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Introduction: The Year of Ghana at Kennesaw State University

Dan Paracka and Sam Abaidoo

Ghana was selected as the country of study at Kennesaw State University for the 2012-2013 academic year because of the long-standing and fruitful relationships that have developed since the September 1999 signing of a memorandum of understanding between the University of Cape Coast (UCC) and Kennesaw State University (KSU). Since the summer of 2000, more than 100 KSU students have traveled to Ghana to study at UCC. Kennesaw State in turn has hosted more than 30 visiting faculty from Ghana on our campus. Indeed, numerous faculty from KSU and Ghanaian universities (UCC and University of Education, Winneba, UEW) have participated in the exchange and capacity building including faculty from the following disciplines: business administration, chemistry, education, geography, history, literature, music, philosophy, and political science. Over the years, UCC Vice Chancellors Samuel K. Adjepong, Emmanuel Addo-Obeng, and Naana Opoku-Agyeman have visited KSU and recently, the current KSU President Daniel S. Papp also visited UCC. Most significantly, H.E. President John Dramani Mahama of Ghana visited KSU in the fall of 2013 to commemorate the Year of Ghana. His speech on that occasion is included in this volume as the epilogue.

KSU and UCC have partnered on several grant projects including a \$100,000 USAID project focused on instructional technology training, and a partnership with Med-share, a local nonprofit in Atlanta to ship over half a million dollars of medical supplies to Ghana. In addition, KSU's Ph.D. program in Conflict Management has partnered with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) in Accra including reciprocal instructional roles and doctoral education of KAIPTC personnel. Currently, we have 41 Ghanaian students enrolled at KSU including several students in the Ph.D. program. For the Year of Ghana, KSU also reached out to partner with several important U.S.-based Ghanaian community groups including the Ghana Council of Georgia and the Ghanaian Traditional Rulers of Georgia.

During KSU's Year of Ghana (YoG), a total of 22 lectures were delivered on diverse topics such as: Ghana's Physical and Cultural Geography, Articulations of Resistance to Enslavement, Early Atlantic Trade with West Africa, Ghanaian Chiefs, Naming and Oratory Traditions, Libation and Praise, Filial and Familial Obligations, The Faces of Religion in Politics, Fantasy Coffins, A Biography of Kente Cloth, Adinkras as Mathematical Metaphor, George Padmore, W. E. B. DuBois, Kwame Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism, Skin Bleaching, Themes in Ghanaian Women's Literature, Market Women in Makola, the Oil and Gas Industry in Ghana, Ghana and the Chinese Connection, and Ghana High-life Music, to name several.

Because every country has its own unique confluence of histories and cultures, the YoG like previous Annual Country Study Programs provided our campus community

with an exceptionally rich opportunity to develop a more complex understanding of today's interconnected world. Intercultural learning is about making the unfamiliar familiar and increasing people's understanding and appreciation of the "other." The study of Ghana is a study of continuity and social change, and of community and nation building as Ghana continuously reinvents, rediscovers, and renews itself. There is great value in understanding the sociocultural forces of both continuity and innovation in Ghana today as the nation makes strides into the 21st century. Cultures change not by forgetting the past but by learning from it.

The modern nation of Ghana is both a story of the Western imagination and emancipation from its grips. Ghanaian culture is deeply self-conscious and other-conscious. Ghanaians understand that things change, that no condition is permanent. Still, they venerate their ancestors, honor their elders, and connect with their past through traditions and other enduring practices. These traditional values and norms emphasize the importance of respect in Ghanaian culture. Unfortunately, much of the traditional knowledge and wisdom of Ghana has been disparaged or discounted, while other aspects have been misattributed and appropriated especially through the period of colonial rule. Yet, this general disruption, destruction, and devaluing of African culture through colonial rule has also served to underscore the importance of preserving values of respect, freedom, and open debate in Ghanaian society.

Evidence of human habitation in the region of modern Ghana goes back over 50,000 years with larger civilizations appearing around 12,000 years ago in the modern area of Kintampo. Iron-smelting enters the region around 100 C.E. and the Akan people are present in the rain forest region by 1000 C.E (Gocking, 2005, p. xxv). Akan groups have continuously occupied the region ever since. Along the coast, historians believe that Akan societies were mostly small, diffuse, shifting settlements, but recent evidence shows that there were large settled agricultural communities that constructed impressive earthworks requiring substantial communal labor (Chouin & DeCourse, 2010, p. 129).

