. Yawah v. Maslieno, Nelson v. Nelson, Nelson v. Amisah, Mattier v. Aryichoe, Plange v. Brazilians; and Fiscian v. Nelson and Basmaty. These court cases tell us how properties were allocated to the Brazilians and how they were transferred to the next generation.

The court cases also shows how other migrants in the Gold Coast, like the Brazilians, also contested over space and various forms of property as they also appealed to the court to grant them access to land which most of them either purchased or rented from younger Brazilians and the Ga people. Like other legal matters, the complex nature of the litigations created other forms of lawsuits. Plaintiffs and Defendants who were

[467] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Fiscian v. Nelson and Basmaty, 20/7/45, 32

unsatisfied with verdicts by the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast filed for appeals or took the case to a Native Court or a Public Tribunal.[468]

Regarding the cases I have stated earlier, it became clear during one of the interrogations that Fiscian, Maslieno and others were involved in dubious transactions. They mostly ignored policies regarding land sales and transfer. Their schemes succeeded because they were in close contact with government and local officials, such as land inspectors and surveyors who prepared illegal documents, drawings, deeds and titles.

In general, members of the Brazilian community and government employees acted as go-betweens for the community, the land administration, the public and the courts. These individuals often manipulated the system for economic gains.[469] For example, two Brazilians, Fiscian and Maslieno had infamous records for transferring the same land to multiple people. They also had a record of appointing themselves as representatives of the Aruna family. On one occasion, when conflict erupted between Maslieno and Yawa Aruna, a Brazilian, Fiscian was selected by the Elders of the Aruna family to lead the community. As this chapter demonstrates, disputes over land varied from one case to the other but were mainly centered within the geographical regions where it was believed Nii Tackie Ankrah I gave out land to the early settlers. In some cases, some of the dispute ended after the land was confiscated by the colonial authorities

[468] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, case of Plange v. Brazilians. 2/4/21, 3.

[469] Ibid.

or during the period when the Brazilians were compensated, after they appealed to the Supreme Court for some form of reimbursement.[470]

Tabom Chiefs and Land Tenure

As noted earlier, court documents on land disputes in the Brazilian community said little about the role of Brazilian chiefs. Few documents highlighted instances in which these leaders appeared before a judge to explain the boundaries of Brazilian land or to emphasize that they were the only ones among the descendants who were given instruction by their forebears to decide how a particular land could be used.[471]

Furthermore, at the advent of British colonial rule, land issues and disputes were carried out mainly by local chiefs, community leaders and family heads. Brazilian chiefs settled disputes and "protected" Brazilian land. In a number of court cases, *Tabom* chiefs reminded the British that they were trespassing on Brazilian land or needed to compensate descendants for land that were used for colonial projects.[472]

The impact of colonialism, property rights, land issues, the role of local Kings and chiefs in resisting colonialism in the Ga traditional area is underscored to explain how these important accounts shaped and reshaped Brazilian history in Ghana in the nineteen century on. According to the late Elder George Aruna Nelson, Brazilian lands were a symbol of power and prestige for most returnees and their descendants because of the

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[470] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Luttrodt St. Yawah v. Maslieno for lands, 15/1/56, 2.

[471] CVA 12/52, March 13, 1953, 44.

[472] CVA 45/49, March 9, 1949, 68.

role it played in the formative years of their history in the Gold Coast. They included the use of land for farming, digging wells and for building tailoring shops and housing for rent. Two of the court cases included in this chapter involved conflicts between Brazilian Chief Nii Azumah III who appeared in court to either defend his community or to challenge members of the community who made claims of their right to land tenure.

Court Case (a): Isaac Cobblah Fiscian v. Henry Asumah Kwaku Nelson and Sohby Baksmathy

The case presented by Isaac Cobblah Fiscian, the great-grand-son of the late Aruna and the leader of the Aruna family against Henry Asumah Kwaku Nelson and Sohby Baksmathy, was about an area of land that became known as the Akwandor land in Accra. This case was presented to the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast land division. Fiscian claimed that his family controlled the land after it was allocated to the Brazilian community, and that therefore the court should have prevented other Brazilians from having access to the area. Nelson and Baksmathy, on the other hand, argued that Akwandor land was part of the land that was given to the entire Brazilian community, and that therefore the court should have ruled on their behalf.[473]

What is fascinating about this case is that whereas the plaintiff pushed for total control of the land, the defendants attacked the authority of Fiscian, arguing that he had no respect among his own people and therefore could not bring up such a lawsuit. The court records show that Nelsons father, G.A. Nelson owned a piece of the land in the Akandor area which he converted from farmland for growing crops to a garden. The

[473] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Fiscian v. Nelson and Basmaty, 20/7/45, 12.

difference between farmland and garden was not clear in this case, but one interpretation was that Nii Azumah II, the chief around 1856, gave G.A. Nelson permission to use the land as a garden to grow flowers instead of using it for planting mangos and crops for sale on a large scale, as most Brazilians did in this area.

The land dispute was far more complex than an argument over a type of plant. The other dimension had to do with other buildings that were erected legally or illegally by the Nelsons. To strengthen his case Nelson stated that his father built a house for the family and later handed it over to his children. The Nelsons also challenged claims by Fiscian that he witnessed the erection of the building in the 1920s and was aware of its sale in 1945.

After a lengthy exchange in court, the court ordered the defendants to provide documents including land titles and deeds to prop up their claims of ownership through inheritance. The case took a sharp turn when the Judge ordered a clerk and a land surveyor of the Deeds of Registry in the Gold Coast to clarify how the Nelson transferred the building to Baksmaty, the second defendant. The testimony by the town engineer showed that although the building was transferred legally, there were safety concerns about the durability of the material for the project and the fact that the building went beyond its original boundary. In short, the Town Council ordered the demolishing of the building, but it was not carried out for reasons unknown.[474]

Fiscian, the carpenter described his confrontation with intruders of his family land which began in the 1920s, perhaps before the demise of the first generation. According to

[474] Ibid.

the court records, the dispute with the defendants persisted for almost twenty years because the lawsuits were taken to both the Native Courts and the Supreme Court. Indeed, such lengthy litigation would require a lot of resources, time and money to sustain it. For the last court case in 1945, Fiscian was pressed to push for a quick resolution, because Nelson was in the process of completing another project on the disputed plot. What provoked Fiscian was the news that Nelson had already sold the new project to Baksmaty—meaning Fiscian had two battles on his hands.

There were other interesting ironies about the case, because Fiscian could not seek help from the Lawyer Bossman, a man known for winning court cases. A kind of "commitment triangle" made this dream impossible. Bossman could not take the case because of some complication: Fiscian and the Nelsons shared the same Brazilian roots; and Bossman was married to the Nelsons daughter. In the local traditions of the Gold Coast it was a taboo for people to sue their in-laws even if they petitioned a court on behalf of a client, as in the case of Bossman. Completing the triangle, Fiscian and the court found out that Nelson hired his son-in-law, Bossman, to prepare documents for transferring the building to Baksmaty. Fiscian felt betrayed by his old friend Bossman.

Recounting his childhood experience, Nelson explained to the court that in the 1890s, he lived with his father, old man Nelson, who ploughed a large area of land where he lived and planted cashew trees and cultivated cassava. According to Nelson, he and his other siblings requested land from his father, which he used to build a house in 1922; he later rented it to people.[475] Nelson notes that Fiscian had moved to Accra during that

[475] Ibid.

time, and therefore he had no knowledge of what occurred in the area in dispute. According to Nelson, his conflict with Fiscian started when Fiscian and the Town Council complained about his plans to put up new buildings on the site his father gave him and after he gave his property to Baksmathy, the second Defendant. Fiscian challenged claims by the Nelsons that they had land beyond the area where Nii Azumah I built his first and only house. He also disputed the argument by the Nelsons that they acquired most of the land through a will passed on by Nii Azumah I.[476]

In his closing statement, the counsel for the Defendant, N.A. Ollenu underscored the contradictions in the testimony by Fiscian, especially the authenticity of his role as leaders of the Aruna family. This conclusion was based on a lack of evidence or support by any member of the Aruna family to confirm his position. Ollenu was convinced that the Nelsons clearly showed that none of the property in question was owned by any individual family in the Brazilian community, such as the Aruna's presented to the court. Ollenu accepted Brazilian traditions that gave the Chief authority to make decisions about land but not the Aruna family. Ollenu also supported the Nelson's claim that the original Brazil land was not divided among the Heads of family.

Before Judge Caussey read the final verdict, he announced that long years of land dispute in the Brazilian community had both psychological and physical effects on Maslieno who spent about 20 years of his life contesting with the Nelson family over land. Judge Caussey also stated that the Nelsons had the right to demand a title for the land to avoid a future harassment by the Aruna's or other interest groups. Although the

[476] Ibid ,18.

Judge could not accept evidence that the late Nelson provided the land to his children in 1915, he was convinced that his son, Nelson, used the land to build another house in 1924 to rent. The Judge concluded that the Fiscian family should have challenged the Nelsons much earlier when they started their project. Finally, the Judge ruled on behalf of the Nelsons and asked Fiscian to pay all fines.[477]

As pointed out earlier, the court cases oscillated from one end to the other like a pendulum. Fiscian filed an appeal immediately on the basis that the Judge failed to provide evidence that the Aruna's were not the rightful owners of the Akwandor land, but all the Brazilians. This case continued for many years, but the judgment remained the same.[478]

Court Case (b): Nii Azumah III v. Larikie Aruna and Kankle Kofi

The land dispute between the three individuals, Nii Azumah III, Larikie Aruna (both members of the Brazilian community) and Kankle Kofi, was also presented to the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast public lands division. In case (No. 769/48) Aruna, the plaintiff sued Nii Azumah III, the Chief of the *Tabom* community for interfering with land sales. The lawsuit demanded £ 25.00 in damages for Kofi, whose land was seized by the Chief and sold to another person. Aruna claimed that the elders of his family approved the transaction, because they did not need the Chief's approval for allocating the land of their ancestors to Kankle Kofi, a non-Brazilian. This case in particular

[477] Ibid.

[478] Ibid, 64-65.

underscores nuances in the authority of a Brazilian Chief who is often selected from the Nelson *We*.

Indeed, the Brazilian community was divided over this issue. Most of the members of the Nelson family, the only group that are appointed as chiefs, gave their support to the Chief, Nii Azumah III, whereas others including members of the Plange family who trace their lineage through the *Naabi* line supported the Aruna's. The Plange family traces their roots to Adsuma Maryamu Matta, a prominent Brazilian who also joined the exodus.[479] During the early part of the twentieth century in the Gold Coast, colonial policies placed more weight on class and social status. Therefore, social issues were determined through this lens.

Before passing judgment, the Judge, Nii Kwei Kuma II questioned why there were no high level representatives from the Nelson family to prove that the Chief had their blessing under Brazilian traditions to take back land that was sold to non-Brazilian by a Brazilian. Also, the Judge pointed out that, "No Elder of the Brazilian community who made him [Aruna] the Head of the community called to prove that the land in dispute was vested in him during his election and installation as advanced by him."[480]

The Judge also challenged the authority of the Brazilian Chief for not showing any documents and land titles to the court as a justification for taking over of Kofi's land on behalf of the entire Brazilian community. In fact, the Judge was suspicious of the

[479] Alcione M. Amos…, 55

[480] Nii Azumah III versus Larikie Aruna and Kankle Kofi 2/28, 1949, 62.

witnesses from the Plange family for presenting his cousins, instead of neutral members from other family lines.

The Judge reminded the court that colonial policies and Native Laws share some things in common: they both recognize the significance of land titles in lawsuits. This point may have been overstated. Based on this argument Nii Kwei Kuma II found Nii Azumah III guilty and was asked to pay the fines by Aruna. The case was the first court case that handed down a guilty verdict against a sitting *Tabom* Chief.

Court Case (c): Nii Azumah III v. Larikie Aruna

The civil appeal court case (No. 63750) which was presented to Chief Justice Mark Wilson (a British official) and Judge Acolatse (from the Gold Coast) on April 9, 1952 was similar to other litigations that were brought before the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast, in the public lands division. The case between Nii Azumah III versus Larikie Aruna is another case where two people of Brazilian ancestry sued each other. In this case Nii Azumah III re-emphasized that the land in dispute was given to members of the Nelson family prior to the death of his father. Aruna, on the other hand, argued that the land belonged to the Aruna family. Both Azumah and Aruna did not have any state approved document or maps that clearly showed the rightful owner of the land in dispute that would have simplified the work of the Judge.

As stated earlier, chieftancy traditions both within the Brazilian and the Ga community allowed Nii Azumah III, who was selected from the Nelson family, to act as a leader of the entire Brazilian community. Nii Azumah III not only exercised his right as a chief but as a concerned citizen of the Gold Coast who supported law and order in his

community. The Chief made a compelling case before the court that he had a responsibility to protect his community, and at the same time he had the right to endorse land transactions or allocate free land to anyone he preferred.[481]

According to the civil appeal court, the lawsuit that was brought forth by Nii Azumah III was in line with colonial policies as well as land distribution and acquisition laws in the Gold Coast. The court noted further that Aruna provided conflicting evidence before the court about how her family gained ownership to the land, which most Brazilians believed was passed on to them for farming. The court therefore stated that Aruna had no right to the land except for farming purposes, since she was also of Brazilian descent. Aruna was ordered by the Judge to pay fines both to the court and to Nii Azumah III.

Court Case (d): J.E. Maslieno v. J.A. Nelson

Another intra-conflict court case, (No. 77/1950) was between Maslieno, who claimed he was the leader of the Aruna family and Nelson from the Nelson family. This was also presented before the Supreme Court of the Gold Coast, public lands division. The litigation was also about trespassing on Brazilian land and who had the right to live on the land. The plaintiff, Maslieno sued Nelson for £ 25.00 as damages for trespassing on his land—selling it to a man called Pinnock without Maslieno's approval.

Prior to the final judgment in the case, representatives from the court were sent to the site, which is believed to be the current location of the West African Examination Council, The Ministry of Information, The National Archives of Ghana and the Young

[481] Ibid.

Women's Christian Association in central Accra. This visit established that the location was the original land which the Ga Chief allocated to the Brazilians. Other details by the court suggested that not all members of the second generation owned part of it, especially the Nelsons. As the record shows,

> "Although according to the statement the Defendant is a Chief for the Brazilians but his father had no land allotted him likewise the Defendant himself consequently the Defendant failed to show his father's portion or his own…The Councillors were satisfied that the spot where the Defendant sold to one Pinnock was portion of Plaintiffs father's land in his charge and therefore decided that the Defendant had had committed a trespass and the land must go back to the Plaintiff with damage of £ 10.00."[482]

In short, the court challenged case (No. 63750) where Aruna was asked to pay Nii Azumah Nelson III for trespassing. By and large, conflicts over land in Brazil during this period shows that descendants contested over the same land which their ancestors told them were given freely by the Ga Chief.

The Court Cases and its Historical Significance

There is insufficient evidence to show that the Ga Chief gave the Brazilians land in multiple geographical areas. Based on this argument and the conclusions that emanated in some of the court cases, this study posit further that: 1) these cases were contested over the same space and site; 2) there were flaws in the court proceedings and the verdict—in the first case the Judge concluded that the Nelsons were rightful owners of the land, but

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[482] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, J.E. Maslieno v. J.A. Nelson, 16/11,45, 1.

in the second case the assumption was that the Nelson's family did not own any land in the area. This verdict also underscored the fact that Chief's within the Brazilian community did not have jurisdiction over other families with ties to Afro-Brazilians.

What is striking about this court case is that the evidence provided by both Maslieno and Nelson contradicts aspects of oral traditions and written records that argues that the first generation of returnees were offered free land by Ga Manche or Chief Nii Ankrah.[483] According to the narratives by the descendants of the Afro-Brazilians, the returnees were not provided a free land during their first interaction with the Nii Ankrah. Instead, they requested an isolated land to dig wells to provide them with fresh drinking water, because most of them had infections and stomach problems after they were introduced to water in Otublohum, their first location of settlement along the coast.[484] The Brazilians called water drilling in this area "Mungatabu", which according to oral traditions means "we have found water."[485] It is not known if this is a Brazilian-Portuguese word, a local Gold Coast word, a common word from the Bight of Benin, where the returnees often visited or a word derived from a combination of both or all these locations.

Another piece of evidence that was provided before the court shows part of the Brazilian history in the Gold Coast, especially on matters relating to how they acquired

[483] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, August 3, 2008, 1.

[484] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, J.E. Maslieno v. J.A. Nelson, 16/11, 45, 11.

[485] Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson, interview with Kwame Essien, August 6, 2008, 1.

land in Accra. The report showed that the land in question was distributed to the "original" members of the Afro-Brazilian community that first arrived.