Historically, Ghana's primary trade routes faced north towards the empires along the Niger River and connected to the trans-Saharan caravans. Strong and centralized states existed in central and northern Ghana and vied for power over trade routes that connected the different products of the coastal and rainforest regions with the savanna lands. Islam spread widely throughout West Africa through these trade routes but did not exert much influence within the rain forest or coastal regions. With the arrival of the European maritime powers, attention increasingly turned south towards the coast. As a result increasing urbanization became one of the most striking changes among Ghanaian societies on the coast during the post-European contact period (Decourse & Spiers, 2009, p. 32).

The Portuguese arrived on the coast in 1471 and began construction of the Castle of Sao Jorge da Mina later known as Elmina Castle. The castle, completed in 1482, is the oldest slave trading post in West Africa. In its early days gold and ivory—not slaves—were the major exports through the castle, although slaves were purchased there and sold in Europe. Following the Portuguese Elmina, as a key trading port, was occupied by the Dutch in 1637, and then the British in 1872. Coastal trading forts such as the one at Elmina served as hubs of early contact between Africans and Europeans. The 16th century was the height of the gold rush in the Gold Coast, as Ghana was called throughout the colonial period. Enslaved Africans were being imported into the Gold Coast to work the mines, and few were being shipped out. In the 17th century, new military tactics based on

European firearms became widely adopted in the Gold Coast. Weapons purchased largely with gold began to arrive in the Gold Coast in huge quantities and led to large scale displacement of people and had significant impact on slavery. As former Vice-Chancellor of UCC Naana Opoku-Agyemang noted in her YoG lecture about Ganvie in Benin and Nzulezo in Ghana, people resisted slavery in unique and varied ways including developing settlements on large water bodies, thus using the natural environment as a means for self-preservation, and to defend themselves against slave raiders' attacks. They remain living in these isolated villages today in order to honor and remember the hardships endured by their ancestors (Opoku-Agyemang, 2012).

The majority of Africans brought out of the Gold Coast went to Jamaica and Barbados in the 18th century (Hall, 2005, p. 111-121). By the end of the 18th century, the strongest power in Ghana were the Asante who strengthened their position by trading for guns with the Fante and other coastal groups that traded with, but also suffered from diseases brought by Europeans. The exchange of plants, animals, and pathogens between Africa, Europe, and the Americas vastly changed the natural and cultural environment of the regions. While trade in food products eventually improved peoples' diets the world over, disease, the trade in weapons, and alcohol had much more immediate and enduring devastating effects.

Across West Africa, first the Portuguese and Spanish, followed by the Dutch, French, and British, bought and captured Africans who were then sold into slavery in the Americas. As many as 15 million Africans were taken to the Americas over the 400 years of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. As many as five times this number died in Africa and at sea. The African Slave Trade financed the Industrial Revolution and spurred Europe's economic ascendancy. Later, more mature forms of capitalism, along with the cost of enforcing slavery, and a growing awareness in Africa of the devastating conditions in the Americas for enslaved Africans, helped to destroy this same system of slavery (Williams, 1944). It is with the abolition of slavery in the early 1800s that the colonization of Africa begins in earnest, aided especially by Christian missionaries' intent on spreading not only Christianity but also Western civilization, commerce, and education.

British control over the Gold Coast expanded throughout the 1800s. Although as Kwame Appiah has observed, "the experience of these citizens of Europe's African colonies was one of essentially shallow penetration by the colonizer . . . the colonizers were never as fully in control as our elders allowed them to appear to be" (Appiah, 1992, p. 7). The British allied with the Fante against the Asante who were allied with the Dutch. The British eventually bought out the Dutch interests but they were never successful in fully defeating the Asante and suffered many defeats at their hands. The Gold Coast Colony was in effect limited to the coastal regions with the interior "protectorate," which marked by continuous resistance and negotiation. In 1874, the British were able to enter Kumasi, the Asante capital, and burn it to the ground, but the terms of the treaty that followed went largely ignored by the Asante. The British returned in 1900 with the intent of capturing the Golden Stool, a symbol of Asante power and authority, an embodiment of the spirit of Asante, and its source of unity. During that conflict the Asantehene was captured and exiled to the Seychelles islands. The queen mother of Ejisu and warrior Yaa Asantewaa managed to resist British troops for several months after the king's capture but she was also later arrested and exiled to the Seychelles.