There are some similarities in the oral traditions and existing literature about how the *Tabom* people were offered a land by the Ga Chief. However, archival records from the court cases suggest that the Brazilians were offered land by the Ga Chief to reciprocate various gifts the Brazilians brought to the Chief, the royal family and his people during their frequent interactions along the coast.[486] Another translation by Elder George Aruna Nelson, the oldest member of the current community, is that the Brazilians acquired the land because of their skills in tailoring.[487] The dominant theory is that Afro-Brazilians who were able to travel along the Bight of Benin for trading purposes had a regular contact with leaders of Ga traditional areas, especially those in the Otublohum area because they exchanged goods and were involved in slave trading. In my opinion, the long history of migrations in the Ga traditional area might have influenced this exchange.

Other elements that complicated court proceedings occurred when the parties took the stand. Although they went to great length to provide the court with historical evidence supporting their claim to the land in dispute, it was obvious that there was a disconnect between the information they provided and the knowledge court officials had. In fact, even some of the witnesses who claimed to be part of various Brazilian families had

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[486] NAG, Divisional Court, STC, Isaac Cobblah Fiscian vs. Henry Asumah Nelson and Sohby Baksmathy, 20/7/45 2.

[487] Elder George Aruna Nelson, interview by Kwame Essien August 10, 2008, 1.

somewhat little knowledge of their own history. This thread runs through interviews I have conducted with members of the community.

Isaac Cobblah Fiscian's case against Henry Asumah Kwaku Nelson and Sohby Baksmathy is also problematic. The details provided by Fiscian not only chronicles the history of the first generation Brazilians and the various families that forms the branches of the "Brazilian tree" but it brings to the fore how colonial projects interfered with Brazilian property in the Gold Coast. Fiscian talks about the ways in which the British colonial rulers took some of the land for constructing roads, lanes and other social projects for colonial ventures. His account of land allocation extends beyond the geographical boundaries of Adjabang Valley, Fonafa Valley and Kibbi-Accra road, where oral tradition confirms that the Ga Chief allocated land for the Brazilians.

As a descendant of Brazilians, Fiscian's childhood account of growing up in the 1920s suggests a shift of paradigm—from one that highlights a sense of unity among the first generation, especially those who were offered free land by the Ga Chief, to one that debunks this idea and establishes a discourse of individualism and tension among the first generation. During one of his cross-examination Fiscian affirmed that Mama Sokoto and Azumah were the first leaders of the Brazilian community. Sokoto is believed to have migrated from Nigeria.[488] Also, Fiscian's report emphasized the various skills of his ancestors from Brazil especially in farming—although he could not tell whether his great grandfather, old man Aruna had farmlands or was a farmer. Like other descendants,

[488] CVA 12/52, Peter Quarshie Fiscian and Mary Fiscian v. Nii Azumah III, March 13, 1953, 42.

Fiscian also confirmed that he sold part of the land his family inherited to both descendants of Brazilians and non-Brazilians legally and illegally.

Fiscian's testimony also transcends oral tradition and written records when he points out to the court that the first generation did not cluster within a given space after they were allocated the land. Rather, Fiscian debunked the notion of communal relations. Fiscian forcefully argued that Brazilian settlers in the mid nineteenth century promoted values of individualism and competition.[489] Fiscian's analysis challenges existing accounts that largely speak otherwise, especially the claims by the Brazilian chiefs in the court records.

Another element that stands out in his testimony was his emphasis on other returnees who moved to the Ga traditional area during this period. He stated that there were a number of West-Indians from the Caribbean who rented rooms from some of the houses that were contested by the Brazilians. These West-Indians may include migrants and technicians that British officials invited from the Caribbean region.[490] Fiscian also talked about the first generation's involvement in slavery when he explained how Mama Sokoto could not transfer property to the slaves she owned.

However, what was missing in Fiscian's detailed version was his ability to tell exactly where each member of the first generation occupied and farmed. Fiscian's account contradicts the Nelsons' and others in the sense that he was convinced that only the Aruna's used Amusadai land. These specific answers could have enhanced the courts

[489] Ibid.

[490] Jeffrey P. Green, "Caribbean Influences in the Gold Coast Administration in the 1900s," *Ghana Studies Bulletin* No. 2 (December 1984), 11-16.

understanding of the complex nature of land dispute in the area. There are other testimonies that shed a light on the history of the first generation. The account by Henry Asumah Kwaku Nelson, like Fiscian's provides other significant information and challenges existing paradigms.

Court proceedings also differed. For Fiscian's account he limited the number of early settlers while the testimony by Nelson in particular raises the number to between 70 and 75 returnees during the first wave of migration. During his court appearance on April 14, 1919, Nelson notes that they included Mama Sokoto but he does not say where the settlers arrived from.

Although Fiscian argued that the first generation Brazilians did not have a communal relation on the land, Nelson stated otherwise. He debunked the idea of a decentralized Brazilian community in Fiscian's testimony. According to Nelson, "the land was not apportioned between them. They shared the land together. A particular family did not settle in a particular spot."[491] However, Nelson does not mention Otublohum as the original area of settlement as others seems to suggest. In fact, Nelson told the court that he spent most of his time at Swalaba, near Otublohum, where oral tradition and written records shows that the returnees built the first Scissors House.

Nelson's account also provided a clearer picture about inheritance, especially properties that were accumulated by the Brazilians outside the contested land. He added that his father left his children with houses at Swalaba and Kokomlemle before his death. Also, Nelson's account provided more information about the size of the plots some of the

[491] J.E. Maslieno versus J.A. Nelson 16/11/45, 29.

Brazilians owned. He claimed his father had four plots about (100 x 100 feet each) at Akwandor that was divided among his siblings: H.A.K. Nelson, Maama G. Nelson, Kobina Nelson and his cousin G.R. Lamptey. There is insufficient evidence suggesting that women in the Brazilian community also inherited land. In some ways, Nelson's details about the size of the land contradicts his earlier account that Brazilians did not have a separate demarcated land—the idea that all land belonged to everyone. In fact, Nelson's specific description rather supports Fiscian's claim that each Brazilian family sought after its own interest.

The case between Fiscian and Nelson also opened up discussion about how the Brazilians amassed property outside Akwandor. Ellen Ashong Nelson, the mother of Nelson and one of the wives of the late Nelson, testified that when her husband was alive, he cultivated his land and planted corn, cassava and other farm products. She told the court that the husband gave his portion of the land to his children and acquired other wealth outside the Brazilian community.

Conclusion

There are insufficient records showing how the first generation transferred land, properties and wills to their children, except oral evidences that were provided by the subsequent generation in court. But oral traditions and court documents show that descendants needed the approval of a Brazilian Chief to transfer land and other properties to other parties.[492] This notion of ownership was challenged by representatives of the Aruna family. Also, the authority of a Chief in the early history of the returnees is not

[492] Ibid, 32.

clear. Unlike, the role of the *Tabom* Chief in the latter half of the twentieth century on, one can only assume that the role of this leader did not have much impact on the other families like the Aruna's who also trace their ancestry to Brazil. In fact, there were confrontations and lawsuits by Brazilians such as Fiscian and Maslieno against Nii Azumah II and Nii Azumah III, both Brazilian chiefs.

Witnesses who acted as land sales agents for the Brazilians, especially Kofi Aduma Bossman, a Ga man, testified that he sold a number of plots in the Akwandor area but had no idea about how the Brazilians inherited the land or the tradition of transferring plots in their community. These testimonies were often robust but lacked cohesion because of how they were presented with or without physical evidence such as maps, titles or other forms of land documents. Other witness accounts also brought to the forefront the lack of unity and transparency within the Brazilian community, as one family after the other turned against each other. The longer the conflict, the easier it was for the exploitation of buyers. Indeed, individuals and family heads who acted as go-betweens for the Brazilians and the Gold Coast community assured interested parties of the authenticity of land sales; yet, most of the cases showed that a segment of the community who were involved in the land deals could not claim the property they had paid for, even after court rulings and intervention of the Native Courts and tribunals.

By and large, discourse about the *Tabom* history uses a broad brush that paints a one-dimensional picture of unity, a sense of cordial relations and friendship between the first waves of returnees to the Gold Coast. According to this line of thought, individualism was not encouraged as in the case of the subsequent generation that it

emerged. Indeed, ample evidence shows that the ancestors of the *Tabom* people had other divisions which were largely based on class, religion and gender. Other arguments for claiming a portion of Brazilian land was based on a long tradition of selling land to non-Brazilians. Such private transaction as oral traditions and the interviews I conducted did not go through the scrutiny of colonial policies, which required evidence of title exchange or deals between the party or parties involved. It is also unclear if the other Brazilian families recognized or accepted Nii Azumah III as the head of the entire Brazilian community in the 1940s, as in the case of the latter part of the twentieth century.

Finally, conflicts over land in the community lessened somewhat in the 1960s as descendants became even more assimilated into the new independent nation of Ghana. In more recent times, conflicts within the *Tabom* communities have extended beyond land disputes to issues relating to property ownership and management.[493] Today, descendants of Afro-Brazilians are faced with how to manage and restore historical sites, such as the *Brazil House* and *Scissors House* which now stand in one of the communities in Otublohum. Since the mid 1990s, the current chief, Nii Azumah V has found creative ways of transforming the historical monuments for tourism. The chief, his elders and members of the community have been successful in generating financial and logistic support for renovating these projects.

As I have stated earlier, restoration of sites in the community is not isolated from other tourist activities. The *Tabom* people have imitated successful tourist institutions and communities in Ghana, and as a result, they have solicited the Ghana Tourist Board, the

[493] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 1.

Brazilian Embassy and UNESCO to invest in their community.[494] (see chapter 5) Conversely, considering the popularity of Elmina and cape Coast castles internationally, the dreams of *Tabom* people require a great deal of planning and investment.

I argue in this chapter that the current challenges confronting the *Tabom* leadership over how or which family has to manage the Brazil House is an extension of the problems their ancestors had over land distribution. For the current generation, they share a number of things in common with their ancestors but they have challenges of their own. As their ancestors, the contemporary *Tabom* communities also have extraordinary skills, which include tailoring. They also play prominent roles in Ghanaian society as diplomats, educators, entrepreneurs and Christian Church ministers. Famous sportsmen such as the former World-Featherweight boxing champion, Azumah Nelson have gained enormous attention in the sports arena and recognition by Ghanaians. President Kuffor's recent nomination of Mrs. Georgina Woode as the first female Supreme Court Justice Judge in Ghana in 2007 has received local, national and international attention, but this recognition has not translated into a more narrow focus on other historical elements such as *Brazil Lane* (a street near the Brazil House), among others and their significance to tourism and Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana. These two "Ghanaian-Brazilians" have made Ghana proud in many ways, yet their communities have been neglected economically and socially.

Another argument here is that like the Ghana Tourist and Monument Board, past

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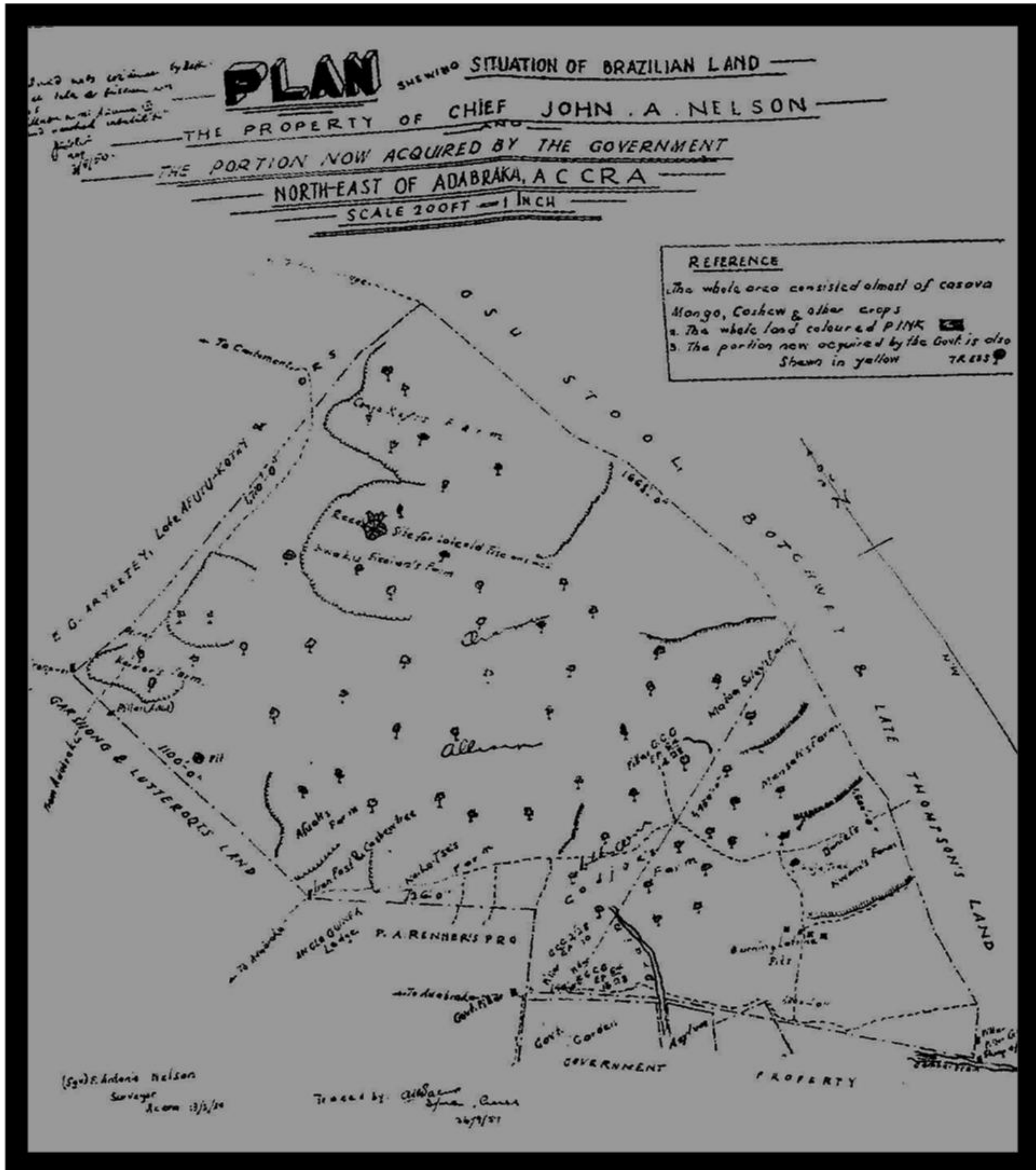
[494] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 2.

Ghanaian leaders have not also fully supported the *Tabom* community in the area of tourism. Rather they concentrate on other annual Pan-African cultural programs such as Pan-African Festival (PANAFEST), Emancipation Day celebrations and tourist activities, mainly at Elmina and Cape Coast in the Central Region and new world heritage sites in other regions of Ghana. Indeed, the *Tabom* people are no longer depending on or waiting for outside help to showcase their rich history and dual identity. Nii Azumah V and his community are well informed about the capitalist ventures that are unfolding in the tourist industry in Ghana. During our interview, the chief did not hide his economic interests. He blamed the Ghana Tourist Board for making it possible for only the people of Elmina and Cape Coast to benefit from revenues generated from the historical monuments in the area while neglecting equally important historical sites in the *Tabom* community, especially the first *Scissors House* at Swalaba which was destroyed by fire in 2007.[495]

[495] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, 14 August 2005, 2; 29 July, 2008, 1.

Figure 6: Part of the Area of land in Dispute



Chapter Five

The *Tabom* People and the Brazilian Government: Preserving the History and Monuments of "Dual Heritage," 1961-2009

Introduction

"It is for me a honor to be received by the highest dignitaries of the *Tabom* people, a people whose ancestors in Brazil never forgot their African origins, but on returning to their birthplace continued to cultivate the memory of the Brazilian nation which they helped to found. The *Tabom* took to Brazil the strength of their arms, their ability hands and cultural treasure which kept up their spirits during the forced exile slavery. Returning to Africa, they brought the novelties which they learned on the other side of the Atlantic: the Cultivation of mangoes, of cassava and beans; irrigation techniques, the knowledge of carpentry, Architecture and tailoring. The returnees also brought Brazilian way of life. In the way they speak, in their festivities, in their cooking and in all the cultural manifestation, we see a little of Brazil. The Brazilian-Ghanaian community of the *Tabom* is a living example of the proud brotherhood between Brazilians and Africans. And Brazil House, the first house occupied by the Brazilian-Ghanaians. Mantse Nii Azumah V, King of the *Tabom*, my brother, our common history symbolizes the capability of human beings to overcome difficulties and suffering and transform them into respect and love for others. My presence here has the purpose of bringing to the *Tabom* people the respect and love of Brazilians."[496]

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, 2005.

"At this juncture, may I express my sincere appreciation to the Brazilian Government for the many efforts it has made towards rehabilitating the Brazil House at James Town, Old Accra. We are happy about this Project which we believe will go a long way to restore James Town to its old

[496] The speech delivered by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva during his first visit to the *Tabom* community on April 12, 2005 in Accra, Ghana.

beauty, and by and large add to the development of this country. The House will also act as a Documentation Center to provide historical information on the *Tabom*, as well as an Official Hall of the *Tabom* Mantse. Your Excellency, I would most appreciate that, added to this project, Brazil considers seriously to support the *Tabom* people specifically and the Ga community in general in such other areas as programs to support street children, the combat of HIV/AIDS, and vocational training and establishment of employable small-scale industries, to support the reduction of poverty among the *Tabom* people and in the country at large."[497]

Tabom Chief, Nii Azumah V, 2005.