For the next 50 years, new ideas of nationalism and self-determination were debated. Mostly coastal communities, the beneficiaries of Western education, attempted to assert their rights and desire for self-rule from British colonial authorities, while British rulers were happy to fuel a growing divide between educated Ghanaian elites and traditional elements of society. People such as T. Hutton Mills, J. Casely Hayford, John Mensah Sarbah, J. B. Danquah, and James K. Aggrey recognized this divide and rule strategy but were effectively unable to overcome it as the British increasingly supported what came to be known as “indirect rule,” preserving the authority of chiefs on whom the British depended to maintain control of the wider country. The role of chiefs in Ghana is perhaps one of the areas most contested and impacted by Western colonial and cultural intrusion. Because Europeans lacked an understanding of traditional Ghanaian political systems and structures, they attempted to supplant these and other indigenous institutions with their own. Nonetheless, despite predictions that their influence would fade after the end of colonial rule, traditional authorities continue to occupy a prominent place in Ghanaian society today (Berry, 2012). This in itself exemplifies the coexistence of tradition and “modernity.”

Following the two World Wars, the call for independence grew louder and more strident, and its chief spokesperson was Kwame Nkrumah who linked Ghanaian independence with the independence of the entire continent. He was well-educated and a skilled political organizer. He attended Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, founded the African Students Association of America, served as vice-president of the West African Students Union in London, and was joint secretary with George Padmore at the Fifth Pan-African Congress. The Akosombo Dam, built on the Volta River between 1961 and 1965, was one of Nkrumah’s most important and enduring legacies as it continues to provide a very large portion of Ghana’s electricity needs as well as the needs of some neighboring countries.

Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism, “Africa for the Africans,” was a direct response to European racism, a racism that evaluated cultures hierarchically and where traditional African culture was viewed as uncivilized, heathen, and savage (Nkrumah, 1973, p. 152-153). Unfortunately, this politics of race that championed African unity against European control, largely failed to develop a deeper understanding of the radically different colonial experiences and conditions of the various emerging African nations. Within Ghana, Nkrumah was a master at using traditional culture and pageantry to promote a sense of nationalism and his power as president, but he actively discouraged the use of such traditions and ceremonies among Ghana’s ethnic communities, especially if that could undermine national cohesion (Hess, 2006, p. 16-25). Certainly, the focus of Nkrumah’s Pan-Africanism emphasized political unification more than cultural parochialism. As Appiah critiques, “whatever Africans share, we do not have a common traditional culture, common languages, a common religious or conceptual vocabulary . . . Africans share too many problems and projects to be distracted by a bogus basis of solidarity” (Appiah, 1996, p. 26).

Following a series of highly contested elections and numerous acts of civil disobedience, the Gold Coast was the first African colony to gain independence from British rule on March 6, 1957 taking the name of Ghana, one of the great West African empires that had ruled vast territory in the nearby region from the fifth to the 13th century. Kwame

Nkrumah was elected the first president of the Republic of Ghana with 57% of the vote among registered voters or about 18% of the total adult population of the country.

Nkrumah was one of the first people to describe the exploitative economic relationships linking Africa to the colonial powers as a form of neocolonialism (Nkrumah, 1965). During the Cold War, Nkrumah increasingly found himself at odds with the West for his more socialist policies. Nkrumah's African-styled socialism advocated government-led development while permitting access to and investment by private capital. While African socialism bore little resemblance to Russian or Chinese communism, it still threatened Western capitalism, particularly in terms of its more traditional aspects emphasizing shared land use and communal labor. After surviving a coup attempt and other attacks on his life, Nkrumah increased his tight control on the reins of power becoming autocratic and oppressive.

Nkrumah was deposed in a military coup in 1966 ushering in a period of military rule, with brief periods of democratic civilian rule (1969-1972, 1979-1981). Between 1982 and 1989 there were more than 20 reported coup plots and attempted coups in Ghana. In the late 1980s Adu Boahen critically identified Ghana's major problems as lack of political stability, lack of accountability, lack of social justice, lack of national unity, lack of press freedom, and overall lack of national priorities. Political stability was slowly ushered in under Ghana's fourth republican constitution which came into effect in 1993, and in 1996, the first elected government since Nkrumah to complete its first term was elected to a second term, under the leadership of Jerry Rawlings. Peaceful and competitive elections have been held ever since in 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2012 with opposition parties gaining power in 2000 and 2008. The first article in this volume, by Kingsley Adjei, provides an in-depth analysis of Ghana's electoral system and its ability to fully and fairly provide adequate representation.