The two epigraphs above, the historical speech by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, "Lula," during his meeting with the *Tabom* people and the response by *Tabom* Chief Nii Azumah V, epitomize the transnational and cross-cultural ties that bind Brazilians and Ghanaians of Afro-Brazilian ancestry in Ghana. It also shows aspects of mutual relations between the two groups in their efforts to forge future ties. Lula's speech clearly underscores the contributions of former Afro-Brazilian slaves to the development of Brazil, the skills they provided when they returned to Ghana, and their resilience and pride. His speech also calls attention to the returnees' determination and the descendants' commitment to preserving their Brazilian identity and heritage—especially the *Tabom* people's efforts to restore the 'Brazil House' and other historical monuments in their community.[498]

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[497] Another part of the speech delivered by the *Tabom* Chief, Nii Azumah V during the first visit of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the *Tabom* community on April 12, 2005 in Accra, Ghana.

[498] Nehemiah Owusu Achiaw, 'Brazilian President's Official Visit: Government Honors Lula da Silva,' *Daily Graphic*, April 14, 2005, 24.

Mantse Nii Azumah V's response, in particular, underscores the pivotal place of Brazil in the *Tabom* people's ideation, the role of the Brazilian government in the restoration of "Brazil House,"[499] and the significance of the Brazilian government to the development and maintenance of ties between the *Tabom* people and Brazil. The *Tabom* people hope this relationship leads to improved conditions in the *Tabom* community and the Ga communities where their descendants live. Not only do these two important exchanges highlight past dialogue; they also support the ongoing discussion between groups' vested interests in Brazilian-Ghanaian history and those who have developed new interests in the reconstruction of Brazilian history in Ghana. These groups include the *Tabom* leadership, the Brazilian government and embassy, the Ghanaian government and other foreign institutions including the United Nations Education and Scientific organization (UNESCO).

The *Tabom* people's ancestral heritage, especially monuments, reminds us of the Afro-Brazilian presence in Ghana from the early nineteenth century on. Put together, the competing forces or interests embedded in the above epigraph provide insight into our understanding of Brazilians' cultural and economic interests in Ghana since the post-independence era (after the demise of British rule on March 6, 1957) and what this fledgling dialogue means to the future of Brazilian history in Ghana.

The two eras 1961 and 2007 are both symbolic periods in the mutual relations between the *Tabom* people and the government of Brazil in their quest to forge cultural connections. The former marked the first time Brazil extended or opened diplomatic

[499] Appendix F.

relations with the new nation of Ghana and when they established the first major contact with the *Tabom* community, while the latter is emblematic of efforts to restore historical monuments—the *Brazil House* and others for tourism.

The 1960s in particular were very critical because it was during this period that the Brazilian government appointed Raymundo Sousa Dantas, an Afro-Brazilian, as the first Brazilian Ambassador to Ghana to establish both cultural and economic ties between the two countries. In fact, this was the first time Brazil appointed a Brazilian of African descent to represent the nation abroad. In Dzidzienyo's words, this form of political amendment epitomized the "genesis of the problems located in the contradictory signals characterizing Brazilian presence in continental Africa since 1961."[500]

It was during this period of diplomatic representation that the first "seed" of *Tabom*-Brazilian relations was planted. The fledgling relations between the two countries and the *Tabom* people's mounting awareness of their ancestral homeland in Brazil—especially their plans to visit Brazil for the first time—demonstrate how Dantas' visit, the seed he planted and the exchanges that followed thereafter have germinated over the last 50 years. Indeed, as we shall see later, not all Ghanaians of Afro-Brazilian ancestry shared these ties or consciousness of a "homeland" in Brazil or notions of a cultural bond that binds part of the descendant population to Brazil. It does not resonate throughout the community.

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[500] Anani Dzidzienyo, *The Challenges of Africa and Brazil*: *Looking ahead by Reconsidering the Record* in Kwesi Kwaa Prah, *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series), 19.

Without a doubt, these mixed feelings about an ancestral homeland in Brazil and how they reconstruct their identity helps to explain why the *Tabom* people are still confronted with a host of issues, including divisions in the community that have prompted deeper assimilation into Ghanaian culture. As indicated in chapter 3, the squabbles in the Brazilian colony in Ghana, which began after the demise of the early settler group, still linger. In fact, they have matured and have taken on different characteristics. The ripple effect of past conflicts over land, who should manage the properties they inherited from their forebears, and who among various *Tabom* family trees (those who trace their roots to the original Brazilian tree as noted in chapter 2) has to stifled unity and progress, particularly the *Tabom* people's plans to visit Brazil.

Besides, there are other negative developments that have emerged as a result of these unresolved problems that have carried over from the twentieth century. Clearly, a fraction of the population and the current leadership deserve praise for passing on stories about their Brazilian lineage and for working closely with the Brazilian embassy in Accra to introduce Portuguese language classes in some areas of the *Tabom* community. However, their failure to create a niche for the younger generation in the *Tabom* leadership to serve as a bridge between the older and younger group has left a gap that has complicated their future. To add to this, the failure of most of the older generation to pass their history on to the younger generation, and the younger generation's lack of interest in activities like Portuguese classes, speaks volumes about the growing divide.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the challenges and hostility I pointed out earlier have grown into silences and apathy about their ancestral past that continue to

threaten the future of the community, particularly the reconstruction of their history in Ghana. This will be explained at the end of the chapter as I re-examine the current state and the future of the *Tabom* people—it is against this backdrop that chapter 5 evolved.

Chapter 2 provided a chronology of the exodus of Afro-Brazilian slaves in Brazil to Africa in the 1800s. Most of the slaves who returned to Africa migrated both voluntarily and involuntarily after gaining manumission and after the 1835 slave revolts in Bahia, Brazil while others who returned voluntarily after the end of slavery in Brazil in 1888 also settled in Nigeria, Togo, Benin and other parts of West Africa.[501] Between these two historical periods a number of slaves were deported to the coastal regions of West Africa after they committed various crimes. A fraction of the returnees made the Gold Coast (Ghana) their new home between the 1820s through the 1890s.[502]

While it is not in the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed analysis of the first generation of Afro-Brazilian returnees, it is crucial to recognize their legacy, their contributions as they were echoed by Brazilian President Lula da Silva in the epigraph to this chapter, and the implications of their legacy to the history of the current generation of the *Tabom* people. Their legacy is particularly important to the current dialogue taking place in Ghana between the *Tabom* people, the government of Brazil, the Brazilian embassy, the government of Ghana, and others. This important conversation has carved

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[501] RG 15/1/21, Yawah per J.M. Ayeequaye vs. J.E. Maslino, July 5, 1930, 37-38; CVA 40/58, Civil Appeal No. 12/52, Jemima Nassu & Ors vs. The Basel Mission, March 13, 1953, 42. See also Jose C. Curto and Paul Lovejoy (eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (NY: Humanity Books, 2004), 51.

[502] João José Reis, *The Bahian Background of the African Returnees* in Kwesi Kwaa Prah (Ed.), *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series, 2009), 33-41.

new channels for reconciling historical linkages along both cultural and economic lines and has created a viable bridge between the past, the present and the future, despite the divisions I have explained and the “dimness” of their future.

This chapter seeks to add another dimension of Brazilian history in Ghana to further explain distinctions between the past and the current generations. How these different groups managed, negotiated and performed different elements of their identities for over a century provides another insight into the complexity of Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana. On the whole, it underscores the multifaceted dimensions of reverse migrations or diasporas in reverse.

Indeed, as illustrated in chapter 3, the Brazilian returnees and their offspring shared some things in common, but at the same time they constructed their own characters that converged and diverged along with their unique experiences in both Brazil and Ghana. This chapter will demonstrate the central thesis of my study about the dwindling state of the *Tabom* history. Unlike some of the older members of the community, such as the current *Tabom* Mantse, Nii Azumah V, the late Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson, his grand-daughter Aishatu Nelson and others I have interacted with over the years, a large portion of the current generation, especially the younger population, remain distant and removed from the history of their forebears.

Therefore, chapter 5 provides a chronological progression of the Brazilian colony in Ghana since Dantas visited the *Tabom* people in 1961 and highlights aspects of the transnational economic and cultural networks that have been established between Brazil and Ghana since the 1960s. This chapter argues that the African Diaspora extends beyond

the New World, and in doing so it showcases the significance of multiple reverse migrations to and from Africa to the New World. Most significantly, this argument draws attention to the importance of the *Tabom* people's plans to visit Brazil to the survival of their history in Ghana and its implications for the historiography of Brazilian, Ghanaian/African and the African Diaspora history. In the case of the fledgling relations between Brazil and Ghana, I focus on two sets of relationships: first, the mutual cultural relations between Brazil and the *Tabom* people; and, second, I also differentiate between how Afro-Brazilian returnees and their offspring connected to Brazil at different historical periods. In addition, I provide an overview of the growing economic partnerships between the two countries on the national level.

It is important to emphasize that the hardships and subjugation African slaves endured in Brazilian plantations for over two centuries did not end engagement between Brazilians and Africans after the violent slave revolts in Bahia and the demise of slavery in Brazil.[503] This chapter posits that unlike their descendants, most of the freed slaves did not look back because the agonizing memory of plantation slavery remained fresh in their mind. Therefore, they were determined to return to their ancestral homeland in Africa to create their own communities and new identities.

This chapter will be arranged in four main parts: 1) how the *Tabom* people have sustained ties with Brazil via the Brazilian government and the embassy in Ghana in the

[503] See João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprisings of 1835 in Bahia* (MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993). According to João José Reis, besides the relentless efforts by slaves become free the 1835 rebellions in Bahia were mainly provoked by attempts by Brazilian authorities to impose Catholicism upon African slaves who practiced Islam. Retribution for revolts included: 5 years of forced labor, 150 lashes (43); deprived leisure (45); death sentence and repatriation to Africa (47); new laws for regulating congregation of slaves—Article 113 of 1830 Criminal Code characterized the gathering of more than twenty slaves as illegal (205); and imprisonment for five to eight years (206).

post-independence era, specifically the 1960s; 2) why the *Tabom* communities are influenced by the rise in capitalist ventures in Ghana's tourist industry, with a particular focus on the cultural and economic significance of the Elmina and Cape Coast Slave Castles to both diasporan returnees and the Ghana Tourist and Monuments Board; 3) how the Brazilian government and embassy have socially and financially assisted the *Tabom* people, especially the restoration of Brazil House and the *Tabom* people's plan to visit Brazil for the first time; and 4) the evidence of silences within the *Tabom* population and the implication of these silences to the future of the community and Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana.

Indeed, the first generation of returnees to Ghana did not sustain any meaningful relations with Brazil after their migrations back to Africa apart from maritime commerce which was common among returnee communities in Nigeria, Benin and others.[504] However, over a century after the rebellions in Bahia and about 80 years after the end of Brazilian slavery, their descendants created a new kind of relation with their "ancestral homeland" in Brazil. In short, the descendants of victims of slavery on Brazilian plantations continue to re-establish transnational dialogue with Brazil despite the enslavement of their forebears. What is driving the *Tabom* people to visit Brazil for the first time and what does this future journey mean?

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[504] According to Michael J. Turner, "Afro-Brazilians who were able to leave Brazil in the period between 1850-1875 had been able to make the greatest financial progress and economic success on the African coast." *Les Bresiliens: The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey*. Ph. D Dissertation (Boston University, 1975), 83. See also Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c 1850 to Recent Times* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001).

The *Tabom* people have maintained this relationship through the support of the Brazilian government and the Brazilian embassy in Accra. Over the course of the years, the Ghanaian government, which did not show any meaningful interest in the past, has also expressed varying vested interests in the *Tabom* community and has strengthened its bilateral economic ties with Brazil.

Chapter 5 also examines how socio-economic incentives in Ghana and prospects in the *Tabom* communities, specifically in the areas of tourism, have energized the *Tabom* "base." In my opinion, on some levels this recent undertaking in the community, which resulted in the repairs and the official opening of the Brazil House on November 19, 2007, has been influenced by profit-making ventures by various entrepreneurs, including returnees who have invested in tourism and other business sectors in Ghana.

Furthermore, attempts to showcase the *Tabom* history have been shaped by various forms of performance, appropriation and commodification as diasporan returnees and the descendants of the *Tabom* people have revisited their past in an effort to reconstruct their identities and profit from symbols of their heritage. Returnee communities in Ghana, especially African-Americans, have been fairly successful in this daunting endeavor as their members continue to navigate the spatial spheres of tourism. Today, they own guest houses, hotels and motels and operate car rental and travel tour agencies to facilitate tourism.[505]

[505] Kwame Essien, "The History of African American Business in Ghana, 1990-2007: The Case of Jerry John Rawlings" (Comprehensive Exams-PhD Portfolio,) History Department-The University of Texas, Austin (2008).

For the *Tabom* people, the performance and commodification of Afro-Brazilian history is not only about leaders' and community members' strategic showcasing of their Ghanaian, Brazilian, or Ghanaian-Brazilian identity. I borrow from Paulla Ebron's use of performance and commodification of African heritage especially at sites of memory that emerged as a result of the middle passage.[506] The rationale behind the repairs and the opening of Brazil House is a good example of how the *Tabom* people, like other returnees in Ghana and the Ghanaian Government, have taken advantage of sites of memory such as Elmina and Cape Coast Castles in order to amass wealth and for raise revenue via tourism. The representation of Africa's past especially the circulation and production of discourse about slavery for historical and capitalist consumption by the descendants of the Black Atlantic experience will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The fact that various groups with connections to the transatlantic slave trade or the middle passage have expressed a sense of ownership or entitlement, showcasing historical monuments as cultural commodities for enhancing their dual identities and heritage, as well as making economic gains from sites of memory, does not mean they are given equal coverage. In her recent book, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana*, anthropologist Bayo Holsey demonstrates how diasporan returnees congregate at the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles for a vast array of reasons—especially how the Ghana Tourist and Monuments Board and the Ghanaian government

[506] Paulla A. Ebron, *Performing Africa* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

benefit from such ongoing interactions.[507] It is this one-dimensional focus by Ghanaians and tourist institutions that the *Tabom* people are trying to reconfigure in order to showcase their historical heritage, landmarks, and their "dual" heritage or identity. Ghanaian-Brazilians are also refashioning or transforming their history in a way that would allow individuals and institutions to see the history of the community through the lens of the *Tabom* people and Afro-Brazilians connections to the transatlantic slave trade. They have 'placed their destiny into their own hands' instead of waiting on outside forces to determine their future.

On the other hand, Holsey's book does not show how diasporan returnees from North America (African-Americans) and the Caribbean (Jamaicans, etc.) are also making economic gains from these historical spaces. This type of approach is common in other literature. For instance, in her thought-provoking book, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, Saidiya Hartman demonstrates how communities like Salaga, a former slave trading market in northern Ghana, have developed new strategies to attract tourists from the diaspora to their community while at the same time ignoring investments by diasporan communities in the tourism sector.[508]

In my attempt to trace the *Tabom* people's journey to Brazil— their reverse diaspora migration—and their ongoing attempts to bring their heritage to the forefront of

[507] Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (Il: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 151-173.

[508] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (NY: Farrah, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 196-197.

tourism as in the case of other returnees in Ghana, I am not suggesting that the *Tabom* people are demanding Brazilian citizenship or are ready to give up their Ghanaian citizenship. Neither am I making claims that they are looking forward to visiting Brazil in order to settle there permanently. Rather, I argue that they are reacting to decades of institutional neglect of their community and their history with the transatlantic slave trade. Indeed, current policies about transnational linkages in the areas of tourism largely favor other diasporan returnees.

The Ghana Tourist and Monument Board, in particular, as well as the new Ghanaian Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations mainly focus on how to preserve, remodel and promote tourism to the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles to generate jobs and revenue for the country. The Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relation in particular was created to showcase Ghana's pivotal role in Pan-Africanism, to channel the cultural interests of diasporan returnees towards various sites of memory where most returnees fashion their dual identity and to direct returnee entrepreneurs to growing commercial activities that have developed at these historical sites since the 1980s.[509]

Part of this chapter shows how the Brazilian government and embassy have interacted with the community since the 1960s and how the *Tabom* people and their leaders have served as vehicles for achieving this historical and transnational objective. I argue that their preparation to travel to Brazil is largely influenced by a yearning to showcase their "multiple identity." By and large, the new efforts by the *Tabom* people are

[509] Bridget J. Katriku (Chief Director: Ministry of Tourism and Diasporan Relations), interview by Kwame Essien, March 8, 2007) 1.

also motivated by global forces and deeply colored by economic interests that result from growing investments in tourism in Ghana as various communities seek to polish up existing sites of memory or repair those in ruins to draw more revenue via the tourist industry. According to scholars in Tourism Studies, it is vital to underscore the significance of sites of memory in "roots tourism, diaspora tourism, genealogy tourism or simply personal heritage tourism" and their significance to diasporan or returnee communities.[510]

Like returnees in Ghana, descendants of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana are aware of the significance of slave forts and castles in Ghana. As pointed out earlier, the new awareness generated by the *Tabom* people has led to long-term plans to restore the historical landmarks fixed in their community. How far have the *Tabom* people come on the restoration of historical sites in their communities? Will this endeavor enhance the process of preserving Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana when most of the younger generations have immersed themselves deeply into Ghanaian cultures? What is the implication of the opening of the *Brazil House*, other sites of memory within *Tabom* communities, and other sprawling tourist sites in Ghana to disciplines such as tourism studies, archaeology studies, social/cultural anthropology, and the study of material culture? What are the implications of these tourist sites to the reconstruction of Ghanaian/African and African Diaspora history in the twenty-first century? These are the questions this chapter grapples with.

[510] Dallen J. Timothy and Victor B. Teye, *American Children of the African Diaspora: Journeys to the Motherland* in Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (Eds.), *Tourism, Diaspora and Space* (London and New York: Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 111.

By exploring transnational networks, cross-cultural interactions and economic exchanges in Afro-Brazilian history in the last 50 years, as well as the interchanging identities of the *Tabom* community and evidence of silences and apathy among the current generation, this chapter will show that the African Diaspora stretches beyond the slave experiences of the New World—there are multiple reverse diasporas to and from the New World. In other words, the *Tabom* people's effort to visit Brazil is part of what historian Paul T. Zeleza characterizes as "multiple belongings" in the African Diaspora.[511]

Also, the on-going relationship between the *Tabom* people and Brazilians, especially the *Tabom* people's future visit to Brazil, is another element of 'unfinished migrations' in the Diaspora that Patterson and Kelley point out.[512] Zeleza was right when he declared that the African Diaspora is a "kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning."[513] The *Tabom* people's plans to visit Brazil also cement the bold statement by other scholars that the African Diaspora transcends national boundaries, and therefore needs more serious academic attention.

The ground-breaking relationship established by Nii Azumah V, the Brazilian people, and other parties who have a vested interest in a reverse diasporic linkages

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[511] Paul T. Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs*, 104, 414 (2005), 39-41; 54-57.

[512] See chapter 1.

[513] Paul T. Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic," *African Affairs*, 104, 414 (2005), 63-64.

between Africa and South America has many objectives: the sustaining of existing ties between Brazil and the *Tabom* people, the raising of awareness in Ghanaian society about the Afro-Brazilian roots in Ghana, the education of the *Tabom* people about their dual cultural identities, the creation of a new site for establishing lasting links between *Tabom* people and other Afro-Brazilian slaves who were dispersed throughout the New World, the generation of revenue through tourism, and, most significantly, the creation of a transnational path for the *Tabom* people to visit Brazil for the first time.

I argue that the *Tabom* people have already carved a reverse migration route in the African Diaspora. As noted earlier in chapter 1, recent scholars have not only sought to redefine the African Diaspora and called attention to race and multiple identity formations; they have also developed other diasporic paradigms and have encouraged further discourse on these issues in the twenty-first century.

Abaaba Sɛ: Sankofa and the Birth of Brazil-Tabom Relation from the 1960s

Abaaba sɛ is a Ga word which literally means stepping back to the past to view the future. Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana in the nineteenth century began after the migration of a portion of the returnee population from Brazil to Nigeria and, later, to Ghana during the early 1800s.[514] Although Brazilian history in Ghana flourished and gradually evolved after the early1900s, there is no evidence of any major interactions between the Brazilian government and the returnees at the beginning of their settlement in Ghana.

[514] SCT 2/4/59, Jemima Nassu & Ors vs. The Basel Mission, March 31, 1915, 249.

Despite what looks like the disappearance of contact between Brazil and the returnees in Ghana, especially in the 1800s, a sizable number of returnees visited and maintained relationships with their relatives who settled in Benin, Nigeria and other countries in West Africa.[515] Some scholars have noted that a number of freed slaves who relocated to Nigeria and other areas attempted to go back to Brazil because of the divisions[516] and religious competitions that developed among them.[517] In spite of these claims, it is unclear how Afro-Brazilian returnees in general maintained lasting relationships with Brazil in the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

For settlements in other areas in West Africa, historian Michael Turner has shown that the first phase of a reverse migration to Brazil developed when a number of Afro-Brazilian returnees–the first generation of slaves who settled along the coastline of Nigeria, Benin and other locations—returned to Brazil for trading purposes.[518]

In the case of Ghana, the first major attempts at interaction occurred under the leadership of the 22nd Brazilian President, Jânio Quadros (1961), who appointed Raymundo Sousa Dantas' as the first Black Brazilian Ambassador to Ghana on April 13,

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[515] SCT 2/4/59, Jemima Nassu & Ors vs. The Basel Mission,, June 17, 1915, 391-392.

[516] Michael J. Turner, *Les Bresiliens: The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey*. Ph. D Dissertation (Boston University, 1975), 146-148.

[517] S.Y. Boadi-Siaw, *Brazilian Returnees of West Africa*, in Joseph E. Harris, *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 299.

[518] See Michael Turner, *Les Bresiliens: The Impact of Former Bresilian Slaves Upon Dahomey*. Ph. D Dissertation (Boston University, 1975); Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon: An Eco-social History of the Anlo of Southeastern Ghana, c 1850 to Recent Times* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2001) and Sandra E. Greene, *Sacred Sites and the Colonial Encounter: A History of Meaning and Memory in Ghana* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002). I have not come across any evidence that establishes that returnees who migrated to Ghana made contacts with Brazil to trade or for the purpose of a visit as in the case of the returnees that Turner describes.

1961. Obviously, Dantas' visit contributed to the history of the community. Brazilian historian Anani Dzidzienyo inquires about the challenges that confronted Dantas—not necessarily because he had to work on a different cultural and political turf from 1961 through 1964, but largely because his appointment symbolized some kind of a shift from Brazil's long history of marginalization of people of African descent from the national and international arena. Put differently, the appointment of Dantas was an attempt by President Quadros' administration to paint a new picture about Brazil, at least to the outside world.

According to Dzidzienyo, the hasty manner in which Dantas was sent to the new independence nation of Ghana was part of the "reforms" or package the Brazilian government assembled to improve Brazil's poor record abroad—especially in terms of diversity in their foreign posts. Indeed, this problem was a reflection of internal problems with race and racism both on the local and national level. In short, "Brazilian relations with African countries have been characterized by an inability to reconcile internal race relations with its packaging for overseas consumption."[519]

There is a disconnection in the problems of racism and racial inequalities in Brazil and the knowledge the *Tabom* people have about this contentious subject when we analyze the perceptions Afro-Brazilian descendants have about Brazil. For instance, during Dantas' interaction with the *Tabom* people, Nii Azumah III, the *Tabom* Chief from1936-1961 declared that,

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[519] Anani Dzidzienyo, *The Challenges of Africa and Brazil*: *Looking ahead by Reconsidering the Record* in Kwesi Kwaa Prah, *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series), 16.

> "It is a fact that none of us here present have ever visited Brazil but that is not important: we continue to consider Brazil as our mother country Mr. Ambassador [Dantas]: for this opportunity of being together in this festive occasion in Ghana…We feel it is our duty to offer this durbar [meeting], as you are the legitimate representative of a country we consider, as I already said, our mother country."[520]

What is striking about Nii Azumah III's speech was manner in which he personified the ties between descendants and Brazil—his use of the word "our mother country" or his description of Brazil as the "home" of the *Tabom* people. Indeed, repeated twice in this important public announcement one cannot help but interrogate the rationale behind this bold assertion. Clearly, the *Tabom* chief who was born in Accra, Ghana in 1877 as well as his parents underscored evidence of Brazilian retention or memory of his ancestral past. One can safely argue that his parents maintained and passed on their knowledge of Brazil to the next generation. This raises an important theoretical question about how returnees and their descendants fashioned their identities upon return to Africa and in the case of the chief after his birth in Accra.

As noted earlier, British Sociologist Paul Gilroy in his thought provoking work, *The Black Atlantic* asserts that slaves and their descendants did not always construct their identities through their ancestral ties to Africa but via the routes, the middle passage or the

[520] Quoted from Marcos A. Schamloeffel, Tabom: The Afro-Brazilian Community in Ghana (Bridgetown, Barbados: Lulu.com, 2008), 63.

ways in which they socialized.[521] In the case of the *Tabom* people, they would not completely agree with the broad articulation of their ties to Brazil as it was indicated by Nii Azumah III because they are not a homogenous community. Also, Nii Azumah III's generation is different from the current generation in the ways they preserved their history.

Based on oral traditions and interviews I have conducted within the community in the past five years, I have come to the conclusion that descendants who were born in the nineteenth century retained their memory of Brazil through the assistance of their parents. The same cannot be said of a large segment of the population who did not pass on their history to the subsequent generations from the mid-twentieth century through the dawn of the twenty first century. This sets the earlier and the later generations apart.

Although the main reason for Dantas visit to Ghana was to sustain ties between Brazil and the independent nation of Ghana, Quadros's short term in office, from January 31 to August 25, 1961, paved the way and laid a solid foundation for lasting relations between Brazil and the *Tabom* people especially after the demise of British colonial rule.

President Quadros' plan was as short-lived as his tenure, which lasted about seven months—the shortest in Brazilian presidency. Four months after Dantas delivered his speech to the *Tabom* people Quadros' term came to an abrupt end. He resigned mainly because of his frustration and impatience with reforms. Three years later, political instability in Brazil led to military dictatorship, which lasted from 1964 to 1985. Thomas E. Skidmore's provides a long narrative of the military regime and how the military juntas

[521] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 4-35.

ushered in a new era of economic depression and inflation.[522] Over two decades of military rule in Brazil complicated and nearly dissolved the fledgling relationship that had been cultivated between Brazil and the *Tabom* people.

According to Mantse Nii Azumah V, Dantas' first visit to Ghana, where he met with Nii Azumah III, the *Tabom* elders and members of the *Tabom* community, marked a new beginning in Afro-Brazilian narratives in Ghana in the twentieth century. There is limited information about what happened between the *Tabom* people and the Brazilian embassy during this tumultuous period. Perhaps it was a result of the resignation of President Quadros the same year that he appointed Dantas.

There were no major interactions between the Brazilian government and the *Tabom* people from 1965 through 1985, when the military in Brazil established military dictatorship in the country. The tenure of new Brazilian chief Fortunato Antonio Nelson, Nii Azumah IV, from 1961-1981 did not bring the *Tabom* people any closer to Brazil. However, there is ample evidence that the new leader played a major role in the relations between the Brazilian embassy and the *Tabom* community. He served as the spokesperson for the *Tabom* people during the reign of his father Nii Azumah III, the former chief, from 1936 to 1961.[523]

In *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985*, Thomas E. Skidmore chronicles the genesis of military rule in Brazil and shows how the Latin American nation

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[522] Thomas E. Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999) 109-112. See also Thomas E. Skidmore, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[523] Marcos A. Schamloeffel, Tabom: The Afro-Brazilian Community in Ghana (Bridgetown, Barbados: Lulu.com, 2008),63-67.

evolved from authoritarian to democratic government in 1985.[524] Skidmore examines the goals of the military, the economic conditions of Brazil over two decades, the military's repression and human rights abuses, and how the military juntas weakened relations between Brazil and other foreign nations.

A year after the Brazilian military juntas began their era of authoritarian rule the new independent nation of Ghana had its first military coup. On February 22, 1966 President Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown. Ghana experienced several different periods of political instability thereafter.[525] The last military take-over in Ghana was on June 4, 1979 when Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings took over. The political turbulence came to an end in 2002 when Ghana returned to civilian rule.

Evidence of diplomatic relations between Brazil and Ghana during the era of military rule exists but this information shows that such relations or interactions did not strengthen ties between the *Tabom* people and Brazil. It took almost 40 years for the *Tabom* people to re-establish any lasting ties with Brazil. By and large, the selection of Nii Azumah V as the new *Tabom* chief in 1998 turned things around. He should be credited for serving as the bridge that linked the *Tabom* people once again to Brazil.

Re/constructing and Re/arranging Tourism: The Significance of Sites of Memory

To properly link the fledgling relation between the Brazilian Government and the *Tabom* people and place the economic interests of the *Tabom* people in a historical,

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[524] Skidmore, Thomas E. *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1988), 36-38.

[525] Emmanuel Doe Ziorkli, *Ghana: Nkrumah to Rawlings, a Historical sketch of some Major Political Events in Ghana from 1957-81* (vol. 1) (Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1998), 312. See also John Westwood, *J.J. Rawlings: From Schooldays at Achimota to Castle* (Blue Volta: Ghana, 2001.

commercial, capitalist and global context, it is imperative to focus on other cultural and economic forces that are driving these interactions and have shaped new awareness in the *Tabom* community. These interactions are mainly between returnee communities, tourists, pilgrims and Ghanaians as well as the Ghanaian government and various tourism institutions. Put differently, when it comes to dialogue about tourism in Ghana it would be misleading to only consider the existing one-dimensional tradition that focuses on blacks from the African Diapora who are either temporal visitors or permanent residents of Ghana.

In some ways, this chapter characterizes the *Tabom* people as a diasporan returnee community. In fact, these descendants of former slaves have lived longer in Ghana than any returnee group from North America or the Caribbean. In short, the transnational structural ties that have been forged by African-American and Afro-Caribbean returnees since the 1980s have some things in common with those of the *Tabom* people in both cultural and economic terms.

Although these descendants of slaves share some aspects of migration in common, the *Tabom* people's experiences diverge from other descendants of slaves on some historical grounds. For instance the *Tabom* people's assimilation into Ghanaian cultures—especially their ability to speak Ghanaian languages fluently and participate in local cultural rituals in Accra and other areas in Ghana set them apart. Additionally, the Ghanaian-Brazilians are some of the only descendants of returnees in Ghana that have successfully reconnected with their roots—in terms of a "complete" immersion into local

Ghanaian cultures. This achievement did not happen overnight; as I have pointed out in chapter three, it occurred through almost a century of assimilation, adjustment and negotiation with local Ga people

There are various features about tourism in Ghana. Culturally, Ghana has served as an outlet for exploring Black culture, Black pride, Black identity, Black liberation, Pan-Africanism, roots of African liberation movements and for infusing Black consciousness since the 1950s. Ghana has other historical significance in areas of of tourism. Several factors explain this. For instance, during the transatlantic slave trade about forty-five forts and slave dungeons along the West African coastline were built in Ghana. This unmatched record has enabled diasporan returnees across the Atlantic Ocean to trace their ancestry in this region.[526] The slave castles and dungeons serve multiple purposes.

For almost six decades various sites of memory in Ghana have become the intersection for cultural, emotional, religious and spiritual point of re-union for returnees and the spirits of their ancestors. Since the 1960s, African Americans in particular and other people of African descent in the African Diaspora have used such sacred spaces as sites to reconnect with the spirits of their ancestors, to gain emotional healing for the atrocities that were committed against their ancestors, to find meaning to many unanswered questions about their roots, as well as emotional renewal for their "battered"

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[526] See Edward Bruner, "Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora," *American Anthropologist* 98 (June 1996): 295-296.

souls. According to a number of returnees and visitors to Ghana, the dungeons are the location where souls and hearts of the living and the dead cross paths.[527]

At the same time, the historical monuments provide the government of Ghana with revenue through tourism. Indeed, these sites of memory has also become new sites of contestation because they not only provide historical facts, but the spaces also constitute stages for making political and cultural statements, especially for those among the returnee population that are determined to prevent foreign institutions such as UNESCO from "white washing" what is characterized as atrocities of the past during the slave trade. It is against this backdrop that tourism in the country and polemics about how to manage historical monuments or generate wealth in Ghana, especially the new economic interest among the *Tabom* people have evolved.

The Appropriation of African Heritage: Ghana Government, Returnees and Others

My discussion of the appropriation of African heritage is derived from Paulla Ebron's analysis of the various ways Africans in the dispora—particularly returnees in Ghana—commodify or look back to symbols of their ancestral past, such as the slave castles and dungeons, and find creative ways of benefiting from these historical symbols, especially in monetary ways. Beneficiaries include returnees, Ghanaians and foreign institutions that have taken advantage of these historical symbols. However, rather than

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[527] Jazz legend Louis Armstrong, Richard Wright, Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, Maya Angelou and other prominent African American's as well as returnees from the Caribbean such as Rita Marley, the widow of Reggae Maestro Bob Marley form Jamaica have also established cultural ties with Ghana since the 1960s. See Kwame Essien, "African Americans in Ghana and Their Contributions to 'Nation Building:' 1985 through 2004." In Alusine Jalloh and Toyin Falola (Eds.), *The United States and West Africa: Interactions and Relations* (NY: University of Rochester Press, 2008) and Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

examining the multiple ways different communities, groups and institutions benefit from sites of memory, most scholars blame Ghanaians and the Ghanaian government for making profit from these sites of memory via tourism, revenue collection and memorabilia that local people sell to tourists.[528]

Without a doubt Ghana remains the most visited tourist site in West Africa because of the large number of slave castles and forts which still stand along the Atlantic coastland—more than any other country in the West African region. Economically, a survey shows that about 10,000 African Americans were among over 27,000 tourists from the Americas that visited Ghana in 2003.[529] In terms of investments, it has increased by about 300% ($45million in 1998 to about $145 million in 2006).[530] Other statistics about "roots tourism, diaspora tourism, genealogy tourism, or simply personal heritage tourism," particularly at the Elmina and Cape Coast, Castles show tremendous growth in the Ghanaian tourism industry.[531] According to this information, "In the early 1990s, it was estimated that between 5,000 and 10,000 tourists visited the fort each year, but the

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[528] Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (Il: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 151-173. See also Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (NY: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2007).

[529] Ishmael Mensah, "Marketing Ghana as a Mecca for African American Tourist," *Feature Article: Ghanaweb.com* (June 10, 2004), 1.

[530] Ta-Nehisi Paul Coates, "Ghana's New Money," *Time in Partnership with CNN*, August 21, 2006, 2.

[531] Quoted from Dallen J. Timothy and Victor B. Teye, *American Children of the African Diaspora: Journeys to the Motherland* in Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (Ed.), *Tourism, Diaspora and Space* (New York and London: Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 115.

number is said to have increased to between 15,000 and 20,000 people a year in the mid- and late 1990s."[532]

It is obvious that the *Tabom* people's effort to participate in the commercialization of African heritage and history—especially through revenue from historical sites in Ghana—is not a new phenomenon but a growing trend in the country and other parts of Africa. Indeed, it is a justifiable plan. What we are witnessing within the *Tabom* community today is another transnational discourse that seeks to enhance tourism in Ghana. It also shows how Black identity is contested and constructed in the diaspora, particularly within growing diasporan communities in Ghana where sites of memory and the refashioning of identities work in tandem. In short, diasporan returnees and the *Tabom* people are now part of this phenomenon and are determined to promote their history on a global scale and in a capitalist arena. According to the *Tabom* people in general, their history has not only been ignored for over half a century in Ghanaian historiography and Ghanaian public school curricula, but also by the Ghana Tourists and Monuments Board and by the UNESCO's World Heritage Site Projects.

It is clear that other groups have taken the lead in amassing wealth through these sites of memory. As Anthropologist Brempong Osei-Tutu has shown more recently, African American returnees and African American travel tours such as Henderson Travel Service in Maryland in the United States appropriate historical monuments and various

[532] Quoted from Dallen J. Timothy and Victor B. Teye, *American Children of the African Diasora* in Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (Ed.), *Tourism, Diaspora and Space: Journeys to the Motherland* in Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (Ed.), *Tourism, Diaspora and Space* (New York and London: Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 116.

sites of slavery in Ghana through the re-enactment of the middle passage experience for cultural and monetary gains.[533] In other words, the *Tabom* people cannot afford to ignore the significance of historical landmarks in their community to tourism in Ghana while diasporan blacks and the Ghana Tourist and Monument Board continue to make profit from the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles. Returnees, especially African-Americans, have gained grounds in tourist spaces along the coastline of Ghana—Central, Western and Greater Accra Regions. As we shall see later, investments by African American returnees who are entrepreneurs have had an impact on how the *Tabom* people perceive tourism in Ghana and the significance of Afro-Brazilian symbols and monuments in *Tabom* communities to this conversation.

Returnees from the diaspora are involved in a two-way economic traffic: they do not only pay entrance fees to visit historical sites in Ghana but they have been taking advantage of growing tourism in Ghana to enrich themselves. The economic and cultural networks that have been established side by side over the years by Henderson Travel Services, FIHINKRA and others through the internet and their offices in the US have been replicated by returnees in Ghana. One cannot overlook how African America entrepreneurs in Ghana have invested heavily in travel and tours, hotel/motel management, beach resorts, guest houses, car rental businesses, and scores of other ventures all under the umbrella of tourism as part of the 'Back to the Motherland'

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[533] Brempong Osei-Tutu, *Ghana's "Slave Castles," Tourism, and the Social Memory of the Atlantic Slave Trade* in Akinwumi Ogundiran and Toyin Falola (Eds.) *Archaeology of Atlantic Africa and the African Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 192-193. See also Brempong Osei-Tutu, "African Americans reaction to the restoration of Ghana's slave castles," *Pubic Archaeology* 3 (2004): 195; "Ghana Sees Profits in Memory of Slave Trade," *Detroit Free Press*, 7 June 1996, 1A.

migration tours or pilgrimage. The *Tabom* people do not have such leverage although they both share a common history of reverse migrations.

In *Ghana's "Slave Castles," Tourism, and the Social Memory of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, Brempong Osei-Tutu also examines the significance of slave castles in Ghana to Ghanaians and African American tourists / returnees. In doing so, he raises important questions about the interpretation of the historical monuments. At the same time, Osei-Tutu shows how these historical monuments are represented in local Ghanaian communities where the transatlantic slave trade took place and how they are represented in African American ideation. From the onset, Osei-Tutu positions the historical sites at the center of his analysis and through this lens he shows tensions between Ghanaians economic interests and attempts by African Americans to define how these "sacred sites" should be restored or preserved.[534]

In his explanation of the driving forces behind these differences, Osei-Tutu argues forcefully that although there is a historical connection between Ghanaians and blacks in the diaspora, Pan-African ideals have overshadowed the historical differences between Ghanaians and African Americans. Without a doubt, Ghanaians perception of the transatlantic slavery and the importance of the historical monuments have been colored by their limited experiences with this subject. On the other hand, African Americans position on how the slave castles should be maintained extends beyond their ancestral ties to Ghana—they are rooted deeply in the plantation experiences of their forebears as well

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[534] Ibid.

as African Americans experiences with racial oppression especially during the Jim Crow era and beyond.

Two terms are used interchangeably in the article. Osei-Tutu uses “restore” to show an association between African Americans attempt to keep the sites in its “original” state; restoration also underscores an effort to show their tie to “spirits” in these historical spaces. “Preserve” is also associated with the economic and tourist interests by Ghanaians and foreign institutions. Indeed, Osei-Tutu does not deny the fact that there are valid cultural ties to these sites, but what he clearly underscores is the contradiction between what African Americans characterize as the Ghanaians commodification of the slave castles for economic reasons and how returnees are also benefiting through entrepreneurship. He also probes the notion that foreign donors and those with vested interests in historical monuments are repairing the historical symbols with the aim of “white washing the sins of the past.”[535]

Here, Osei-Tutu explains how African American returnees, travel tours and entrepreneurs in Ghana also appropriate these sites for monetary gains. There is also another inconsistency when it comes to the performance of the slave trade: Ghanaians appropriate symbols of the transatlantic slave trade for their benefit and African Americans re-enact the middle passage experience to “educate” Ghanaians about their experiences with racism in North America. Put differently, African Americans criticize Ghanaians for having monopoly over the slave castles, yet they also use it to enhance

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[535] Ibid.

their racial politics and economic agendas. This ‘blame-game’ or contradiction is visible in the works of Hartman and Holsey.

Works by Anthropologists including Edward M. Bruner and scores of others, challenge the notion that the Ghana Tourist and Monuments Board and other foreign donors such as United Nations Development Program and USAID are tampering with the sacred sites. There is no such a thing as tampering of historical monuments because in Ghana they have always been modified or their features have undergone various physical changes to make them durable or to meet some form of capitalist agendas. In order words, there has been a long tradition of foreign donors preserving various historical sites in Ghana not only for tourism/economic purposes but for posterity sake. For Bruner, the question of ownership has no answers because of multiple of interests and ties various groups—Ghanaians, diasporan blacks and international agencies have with the historical symbols.

African Americans and diasporan communities in Ghana are demanding full ownership of the slave castles in order to keep them as “sacred sites,”—void of tampering by foreigners, Osei-Tutu says.[536] He concludes by highlighting issues of identity and ownership, especially how African Americans seek ways to assert their position regarding their ties to the motherland on all issues relating to slavery.

In the 1980s and the 1990s, as the disputes over the historical monuments intensified between returnees, Ghanaians, the government of Ghana and international donor agencies, so did the controversies. Again two main strains of thought developed

[536] Ibid.

during this lengthy transition to resolve the conflict as they debated over preservation and restoration of the memorial sites. Defining the project from the premise of Ghanaian cultures favors the returnees because of the emphasis on memories of the past. In other words, preservations of historical symbols cement returnees' desire to retain some aspect of their memory.

Preservation is entrenched in the African word *Sankofa*, a Ghanaian Akan word which simply means bringing back, putting same things in place key memories of the transatlantic experience. Restoration on the other hand provides room for changes that were needed to promote tourism. Returnees characterize changes to the historical sites as an attempt to deny them of valuable memories of the past. The outburst by the returnees was expressed in another way: "I am today witnessing the 'white wash' of a piece of African history…Gone was the musty lingering smell of time and of black male bodies forcibly removed from the motherland…Wake up Afrikans in the Diaspora."[537]

Obviously, the two groups of people with unique historical backgrounds and racialized experiences addressed the same issue connected with slavery, but they communicated differently based on their memory of the sacred site. This is another junction where the Ghanaian government and diasporan returnees diverge.

Also, in Benin, West Africa, where other Afro-Brazilian returnees, the *Aguda* people, who settled in the nineteenth century, there is growing awareness about the significance of Afro-Brazilian heritage in tourism. This has led to the annual enactments

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[537] The Editor, "Ghana-Don't White Wash the Slave Trade," *New African*, November 1994, 4. See also Seestah Imahkus, *Returning Home Ain't Easy but it Sure is a Blessing* (Cape Coast, Ghana: One Africa Tours and Speciality Ltd., 1999), 214.

and performances of African cultures especially, during Vodum Whydah Festivals.[538] In her recent work about Afro-Cuban returnees in Lagos, Nigeria, Solimar Otero explores the various sites of memory, the significance of these historical symbols to tourism and the activities of vibrant *Aguda* communities in Nigeria.[539]

The economic and cultural representations I have underscored are relevant to the *Tabom* experience because they intertwine on a number of levels. However, one of the striking differences is that descendants of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana have no qualms with who renovates or restore Elmina and Cape Coast Castle's in the Central Region. Rather, they are determined to change the angle of the debate to other promising future sites for tourism within their own backyard—the Afro-Brazilian colony along the coast of Otublohum and Swalaba instead of the Central Region.

Responding to 'Profit-Making' Ventures in Ghana: Another Path for Tourism?

The *Tabom* people have their own ideas about how to preserve and restore their ancestral heritage, their monuments and their history, which can be traced back to slavery in Brazilian plantations around the sixteenth through the nineteenth century.[540] This aspect of African diasporan history solidifies existing theories that underscore transnational or cross-cultural networks that are largely shaped by both cultural and

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[538] Peter Sutherland, *Ancestral Slaves and Diasporic Tourists: Retelling History by Reversing Movements in a Counternationalist Vodun Festival from Benin* in Toyin Falola and Christine Jennings, *Africanizing Knowledge: African Studies Across Disciplines* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 69-71; 79.

[539] Solimar Otero, *Orunile: Heaven is Home, Yoruba and Afrocuban Diasporas Across the Atlantic* (PhD Dissertation) 115-117; 146-153.

[540] See Gilberto Freyre (Casa Grande) *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946).

economic factors as demonstrated in chapter 1. In terms of commodification and appropriation, Ebron reminds us that,

> "There is no better place to explore the contours of performance as an idea and as practice than in the context of Africa, which has been made into an object through a number of performance tropes…The ways performance becomes a frame of enactment, creative movements of Africa not just for Africa but, most significantly in the performance of Africa for wide-ranging audiences…The continent becomes an object of significance in various local and global contexts…Notions of "culture" allows one to observe how Africa becomes a significant site in the performance of place in global context."[541]

To rearticulate my earlier analysis alongside Ebron's theory of performance and commodification, the new "rule for tourism engagement" was primarily developed as a response to years of neglect by the Ghanaian government, foreign institutions such as UNESCO and programs associated with the expansion of World Heritage Sites Projects in Ghana. The *Tabom* leaders' subtle approach to raises awareness or to convince the Ghana Tourist and Monuments Board, the Brazilian government, Brazilian embassy in Accra and foreign donors with interests in the Elmina and Cape Coast Castle's has been fruitful.

The transition from years of neglect to new attention towards the preservation of Afro-Brazilian legacy in Ghana deserves a place in *Tabom* history, Brazilian history, Ghanaian/African history and the history of growing transnational communities in the

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[541] Paulla Ebron, *Performing Africa* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1-2.

African diaspora, as well as in other disciplines such as tourism studies has emphasized this important discourse.[542]

As Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy relates in *Tourism, Diasporas and Space,* the growing trend in global travel towards cultural performance and the institutionalization of tourism for economic gains in Ghana and other areas in west Africa, especially the role of diasporan returnee entrepreneurs in Ghana, has not escaped the watchful eyes of Nii Azumah V and the *Tabom* leadership. Put directly, the *Tabom* people are imitating other groups in Ghana. Indeed, one cannot deny the fact that ample evidence ties the *Tabom* people to Brazil, but it is obvious that the *Tabom* people's increasing interactions with and awareness of their ancestral connection to Brazil since the 1980s are mainly influenced by their desire to enrich the community through tourism. Their goals can be summed up in three objectives: the pursuit of economic opportunities through the *Tabom* leadership, through the Brazilian government and the Brazilian embassy, the government of Ghana, the Ghana Tourist and Monument Board, and through foreign institutions such as UNESCO who seemed to have expressed some vested interest in the past.

Drawing a parallel between the long history of international publicity about the Elmina and Cape Coast Castles within Ghana and the exposure of existing historical landmarks and possible tourist sites in *Tabom* communities is like comparing apples and oranges. There is a stark difference between the two sites of memory. Nii Azumah V and his followers did not only have to compete with two popular tourist locations—Elmina

[542] Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (Eds.), *Tourism, Diaspora and Space* (London and New York: Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), 1-5.

and Cape Coast Castles—but also with other thriving tourist sites such as Kakum National Park, the *Manhia Palace* the seat of the Ashante Kingdom, just to mention a few. Like the people of Loiza in Puerto Rico, a United States territory who converted their deteriorating community into a "capital of [African] tradition for economic gains,"[543] the *Tabom* people want to use their rich heritage as an outlet for amassing wealth.

There are other similarities between the *Tabom* and the Loizan people. Like the Loizan community and others who "opened their doors to the recognition of the African tradition, and the town's folklore [to] the media as both source of pride and means of survival," the *Tabom* people have publicized their concerns and imitated successful tourist institutions and communities in Ghana. As a result, they have started advertizing the Brazil House through brochures that are distributed at popular tourist sites and hotels and the Accra International Airport. They have also extended invitations to both local and foreign institutions to invest in their community. Conversely, considering the popularity of Elmina and Cape Coast Castles internationally, the dream of the *Tabom* people to transform their community into a "modern" tourist spot in the twenty first century would require a great deal of planning and investment. This would require aggressive publicity to encourage visits to their communities.

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[543] Samiri Hernandez Hiraldo, translated by Mariana Ortega-Brena, "If God Were Black and from Loiza: Managing Identities in a Puerto Rican Seaside Town," Latin American Perspectives, Issue 146, 33, No. 1 (January 2006), 74; 75-79.

Which Road? Voluntary Return to Brazil: The Role of the Brazilian Government and Embassy

The *Tabom* leaders have partially succeeded in their unyielding efforts to reconstruct and highlight their heritage. Instead of being entangled in existing debates about rights, access or who owns historical monuments in Ghana, they are using various resources in these historical sites as incentives for progress within their community. As part of this process, they are preparing to visit Brazil for the first time to honor the invitation by Brazilian President Lula da Silva during his visit in 2005.

Nii Azumah and the *Tabom* youth are not the only ones who act as intermediaries between the *Tabom* people and others outside the community. Another major actor, the Brazilian Embassy has also become a go-between for the *Tabom* community and the Brazilian government. For the Brazilian embassy in Ghana, the *Tabom* story embodies a strong diplomatic and transnational enterprise linking the embassy and Ghanaians—hence, their success as a diplomatic station on the African continent. This existing network also ties Brazil and Africa in the context of diasporan discourses. In fact, the performance of culture and the management of identity are visible here—as the *Tabom* people adapt new ways to make their history accessible and their community as a pilgrimage for many Brazilian citizens, diplomats, tourist, pilgrims as well as visitors from other locations.

In terms of the broader engagement between the *Tabom* people and the general public, the *Tabom* people have received much support from the Brazilian Government. Although there was temporal halt in communication between the *Tabom* people and the

Brazilian Government on the national level after the resignation of President Quadros in August 1961 and during the military era from 1964 through 1985, there were positive developments later. Obviously, the 21 years of military dictatorship as well as military regimes in Ghana beginning with the demise of the Nkrumah Government, constructive dialogue continued thereafter.

In the post-independence era in Ghana's history the Brazilian embassy in Ghana in particular facilitated this ground-breaking process through educational programs in the *Tabom* communities since the early 1990s. The Embassy has done so effectively by providing financial resources for restoring cultural heritage such as buildings and streets as well as historical monuments such as the "Brazil House," and others; and by highlighting social contributions such as farming and tailoring skills the *Tabom* people brought with them during the transition from the mid 1800s as demonstrated also by Lula in the epigraph in the beginning of this chapter and chapter 3.

Language differences between the *Tabom* people and the Brazilians in general remain as a challenge for fluid dialogue. To improve or intensify communications between Brazil and the *Tabom* people, the Brazilian government funded a Brazilian lecturer Marco Aurelio Schaumloeffel to teach Portuguese at the Ghana Institute of Languages and the *Tabom* community.[544] Additionally, the Brazilian Embassy, which acts as a bridge between the *Tabom* people and Brazil, has created a study abroad program and sponsored Ghanaian students (who are not are not necessarily of Afro-

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[544] Marco A. Schaumloffel, interview with Kwame Essien, January 20, 2005, 1. See also Marco A. Schaumloffel, "The influence of the Portuguese Language in Ghana," *Daily Graphic*, May 7, 2004, 7.

Brazilian descent) to study in Brazil. These evolving trends suggest that there continue to be positive relationships between the *Tabom* community and Brazil. What in the history of these two countries has permitted these historical connections and how does this mutual relationship inform us about trends in the African Diaspora?

The Brazilian embassy in Ghana prides itself on its connection to the *Tabom* community and her ongoing contribution to the configuration of the history of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana.[545] The embassy has demonstrated her vested interest in this community on its website by showcasing the story of the *Tabom* people and the embassy's Portuguese language program. Moreover, information about the selection of Ghanaians to attend Colleges and Graduate schools in Brazil, as well as the number of students the embassy has sponsored since the 1990s is displayed. In addition, the embassy promotes various cultural activities in Ghana. The recent visit by President Lula da Silva to Ghana as well as the programs and festivities that were organized to allow 'Lula' to interact with the *Tabom* community blazes at the embassy's website.

Various other issues and programs with different dimensions are driving the Brazilian embassy to provide various supports to the *Tabom* people. As indicated earlier, the *Tabom* people are vigorously pursuing other outlets and embarked on campaigns to create a base for informing Ghanaians about the obscured history of the *Tabom* people; for creating space for tourism and revenue for the *Tabom* community, and most significantly, for setting a stage for the *Tabom* people to visit Brazil and for Afro-Brazilians in Brazil to visit their "distant relatives" in Ghana. Obviously, as these efforts

[545] See Brazilian Embassy in Ghana's website.

progressed, the *Tabom* Mantse invited the Brazilian President Luiz Incacio Lula da Silva to Ghana to deepen bonds of friendship and relations.[546] After a series of engagements, the new Brazilian leader expressed Brazilians unconditional support to the cultural initiatives initiated mostly by the new the *Tabom* leadership.

The resilience portrayed by the *Tabom* people in their efforts to preserve their past ties and strengthen their bonds with Brazil materialized when President Lula da Silva finally accepted an invitation to visit Ghana on April 12, 2005—the first visit by any sitting Brazilian president. During the visit, the Brazilian president met with Nii Azumah V, a high level delegation from the *Tabom* community and former President of Ghana John Agyekum Kuffor, who took keen interest in Ghana's relationship with Brazil as a means of furthering his economic agenda.[547] Lula's visit had two objectives: to solidify the cultural relations between Brazil and the Afro-Brazilian returnee community that were established by former Brazilian President Jânio Quadros and Ambassador Raymundo Sousa Dantas in 1961, and to promote economic agreements between Brazil and Ghana in areas of salt production and exports among others.

Although Lula's visit to Accra was brief, the Brazilian President addressed the cultural aspects of his mission to Ghana when he met with Nii Azumah V and members of the *Tabom* community. As the epigraph of this chapter shows, the two leaders acknowledged the "umbilical cord" that binds the *Tabom* people and the people of Brazil,

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[546] Ibid.

[547] Nehemiah Owusu Achiaw, "Brazilian President Official Visit: Government Honors Lula da Silva," *Daily Graphic*, April 14, 2005, 24.

and they later discussed matters concerning future mutual cultural and economic cooperation. First, during the durbar to welcome Lula, the *Tabom* people showcased the significance of Afro-Brazilian returnees to Ghana, the ways in which they have bridged the story of their ancestors with their own experiences of living in Ghana, especially through their construction of both Ghanaian and Brazilian identities, and their nostalgic feelings about their ancestral roots in Brazil. The gathering also gave the *Tabom* delegates the opportunity to introduce part of the *Tabom* population to the Brazilians. Afro-Brazilians such as the famous musician Gilberto Passos Gil Moreira—popularly known as "Gilberto Gil"—who was Lula's Minister of Culture from 2003-2008 also interacted with the *Tabom* people.

Besides the linguistic, educational, and economic endeavors currently taking place, the new *Tabom* Mantse, Nii Azumah V and his elders embarked on a long-term scheme to restore and preserve all historical cultural sites and monuments such as *Brazil House, Brazil Lane* and *Scissors House* (this site was burnt down by fire in 2007) which was once inhabited and used by the Afro-Brazilian returnees in 1800s for the development of their history and their culture. According to Mantse Nii Azumah V, a future project, which includes the construction of "Tabom City," would comprise of *Tabom* Clinic, *Tabom* Library and *Tabom* schools are beyond the scope of this chapter.

Furthermore, to gain even more popularity in the country, the Brazilian government has established joint trade and economic programs with the Ghanaian government to enhance salt production in both countries. The economic partnership

between Brazil and Ghana cumulated in the Ghana–Brazil Chamber of Commerce and Industry which was officially opened on April 13, 2005 in Accra during Lula's visit. It was launched by Kuffor, officials from the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Affairs in Ghana and officials from the Brazilian embassy. The primary goals of this economic partnership were the expansion of transnational economic ties between the two countries in areas of salt production and exports, sugar, paper production, cocoa, sheanut butter, bauxite and the exploration of further economic exchanges between the two countries in the twenty-first century.[548]

In terms of the cultural and bilateral economic corporation between Ghana and Brazil, the former Ghanaian President Kuffor expressed Ghana's appreciation to the Brazilian President, and decorated Lula da Silva with the highest state honor, the Star of Ghana, at a State Banquet held in his honor. The citation read, "You are an outstanding democrat…Your government since its inception forged closer cooperation with African countries, as a consequence of its development, Ghanaian-Brazilian relations have also been strengthened further."[549]

To cement the on-going ties, President Lula da Silva extended an invitation to the *Tabom* Mantse, his elders, and some members of the *Tabom* community to visit Brazil in August 2005. However, according to the *Tabom* Mantse, the historical visit was postponed to a future date because of the *Tabom* people's participation in the *Homowo*

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[548] http://www.embrazil.com.gh/content/home_e/trade-investments/ February 22, 2010.

[549] Nehemiah Owusu Achiaw, "Brazilian President Official Visit: Government Honors Lula da Silva," *Daily Graphic*, April 14, 2005, 24.

festival, an annual cultural celebration by the people of Ga traditional area in Accra, discussed earlier.

During the end of Lula's first term in office he came under enormous pressure and attacks from all fronts. Some of Lula's critics raised issues about various social and racial problems that confronted Brazilians of African descent, most of whom remained on the margins of Brazilian society. One may ask why Lula was interested in inviting the *Tabom* people to Brazil when in fact he has not been able to meet the promises he made to landless Brazilians and poor working class Afro Brazilians when he mounted his last political platform. What was Lula's political motivation?

"Elastic Binding Ties:" Lula's Visit to the *Tabom* People and the Road to Brazil

In terms of ongoing efforts to enable the descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves to visit Brazil for the first time it is imperative that I reemphasize the significance of the *nkyinkyim* and *sankofa* Ghanaian symbols and how these important motifs energize discourse of a "return" or looking back to a known or an unknown destination. In other words, how far have the *Tabom* people come with promises about a visit to Brazil? The attempts by the Brazilian Government to invite the *Tabom* people to Brazil could not succeed immediately after Lula's visit. In fact, during his second presidential campaign some *Tabom* people expressed concerns about the future of their visit. In short, a number of the *Tabom* people were curious about what would happen if his term in office ends or if he is not re-elected for a second term. Lula's re-election in 2006 discarded these concerns. Indeed, Lula has been identified as the only Brazilian leader who has made

strides by increasingly enforcing policies such as Affirmative Action programs for racial equality in Brazil. Internationally, he has been praised for installing economic and cultural bridges linking Brazil with African nations in recent times.[550]

The dream of descendants of the Afro-Brazilian community in Ghana almost became reality a year after Lula's visit to Ghana. The invitation which was coordinated by the Brazilian embassy run into a new barrier because of 'improper planning' and arrangements that went directly against some taboos and rituals in Ghanaian cultural traditions. The proposition by the embassy failed because it did not take important cultural protocols into consideration. Although the embassy arranged for the trip, they only invited Nii Azumah V. The omission was that, traditionally, a chief in Ghana cannot travel without the company of his linguist and some close members of his royal throne. More importantly, a leader of such caliber needed sufficient time to consult elders of his throne and his community before leaving his subjects. The new Brazilian Ambassador, Luis Fernando de Andrade Serra later paid a visit to the *Tabom* chief to formulate a more constructive plan to make this dream a reality, Nii Azumah V says.[551]

In order for the Brazilian embassy to accomplish her objectives, it would have to give the *Tabom* leadership advance notice and also make additional provision for a large delegation from the community. The *Tabom* chief would need sufficient time to prepare and assign his position to one of the elder's temporary during his absence. I will add that

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[550] See the citation by former Ghanaian President to President Lula da Silva.

[551] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, January 10, 2009, 1.

an entourage is significant because of various cultural performances that are needed during the process of leaving Accra to Brazil. For example, common cultural practices in Ghana require the pouring of libations and performance of various rituals to ask protection from the gods of the land (Ghana) and the spirits of their ancestors to guide the chief as well as those who would accompany him and the community they would leave behind. All these rituals are performed by his linguist and some members of his royal circle. We are yet to know how members of the community would be selected and when this dream is fulfilled.

In essence, the fledgling mutual relationship between the *Tabom* people and Brazil illustrates evidence of a strong cultural umbilical cord binding the two distant groups. Nonetheless, another critical question remains: how would the "native state" of Brazil embrace the *Tabom* people after nearly two centuries of separation? What would happen if the two groups converge in Brazil? Who would they meet with in Brazil?

Race/s to and Racism in Brazil

Despite the progress the *Tabom* people have made so far in their endeavor to visit Brazil, I will emphasize that they fall short in other areas. Ghana's Brazilians are not well informed about racial tensions and economic inequalities in Brazil. This became visible during my interview with Nii Azumah Nelson V, the current *Mantse* and with the late elder George Aruna Nelson. Part of the work therefore, will briefly outline social disparity and racial tensions in Brazil and their implications to future visits by the *Tabom* people.

In general, many members of the *Tabom* community are not well informed about the existing tension, identity crisis, ethnic formations as well as racial politics all of which evolve daily in the former slave Portuguese colony. The *Tabom* people's knowledge, illusions of and about Brazil was all-encompassing during my interview in Accra. Some members of the *Tabom* community were reluctant to discuss racial diversity in Brazil and its implication on Afro-Brazilian and white Brazilian relationships.

Indeed, the embassy is readily available to provide information and resources that enhance their image in Ghana. It is however disturbing that although the embassy officials and their guest have paid regular visits to the community in the last five decades and successfully arranged for the study of a colonial language, Portuguese, it has not initiated any program to inform the *Tabom* people with the history of slavery in Brazil and how the legacy of slavery has and continue to shape current and the future of Afro-Brazilians in Brazil.

Diversity or lack of it within the embassy staff in Ghana reflects an aspect of racial marginalization in Brazil. With the exception of Ambassador Raymundo Sousa Dantas, who became the first Afro-Brazilian Diplomat in Ghana, subsequent ones have been largely Brazilians of European descent. Anani Dzidzienyo provides an in-depth analysis detailing problems with diversity or lack of it in Brazilian diplomatic circles.[552]

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[552] Anani Dzidzienyo, *The Challenges of Africa and Brazil*: *Looking ahead by Reconsidering the Record* in Kwesi Kwaa Prah, *Back to Africa Vol. 1: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town, South Africa: CASAS Book Series), 13-25.

Certainly, as noted by Dzidzienyo, it would be interesting to inquire about the racial composition of its diplomats and staff in other diplomatic posts in Africa. In Ghana, the observation was very striking during my visit to the embassy in 2005, Schaumloeffel; the Portuguese language coordinator is of German descent, while the entire staffs in the embassy in Accra (during the time of my visit) are of Brazilians of European ancestry.[553] Part of this analysis is also based on my visit to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil where I observed that almost all administrative positions are held by Brazilians of European descent. Recent scholarship in Brazil has been devoted to the reality of racial inequalities in the country.

During my interview with Marco Aurelio Schaumloeffel at the embassy in Accra, he admitted that racial inequality in Brazil, especially in the education systems, privileges Brazilians of European origin—his conclusions about the exclusion of Afro-Brazilians in a diplomatic post like the one in Ghana cements some of the arguments raised in academic scholarship regarding myths of racial democracy in Brazil. Similar comments were addressed during my discussions with Nii Azumah V and Frank C.K. Dugbley, a Ghanaian official at the Brazilian embassy in Accra. However, they did not share the same view as Schaumloeffel.

The absence of Afro-Brazilian staff members at the embassy, in addition to Dzidzienyo's conclusion, provides a recipe for the *Tabom* people to question or inquire about the lack of racial mixture in such a public diplomatic environment. This racial

[553] Marco A. Schaumloeffel, interview with Kwame Essien, January 20, 2005, 1.

disparity at the embassy does not resonate among a large population of the *Tabom* community because of their limited knowledge about this important subject, especially how notions of racial democracy in Brazil place a large population of Brazilians on the periphery. This contentious issue will be addressed later in this chapter to create awareness about its implications for future visits of the *Tabom* people to Brazil. In my opinion, the issue of racial inequality is not often raised or addressed by the Brazilian government and those who interact with descendants in Ghana. In some ways, the Brazilian embassy has not made it a priority or found the best way to disclose this important feature in Brazilian history and social interactions perhaps because of the concern that such revelation could taint the image the *Tabom* people have about Brazil.

Lack of knowledge about the reality of Brazil will be the appropriate word to use to describe the *Tabom* peoples knowledge of racial problems in Brazil, but in the context of Ghanaian cultures it will be offensive and disrespectful to describe a leader of Nii Azumah V's caliber as such. I will say that the *Tabom* people are not well informed on this subject. For example, in their response to my question about which Brazil they were looking forward to visiting in the future, the response was very defensive. According to a number of *Tabom* people and those affiliated with this group, the ancestors of the *Tabom* people contributed to the economic success of the great Latin American nation, therefore they deserved a rousing welcome when they are able to visit Brazil. They posited that the entire *Tabom* group will be embraced by both white and non-white Brazilians.[554]

[554] Interview with Kwame Essien, August 14, 2005, 1.

I do not intend to overstate the gravity of racism in Brazil but my argument here is that the *Tabom* people may encounter similar hostility Afro-Brazilians have encountered since the demise of slavery in Brazil if they are not provided with adequate protection and information regarding racial tensions in the country. Because of the scope of this dissertation, I have limited my arguments about racial inequalities in Brazil and its implications to the *Tabom* people's future visit.

Recurring themes in contemporary Brazilian literature on race and ethnicity formations are threefold: 1) that white hegemony, white elites and white scholars have neutralized racial problems; 2) that they have created and perpetuated myths of racial democracy and harmony; 3) they have weakened black mobilization and destabilized Afro-Brazilian unity by imposing the notion of *mestizaje*, or racial mixing, In the words of historian Thomas Skidmore, "Brazilians see themselves as very different from all other New World societies…yet inequalities and vulnerabilities remain."[555]

For Edward Telles, race in Brazil remains a visible marker for creating class and ethnic structures in, "which blacks and browns are kept in the lower ranks…Race and class thus become important signifiers of status conscious society."[556]

Other Brazilian scholars have taken note of how anti-Gilberto Freyre critics are perceived when they interrogate the authenticity of racial equality. According to

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[555] Thomas Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), xiv.

[556] Edward Telles, *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 16.

Dzidzienyo, any scholar who debunks or challenges the notion of racial democracy in Brazil is branded 'un-Brazilian' or enemy of Brazilian national racial unity.[557]

Considering the recent attention that is given to aspects of African retentions in the New World especially in academia, it would be easy for one to rely on common historical elements such as religious and cultural practices such *Candomble* and *Capoeira* that tie Africa to Brazil as a safety net for the *Tabom* people. However, these avenues may not be enough to provide them with the recognition and the reception which the *Tabom* leader and his people are hopeful of during the future historical visit. Dzidzienyo has a stern warning to those who think along these lines. He proclaims that, "neither has …African provenance, such as musical expressions, which have been shifted from the margins to the center of national cultural life in specific Latin American societies, resulted in the transformation of the overall negativity assigned to [people of] African origins."[558]

The simmering animosity, stigma and "dislike" for Afro-Brazilians cements my argument that the *Tabom* people dream to visit the former home of their slave forebears opens up new questions about their safety, disappointments, and illusion. The point is that, this mindset and existing racial problems in Brazil may create some troubles for the *Tabom* people.

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[557] Gilberto Freyre was a Brazilian Sociologist who argued forcefully that Brazil is a color-blind society. Anani Dzidzienyo and Suzanne Oboler (Ed.), *Neither Enemies Nor Friends: Latinos, Blacks, Afro-Latinos* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 137-139.

[558] Anani Dzidzienyo, "Response to Silvio Torres Saillant: Coming with the African Connection in Latino Studies," *Latino Studies* 2003, 1 (160-167), 164.

Since 2006, Nii Azumah V and his people have had access to reading materials especially those from academic circles that addresses racial and ethnic problems in Brazil. This has yielded a great deal of success. According to the *Tabom* chief, he has become more informed about the controversial subject in Brazil after reading some articles and books more recently about Brazil. As a result of the new "awakening," the *Tabom* chief claimed that he discussed some of his findings and concerns with officials of the Brazilian embassy. The officials have partly acknowledged racial problems in their country and assured Nii Azumah that some Brazilian leaders have made efforts to correct the lingering problem—especially, President Lula's crusade to reform economic and racial inequality in the country during his second term. Would this change anything—especially during and after their future visit to Brazil?

For the *Tabom* people, their perception of racial tensions is framed in a very narrow scope. Indeed, their interaction with Brazil so far has been through their experiences with Brazilians from the embassy; others like Lula and prominent Afro-Brazilians such as Gilberto Gil who interacted with the *Tabom* people during Lula's visit. (see Appendix E) Put differently, notions about racism is perceived as a myth or frivolous among some *Tabom* people because a number of *Tabom* leaders claim they have had cordial relations with Brazilians they have so far come into contact with. Lula amplified this mutual friendship and the sense of brotherhood at the end of the speech which he delivered memorable speech before the *Tabom* community in 2005. In the words of Lula, "Mantse Nii Azumah V, King of the *Tabom*, my brother, our common history symbolizes the capability of human beings to overcome difficulties and suffering and transform them

into respect and love for others. My presence here has the purpose of bringing to the *Tabom* people the respect and love of Brazilians."[559]

Nii Azumah V on the other hand solidified his communities commitment to Lula when he replied that, "Your Excellency, I would most appreciate that, added to this project, Brazil considers seriously to support the *Tabom* people specifically and the Ga community in general."[560]

In fact, the *Tabom* people like the late Elder George Aruna Nelson who countered on Lula's promises seemed to be more concerned about a visit to the former community where their ancestors lived than being entangled with complex racial debates that continue to permeate the social, economic and political landscape of Brazil. [561]

One of the contentious debates in Brazil since President Lula won a second term in office is the issue of Affirmative Action—a program needed desperately in Brazil to close the gap between privileged white citizens and the rest of the population who are mostly non-whites. According to Brazilian historian, Professor João José Reis, there are petitions for and against Affirmative Action already in place—a debate that could linger

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[559] Part of the speech delivered by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva during his first visit to the *Tabom* community on April 12, 2005 in Accra, Ghana.

[560] Nii Azumah V's response to President Lula. See epigraph.

[561] The general Ghanaian experience with racism during the colonial era is minimum compared to blacks in South Africa during the apartheid period and racial discrimination in the African Diaspora. It is reasonable to argue that the *Tabom* people are not conscious about this subject or not aware of its lasting impact on Afro-Brazilian history. For older people like George Aruna Nelson, he preferred to satisfy his curiosity about his ancestral homeland in Brazil than engage in the dialogue about race and racism. Interview with Kwame Essien, January 10, 2009, 1.

throughout his second term in office.[562] One may wonder why has it taking the Brazilian Embassy so long to engage with the *Tabom* community about growing racial conflicts and social inequalities in their country. If it took such a long time to address this subject will the Embassy include this aspect of Brazilian history in their future engagements with the descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves in Ghana?

It may take a long time for us to find answers to some of the questions. As one of the challenges confronting my research, the *Tabom* chief's new awakening might create some problems for him and his community if they continue to interrogate the embassy about racial issues now surfacing in academic circles to debunk myths of racial democracy and harmony. On the other hand, one thing is certain: Nii Azumah V continues to share the academic materials with his people to inform them about their ancestral history. But considering the fact that descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves are spread throughout various regions of Ghana, Nii Azumah V's new knowledge about Brazil might not go beyond his community. The chief plans to include academic materials, video tapes and other information about Afro-Brazilian history among the list of readings to be housed in the future *Tabom City* library collections indeed signals a promising future for preserving Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana.[563]

Nii Azumah V contends that the new generation of the *Tabom* people will continue to depend heavily on oral history, diaries, letters, historical monuments such as

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[562] João José Reis, interview with Kwame Essien on Novemebr 29, 2006 during Reis' tenure as Thinker Scholar at the University of Texas, Austin.

[563] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, August 15, 2005, 1.

the Brazil House, Brazil Lane and other historical symbols that are yet to be to be repaired. These landmarks which still stand in their community, along with photographs passed on by the previous generation will continue to guide future research to explain their Brazilian roots. Indeed, Mantse Nii Azumah V's audacity of hope and his persistent efforts to restore the history of his forebears has survived against all odds which included squabbles within *Tabom* communities.

The Opening of Brazil House v. Old Problems and New Hurdles in the Twenty-first Century: Roots of Silences and Apathy

President Lula's visit as that of Danta's created new hope for the *Tabom* people. Through various efforts and the support of the Brazilian embassy in Ghana, the Ghanaian government, the Ghana Tourist and Monuments Board, UNESCO as well as other individuals and organizations, the Brazil House which was known as the "Warri House" was opened for tourism on November 17, 2007 after over a year of repairs. (See Appendix F) This watershed moment not only marked an important historical event and the birth of tourism within the *Tabom* community, but symbolized decades of attempts to showcase the obscured history of the Afro-Brazilian community in Ghanaian school curriculum and African Diaspora history. Similar to the attention the first generation got after they were offered a vast land by Ga king Komeh I in the early nineteenth century as stated in chapter 2, the history of the *Tabom* people has been showcased once more locally, nationally and internationally at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

It is important to add that the *Tabom* people, especially under the leadership of Nii Azumah V, have made great strides in their daunting efforts. The opening ceremony

was attended by representatives from the Embassy as well as the *Tabom* chief and his elders. Ghana's former Minister of Tourism and Diasporan Relations, Stephen Asamoah Boateng and the current Brazilian Ambassador to Ghana, Mr. Luis Fernando Serra were also present. Other special guests included the first female Chief Justice of Ghana, Mrs. Georgina Wood—a third generation descendant of Afro-Brazilian slaves.

However, this success story and progress in the community has been obstructed by lack of coordination among various *Tabom* leaders and Ghanaians of Brazilian descent over which family owns the land where the Brazil House is located, especially who has the right to manage the historical monument. This emerging problem remains a bone of contention and has in some ways it slowed down plans by leaders of the community to transform the *Brazil House* and the *Scissors House* at Swalaba into a leading tourists spot as others in Ghana.[564]

Indeed, President Lula's first visit in 2005 had a tremendous impact on the *Tabom* community and their ties with Brazil as in the case of the interactions between Ambassador Dantas and the *Tabom* people about five decades earlier. However, as I have shown subsequent engagements or arrangements between Brazil, their embassy in Ghana and the *Tabom* people did not always produce the results that they expected.

The various attempts by the *Tabom* leaders and The Brazilian embassy to restore some elements of Afro-Brazilian heritage in Ghana such as the Portuguese language, which has faded out in the *Tabom* community since the early 1900s have not been very

[564] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, July 30, 2009, 1.

successful, primarily because of the lack of interest by a section of the *Tabom* population in Accra; and problems continue with organizing a majority of members of the community who are scattered or assimilated into various regional ethnic groups in Ghana. The influence of English and Ghanaian languages on the *Tabom* community also makes it difficult for the *Tabom* people to study Portuguese.

Other problems have been created by Ghanaians. Both the education systems in Ghana and the Brazilian embassy have to share the blame as well. The former has failed to include the history the *Tabom* people in school curricula in Ghana or include the Afro-Brazilian returnee experience in broader Ghanaian historiography. As noted before, the latter have not yet provided the *Tabom* people with historical information about slavery in Brazil and its long-term effects on people of Afro-Brazilian descent. This has not been enforced in any meaningful way as they have done in the case of the study of Portuguese language in the *Tabom* community and their contributions to the study of Portuguese at the Ghana Institute of Language in Accra.[565]

Chapter 3 showed how some elements of Brazilian heritage, such as their Muslim and Portuguese names, were preserved by the first generation of returnees, but the Afro-Brazilian community began to crumble when their offspring became consumed or overwhelmed by local Ghanaian and western cultures after the death of the older

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[565] Marcos Schaumloffel, interview with Kwame Essien, January 20, 2005. In 2003, Marcos A. Schaumloeffel was appointed by the Ministry of External Relations in Brazil to teach Portuguese language at the Ghana Institute of Language and the *Tabom* community among others. Schaumloeffel is currently an attaché of the Brazilian Government in the Caribbean. He is the author of *Tabom: The Afro-Brazilian Community in Ghana* (2008), a project he completed for the Embassy after his numerous interactions with the *Tabom* people.

generation. To put it simply, because of intermarriage many descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves are using Ghanaian names. The failure of the new generation to continue past relationships with other Afro-Brazilian returnees in West Africa also widened the gap between the *Tabom* people and other descendants of Afro-Brazilians along the coastline of West Africa. To take this issue further, evidence in the previous chapter shows that as the elders of the community passed away, most of the lands which they possessed in Accra, Ghana, were sold by the succeeding generation, instead of continuing their farming traditions or agrarian lifestyle.[566] Disputes over land and how to manage existing properties have also weakened efforts to forge unity among different descendant family groups as tourists begin to patronize the *Brazil House* in small numbers.

There are other forces that blurred or continue to obscure the historical linkages between the old and the new generation at the dawn of the twenty first century. These old problems and new hurdles are part of the seeds that were sewn in the past—the decisions by descendants to protect individual interests in place of communal activities as their ancestors. According to Nii Azumah V, as the subsequent generations assimilated even deeper into local cultures, and as trading ventures intensified between the end of the 1800s and early 1950s, a great gulf was created between former Afro-Brazilian slaves who settled in the Ghana and those that settled in other countries in West Africa.[567]

The issues I have outlined earlier, especially intermarriage which occurred during and after the end of the first generation, leads to a very important subject about silences

[566] CVA 40/56, Suite No. L.S. 214/1956, Madam Sarah Clegg vs. Emmanuel Drisu Cobblah, December 5, 1956, 8.

[567] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, July 27, 2008, 2.

within the "descendant colony." Silences by a section of the descendant population in the history of their ancestors as well as lingering divisions continue to complicate the notion of a voluntary return to Brazil. This has been colored by the formation of a strategic identity among the *Tabom* people which takes on different dimensions depending on the particular situation. In a nutshell, when descendants decide to be identified as *Tabom* people, as Ghanaians, or as both serve different or overlapping agendas.

In Silencing the Past, Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot underscores how people remember or forget their past intentionally or unintentionally.[568] A similar idea is conveyed in Jacques Depelchin's *Silences in African History: Between the Syndromes of Discovery and Abolition*. Depelchin argues that "the production of academic knowledge about African pasts took place in the context of decolonization" —a period in African history when Europeans largely determined the academic destiny of Africans and a time when foreigners defined Africans' historical and cultural conditions within the framework of power and through racist notions of white superiority and black inferiority.[569]

Caroline Neale has also pointed out that many historical accounts were grounded in flawed research and that the processes used for conducting research in Africa are specifically designed to obtain a particular result.[570] Indeed, historian Sandra E. Greene

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[568] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Pwer and the Production of History* (MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 14-20.

[569] Jacques Depelchin, *Silences in African History: Between the Syndromes of Discovery and Abolition* (Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2005), xi.

[570] Caroline, Neale, *Writing "Independent" History: African Historiography, 1960-1980* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 60.

was vocal about this important subject when she explained how whispering and silences have affected the ways in which Ghanaian history has been constructed."[571] Scholars from different disciplines who have written about the challenges confronting African studies or historiography have raised similar arguments.[572]

This section of the chapter takes the observations of Depelchin, Neale, Greene and related literature into account in its analysis of silences within the *Tabom* community. Indeed, it is daunting to unearth the voices of women and the youth of the *Tabom* community because the history of these two minority populations as others has been excluded in various historical accounts. On the hand, it is difficult to reach and because they often identify with their 'Ghanaianness' rather than their 'Brazilianess.'

From the post-independence period to present times, the descendants have developed and exhibited interesting characteristics which my study calls "cultural metamorphosis," a critical stage in the history of their community in which part of the population is slowly becoming a "lost generation." This component in the history of Afro-Brazilians in Ghana becomes even more evident when one examines community members' interest, or lack thereof, in talking about their past. This section of the population seems to convey the point that they are not interested in discussing the history of their forebears, a past they do not know or do not understand very well. As Luise

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[571] Sandra E. Greene, "Whispers and Silences: Explorations in African History," *Africa Today* Vol. 50, No. 2 (2003), 1.3.

[572] John Edward Phillips (Ed.), *Writing African History* (NJ: Rochester University Press, 2006), 254, 267.

White points out, the attempt to mask what has been passed on through oral history and traditions has produced other obstacles.[573]

Other complications have been created by a section of the community's efforts to stop talking about the history of slavery within their family, especially the engagement of returnees in slavery activities in the mid 1800s and the early 1900s.[574] Although one cannot easily divorce him or herself from biological roots or bloodline, some descendants have made a conscious decision to keep silent about this part of their history. This decision has been shaped largely by the stigma attached to slavery, a lack of interconnected ties between different families of Brazilian ancestry, and divisions that were created during the early years of their assimilation into local cultures.

Obviously, part of the contemporary group incorporates the history of their ancestors into their narratives with the aid of oral tradition. However, a number of descendants find no pleasure in associating themselves with the fact that their ancestors were former slaves from Brazil or that their ancestors also sold or had slaves in their homes upon their arrival and settlement in Ghana. Nii Azumah V has attributed these silences in the community about the dark side of their history to the stigma that is attached to domestic and transatlantic slavery.[575]

The position of the *Tabom* chief on the subject of silences within his community has been emphasized more recently by anthropologist Bayo Holsey in her insightful work

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[573] Luise White et al (Eds.), *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 3-10.

[574] NAG, Divisional Court, SCT 2/4/50, Millers v. Victoria Van Hein, 12.

[575] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien on August 1, 2008, 1.

about the ways in which Ghanaians refashion narratives of the slave trade. According to Holsey, "the history of the slave trade is largely ignored [by Ghanaians] in order to maintain the coherence of the story of colonialism and independence."[576]

Holsey's analysis may be true to some extent if this conversation is mainly about non-*Tabom* people in Ghana. Obviously, her analysis is debatable. For a number of descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves, the strategic erasure of their past with slavery is actually based on matters of positionality. Their families' social and domestic involvements in slavery was more of an attempt by the earlier settlers to draw a distinction between their social status in Ghana and their past social status—once slaves, they later became free wealthy merchants who wanted to dominate their new social environments.

Other reasons that are rooted in differences within various segments of the community are beyond the scope of this chapter.[577] In short, the leaders of these families neither recovered from over 50 years of land disputes nor had any interest in the future of the community because they chose to identify as Ghanaians thereafter. Their attitudes might also reflect a sense that there is no place for their history and that there might not be space for their contributions within broader Ghanaian historiography.

Similar to Holsey's claims about Ghanaians' replacement of slave narratives with nationalist sentiments, there is a distinction between how the first generation of returnees perceived slavery and how a portion of the current generation distances itself from this

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[576] Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (Il: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 129.

[577] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien on August 1, 2008, 1.

contentious historical subject.[578] The new generation participates in Ghanaian socio-economic and political life on several different levels and is proud of being Ghanaian. The *Tabom* people often show pride in their Brazilian heritage whenever a member of their community excels at the national level. For instance, it is believed that a large section of the community, like other Ghanaians, celebrated the victory of Azumah Nelson, a Ghanaian of Afro-Brazilian descent, in the boxing arena.

Also, when Mrs. Georgina Woode, a *Tabom*, was selected as the first female Chief Justice in Ghana, the *Tabom* people gained similar attention and coverage in the media. In fact, as noted in chapter 3, the 2006 World Cup soccer match between Brazil and Ghana brought the historical relationship between the *Tabom* people and Brazil to the forefront. However, such excitement disappears when it comes to setting up interviews with some Ghanaians of Brazilian ancestry. In short, a large portion of descendants do not express passion about their historical connections with Brazil.

A future visit to Brazil could enhance Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana, but it is certain that the new generation has a duty to preserve their past in the same way that older members of the community, such as Mantse Nii Azumah V and Elder George Aruna Nelson, have done for posterity sake.

The final section of this chapter therefore draws on the death of Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson, who was the oldest descendant prior to his death on April 7, 2009. As the eulogy below shows, the old man played a pivotal role in transforming, sustaining and

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[578] Bayo Holsey, *Routes of Remembrance: Refashioning the Slave Trade in Ghana* (Il: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 128-129.

disseminating *Tabom* history. Part of my analysis also draws from the contribution of Aishatu Nelson to her Brazilian heritage. Both Nelson and Aishatu were from the Nelson *We* and provided a large amount of information about their ancestors during our interviews. Aishatu took very good care of her grandfather, Elder Nelson, in his old age, especially during the closing stages of his life. It was no surprise that she was selected out of 65 grandchildren and 30 great grandchildren (from 20 children of Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson) to read a tribute from his offspring. Aishatu read part of the tribute softly and passionately:

> "Grandpa, you lived a full and happy life surrounded by those you loved so much, and although we cry and feel great sadness, we know you still remain in our hearts. How we wish you had stayed longer with your grandchildren…We, your grandchildren have many great and unforgettable memories of our days together; from advise, jokes, revealing the history of our family and above all, teaching us more about what the word of God really meant in our lives…We had so much from you, Papa Nii this will never be forgotten…Oh Papa Nii, Kpo Yaawo Dzogbann. Rest in peace our great Grandpa and Hero." [579]

Aishatu's tribute demonstrated a host of issues: the close ties between the old man and the generations that followed him; the acknowledgement that a member of the third generation—depending on how one counts the generational periods—had passed on the history of their Brazilian heritage; the promise of these young *Tabom* people that they would never forget Elder Nelson and what he shared about their ancestral past; and an

[579] From the funeral program of Elder George Nii Aruna Nelson, July 10, 2009, 16-17.

indirect assurance that they would carry the torch of memory and perhaps disseminate similar accounts to the next generation.

Indeed, this is a unique case in the community: this trailblazer of Brazilian heritage left a legacy that could be worthy of imitation among his descendants. Another element that stands out is the use of Ga words. “Papa Nii” means grandfather Nii—the elder’s Ga name–and the word “kpo” is the Ga word for sorry. These words were used to express sadness and to explain the pain and mortality of his 65 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren. The 65 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren dressed in the Ghanaian traditional white outfit as a way of celebrating the long life of the old man rather than mourning his passing.

Overall, the tribute epitomized a watershed moment in the history of the Afro-Brazilians. One question still lingers: how far can the descendants carry on with Papa Nii’s legacy? During his lifetime, Papa Nii, a third-generation Brazilian, imagined visiting the ancestral homeland of his grandparents who were once slaves. He was among the *Tabom* delegation that hosted President Lula, but his wish to visit Brazil was never realized. We are yet to know if his offspring can fulfill the promise they made to preserve their Brazilian heritage as it is underscored in the epigraph.

Indeed, the memory of a home in Africa remained in the consciousness of slaves who were dispersed into plantations in Brazilian and served in various capacities in the echelon of Brazilian societies. In reverse, the same can be said of Ghanaians of Brazilian descent that have either come close to visiting Brazil for the first time or have not had much interest in connecting to their Brazilian history.

The funeral of Elder Nelson at the St. Mary's Anglican Church, Asafoatse Nettey Road, Accra around noon on Friday July 10, 2009 was indeed memorable and historic. Standing before over 1,000 mourners and about eight feet from Elder Nelson's casket, Aishatu audaciously read the tribute with her head up while holding her tears. At the cemetery she placed flowers on the old man's grave, and as the grave was covered, Aishatu no longer contained her emotions—she lowered her cheek with pride and wept as if she were saying the final farewell to one of the great-grandchildren of the first Brazilian settlers.

During his interment at the Nii Ankrah Royal family Mausoleum in Accra, it became clear that a tower in the *Tabom* community had 'fallen.' It was the end of an era. Symbolically, the scene at the cemetery characterized a critical juncture in Brazilian heritage—an intersection between what the elder disseminated about his ancestral past during his lifetime and how this information would aid in the construction of Brazilian history after his burial. How much information Papa Nii took with him to his grave and its impact on the *Tabom* account may not be known yet. Additionally, what Aishatu and those of her generation could contribute to our knowledge about the Brazilian tree could also have a lasting impact. Indeed, she could become the vehicle for preserving, transporting and spreading news about their heritage. It is imperative to add that the future of the *Tabom* people continues to oscillate in different historical directions.

Conclusion

It is increasingly becoming obvious that since the first generation, their children and grand-children made their home for over 150 years, the rapid process of immersion into Ghanaian cultures has transformed identities of members of the colony of Brazilians in Ghana. Most integration during this period was influenced largely in areas of marriage, socialization and their participation in *Homowo*, the annual festival of the Ga people and others that continue to raise questions about the murkiness of the future of Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana.

There are other forces that continue to blur memories of their ancestral past. In fact, for the contemporary history of the *Tabom* people delays or the unsuccessful attempt by the elders of the community to visit Brazil has also added to the complexity in reconstructing their past. Degrees of alienation have also made it difficult for the younger generation to fathom the reality of a second ancestral homeland in Brazil—hence, their continuous immersion into Ga cultures in particular.

Not only does this chapter build on the previous ones, but it provides another dimension to the transnational networks that included multifaceted movements by the early settlers back and forth to Nigeria and other locations along the Bight of Benin. The major objective was to maintain contacts with other returnee, the *Aguda* people and as they sought new ways to refashion their identity.[580] From a broader perspective, the "push and pull" factors in the process of identity formation in diasporan or returnee communities elsewhere resonated in the Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana. The *Tabom*

[580] RG 15/1/21, Yawah Per J.M. Aryeequaye vs. J.E. Maslino, August 5, 1930, 38.

people's growing desire to visit Brazil is part of what has been characterized as the creation of intricate memberships in the African Diaspora.[581] There were other forces that generated new consciousness among the *Tabom* people at the twilight of the twentieth century especially their journey to bring tourists to their communities.

Nii Azumah V and his community as I have explained are well informed about the capitalist ventures that are unfolding in the tourist industry in Ghana. During one our interviews the chief did not hide the *Tabom* people's economic interest. He blamed the Ghana Tourist Board for making it possible for only the people of Elmina and Cape Coast to benefit from revenues generated from the historical monuments in their area (the Central Region) while neglecting equally important historical sites in the *Tabom* community such as the *Scissors House* and the *Brazilian House* and others as *the Brazil Lane*.[582]

Since he was selected as the new *Tabom* leader in 1998 after nearly two decades of conflicts over who should inherit this prestigious position, Nii Azumah V and the elders of the community have turned things around in their efforts to forge unity among the descendants. As the new chief he has taken upon himself to ensure that the history of the community and other aspects of their inheritance are passed on to the next generation for posterity sake.

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[581] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Rewriting the African Diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic, *African Affairs* (2005), 39-41; 54-57; 63-64.

[582] Nii Azumah V, interview with Kwame Essien, July 30, 2008, 1.

In conclusion it is significant to rearticulate that the *Tabom* people's interest in tourism was mainly influenced by the success of other returnees from North America and the Caribbean in the tourism industry in Ghana. Indeed, African American and Caribbean returnees also relocated to the "motherland" from the late nineteenth century on contested with the Ghana Tourist and Monument Board as well as foreign donors especially in the 1980s through the 1990s to gain some degree of ownership to various sites of memory. These returnees have made progress in their commitments to establish their ancestral ties with West Africans where most of the slaves were captured; and because diaspora returnees believe that they have "spiritual" ties to slave monuments.

Clearly, diasporan black's historical memory about the transatlantic slave trade intersected with the history of the *Tabom* people and how this drove the *Tabom* people to create routes between a homeland (Ghana) and a hostland (Brazil) as noted by Kim Butler.[583]

Another emerging situation worth mentioning here about performance and commodification of sites of memory is the ways in which the *Tabom* youth, the future generation who took the "law" in their own hands prior to the repairs and the opening of Brazil House. As the "gatekeepers", the youth monitored activities of visitors and tourist who entered the *Tabom* compound to view *Brazil Lane*, *Brazil House*, the first *Scissors House* and other archaeological remains which some of the local people believe were used as slave dungeons along the shores of Otublohum, Jamestown or Bukom, in Accra.

[583] Kim D. Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10 (2001), 43; 192-206.

Prior to the opening of the *Brazil House*, the gatekeepers made their presence known through the process. For example, during one of my visits to Otublohum where the Brazil House stands to take photographs of historical symbols, several young people approached me and demanded money before I could take photographs. Although I was accompanied by Nii Azumah's assistant and I am fluent in Ga language, the main Ghanaian language spoken by the *Tabom* community, it took a longer time to accomplish my goals that day. The delays were mainly caused by frequent interruptions by the youth.

During the same visit, they requested that I take their photographs to show others how they have carried on the skills of their ancestors. At the *Scissors House*, a location believed to have been inhabited by Afro-Brazilian returnees who were experts in tailoring and dressmaking, most of the young men started cutting different fibers and clothing materials to show their skills in cloth-making. There was no form of harassment at the *Scissors House* as in the case of the premise of Brazil House prior to its renovation for tourism. Clearly, the cloth-makers who were both of Brazilian and non-Brazilian descent were performing and enacting their culture as Ebron argues.[584] They contested for space and power whenever they saw visitors on their compound.

One may see such visits as harassment, but other members of the community see such interactions as opportunities for disseminating news about the "hidden treasures" of the *Tabom* people. They carry on the traditions of cloth-making, encourage visiting and provide hospitality for tourists and visitors, especially those accompanied by embassy

[584] Paulla A. Ebron, *Performing Africa* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1.

officials. The *Brazil House* and other sites of memories such as the first *Scissors House* at Swalaba reminds us of the Afro-Brazilian presence in Ghana for nearly two century. These material cultures signal the dynamic nature of the African Diaspora in reverse.

Figure 7: The first meeting between Nii Azumah V (left) and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in April 2005 in Accra, Ghana (Photograph from Brazil House)

Photograph was provided by Mantse Nii Azumah V

Figure 8: The Brazil House in Accra which was opened for Tourism on November 17, 2005. (Photograph by Kwame Essien)

Conclusion

In the mid-1800s, the first New World diasporan community of former Afro-Brazilian slaves, who became known as the *Tabom* people, emerged on the coastline of Ghana after gaining manumission, after slave revolts in Bahia, Brazil necessitated their emigration. The 1888 abolition of slavery in Brazil also led to the voluntary relocation of newly free Afro-Brazilian slaves to Ghana. The descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves used various strategies to maintain their Brazilian heritage and identity upon resettlement. They were particularly concerned about making a contribution to colonial Ghana and passing on their heritage and skills to their offspring as I have shown in the previous chapters.

Although the wishes of the early settlers have not been fulfilled, a portion of the *Tabom* population is determined to preserve their history and restore historical monuments in their communities for tourism and to raise revenue. This group has also accepted an invitation by Brazilian President Inácio Lula da Silva to visit Brazil. The potential visit to Brazil to for the first time would enable the *Tabom* people to see where their forebears were once held as slaves.

As noted in chapter 3, the Brazilians and their descendants have been successful with some of their endeavors. What issues surface when people are either forced from one location to the other in the case of Afro-Brazilians slaves who migrated to Ghana

after slave rebellions in Brazil; or when they do so voluntarily in the case of the *Tabom* people who are yearning to reconnect to the former homes of their ancestors? Obviously, the history of the first generation has some interesting dimensions when we examine how they adjusted to their new environment.[585] In this regard an aspect of this study sought to highlight the avenues the *Tabom* community have created with the government of Brazil and embassy in Ghana, the government of Ghana as well as a number of institutions to facilitate future plans of the *Tabom* people.

Although the Ghana Tourist and Monuments Board has not seriously showcased or promoted historical monuments in the *Tabom* community as part of their immediate tourist programs, the *Tabom* people have followed a different path. Their leaders have set up a collaborative project that brought groups such as the Ghanaian government, the Brazilian government and embassy and other foreign tourist institutions together to raise money to restore the Brazil House, which was opened for tourism on November 19, 2007. The *Tabom* people continue to receive visitors from foreign countries, including visitors whose travels have been arranged by the Brazilian embassy in Ghana.

There are inadequate secondary sources covering the history of Afro-Brazilian communities in Africa, especially works relating to the *Tabom* people. Therefore, I plan to use the large body of work about the history of diasporan communities elsewhere to support my analysis in future projects. To do so, I will employ an Atlantic historical

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[585] Jose C. Curto and Paul Lovejoy (Eds.), *Enslaving Connections: Changing Cultures of Africa and Brazil During the Era of Slavery* (NY: Humanity Books, 2004), 194, 205, 226.

framework, connecting historiographic works on Brazil, North America and other geographical regions.

There are other challenges in including an ethnographic approach in my work. For instance, there are a variety of questions regarding the origins of the *Tabom* people. The answers to these questions depend on whom you talk to in the community. For instance, the older members of the community point out that the first generation resettled in Ghana because most of them were free slaves who were involved in commercial activities with Brazil. According to the younger generation, the first generation chose Ghana because they were reminded by the chief in their community before they were taken from Ghana that they should return to their homeland whenever they were freed.[586] There are other interpretations to this discourse.

The narratives of George Aruna Nelson (who was 91 years at the time of my interview) basically stated that the first generation settled in Ghana because of the prior voyages they engaged in for commercial activities after their status changed to free slaves. Nii Azumah Nelson looked at it from another angle and suggested that the first generation was mostly made up of Muslims who were captured from areas in Nigeria at the height of Islamization and the conquest of non-Muslims in northern Nigeria. The variations become even more complex when you talk to the younger generation, most of who are between the ages of eighteen and forty five. Their understanding is that most Afro-Brazilians returned to Ghana because, at the time of their capture, the chief in Accra

[586] Asuah (Nii Azumah's assistant), interview with Kwame Essien, January 10, 2009, 1.

provided them with a type of map and gifts, including a flag to remind them of their old community and heritage as people of the Gold Coast.

The archival documents I have examined so far do not clearly answer these questions, as pointed out in chapter 2. Further interviews could help clarify this. Since the existing historiography largely focuses on males with little or no serious discussion of the position of women in the migration and settlement processes, part of my future research will focus on women in the community. I hope to devote a chapter to these important elements of the *Tabom* history with the goal of giving voices to women and issues that impacted them.

Another problem is the difficulty of exploring the gender dynamics of the community in the early generations. Most of the existing information about the *Tabom* people talks about the male ancestors—how they organized their community to preserve the skills they brought from Brazil, how they distributed land which was offered by the Ga king, and how these men participated in farming activities that contributed to the socio-economic systems of the Gold Coast.

Obviously, the history of *Tabom* women has been sidelined in the currently available narratives. In a few instances, women are mentioned when there is a discussion about the role of the *Manye* (queen mother) or when there is the need to highlight aspects of the wife of a *Tabom* chief. Gender components are more problematic when it comes to matters relating to inheritance. In terms of appearance, much is said about the ways the

first generation preserved their Brazilian cultural values by dressing in European suits and hats, but the appearance of women in this group is also placed on the periphery.

The appearances of women are also not highlighted in the photographs, artifacts or other cultural objects that the community has preserved for over a century. However, the *Tabom* women are becoming more visible in the history of the current generation. For instance, at Swalaba, the location of the *First Scissors House*, which was built in 1854 near the current location of *Brazil House* in Accra, *Tabom* women associated with *Tabom* communities had a level of control as "land-ladies" who collected rent and managed housing properties in the community. Unfortunately, they lost this economic control after the building burnt down in October, 2007, about a month before the Brazil House was opened.

Indeed, the nomination of Mrs. Georgina Wood, who was raised at the current location of the Brazil House, as the Chief Justice of Ghana has also elevated the image of women in the *Tabom* community. I am uncertain how her story could help further minimize silences about *Tabom* women and children.

This study does not underplay the importance of interrogating how the *Brazil House* has contributed to tourism in Ghana and examine the *Tabom* people's plans to visit Brazil for the first time. Both researches provides insight or enhance our understanding about how these two important historical elements have contributed to the preservation or reconstruction of Afro-Brazilian history in Ghana—especially, the significance of this site of memory and the road to rediscover Brazil and to re-affirm their dual heritage.

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Vita

Kwame Essien was born in Tema, Ghana (West-Africa). After completing Padmore Primary School he pursued higher education at St. Paul Technical Institute and graduated at Accra Polytechnic in Ghana in 1990. Essien's family history with the middle passage especially the story about his great-great grand-uncle, Chief Kweku Andoh (the chief of Elmina from 1884-1898) shaped his interest in slavery and migrations. Essien completed his B.A in history at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro in 2002 and his Master's degree in African studies at the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2006. He began his PhD in African and African Diaspora History at the University of Texas at Austin in August 2006. In the spring of 2008/2009 he was awarded the Gondwe Fellowship to teach African, African Diaspora and World History at Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania. Essien has contributed to a number of publications and has received research grants over the years.

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