Ghana has been recognized for its democratic choices, good governance, and economic management in recent years. Successive governments during the fourth republic have generally increased accountability and transparency while reducing corruption. Real GDP growth rate in Ghana has been between 4% and 6.5% annually since 2000. Until recently Ghana's economy has tended to rely primarily on three main export commodities: gold, cocoa, and timber. The country is among the world's top gold and cocoa producers. Agriculture, including cocoa, is a mainstay of the economy, accounting for more than one-third of GDP and about 55% of employment. The second and third articles in this volume focus on the impact of mining on local farming communities and the environment. The article by Emmanuel Tenkorang and Patrick Osei-Kufuor examines social indicators to assess the environmental consequences of mining activities for sustainable land use, and the overall management of natural resources. The piece by Yaw Asamoah, Kwabena Antwi, Oheneba Akyeampong, Paul Baidoo, and Daniel Owusu-Koranteng reviews the role of Environmental NGOs in responding to environmental degradation and improving public decision-making and human rights.

In 2006, the average annual household income in Ghana was US\$1,327 and the average per capita income was US\$433 (Ghana Living Standards Survey Report, 2008). As an emerging middle income nation, Ghana faces many difficult challenges especially in alleviating poverty, providing adequate infrastructure, health care and schools, and generally providing better opportunities to its citizenry. Two articles in this volume deal specifically with education and health care. Douglas Agyei, in his article on technology inte-

gration in teacher education, finds that Ghana's challenges do not lie primarily in a lack of available equipment but in a shortage of skilled teachers. Solomon Sika-Bright and her colleague Georgina Oduro looked at breastfeeding practices of traditional migrant communities and factors influencing their choices and therefore the health of children.

Ghana's population is young, with approximately 38% of the population under the age of 14 (Gocking, 2005, p. 8-11). The informal economy accounts for much of the economic activity of Ghana. By some estimates, informal employment comprises nearly 80% of non-agricultural employment and represents over 90% of total employment. In this volume, Raphael Avoryno conducted research examining the role of rural women operating in the informal economy to assess their contributions to socio-economic well-being and to help determine what is needed to help expand their impact.

Education in Ghana is highly valued and women's education has been given greater importance in Ghana compared to many of its neighboring countries in West Africa. Dr. Kwegyir Aggrey's famous statement, "If you educate a man, you educate an individual. If you educate a woman, you educate a nation" speaks both to the importance of education in Ghana as well as to the importance given to women in Ghanaian society. The matrilineal culture of Ghana, where children belong to their mother's family lineage, and found mostly among the Akans, has perhaps been less antagonistic to women than that of other more patriarchal African countries and resulted in a larger role for women in the life of the nation. In this special issue, Philomena Okyeso examines the work of the Ghanaian feminist writer, Ama Darko, describing the complicated relationships among women as they respond to poverty, patriarchy, and poor governance. She places special attention on the role of the mother/daughter relationship, surrogate mothers, and male-female collaboration in overcoming such hardships.

Ghana has long played an important role in the imagination of African-Americans who long to return to "Mother Africa." Over the years, many prominent black leaders and scholars including people such as W. E. B. DuBois, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Richard Wright, Maya Angelou, and Barack Obama have visited Ghana. The symbolic return to Africa, to mourn the ancestors and recognize the strength of spirit needed to overcome the horrors of the middle passage and lives in bondage, is for many a sacred pilgrimage (Angelou, 1986). "Roots tourism" to Ghana is a major source of income for the country. Indeed, tourism today has expanded to include all types of travelers including local tourism from within Ghana and the West Africa region. Kwaku Boakye, Ferdinand Otibo, and Foster Frempong in their article on Ghana's tourism industry provide a detailed overview and assess its role as a pathway to development and means for diversifying the economy. Their detailed analysis provides valuable insights on how to move the industry forward. The next article in the volume by Hope Torkornoo discusses the role of corporate social responsibility and how multinational companies may contribute both to improve the quality of life for Ghanaians and improve their long-term economic interests as well.

Finally, President Mahama's speech on the Kennesaw State University campus is reprinted here and describes the beginnings of an African renaissance, one in which political impudence by the so-called "big man" political leaders is being replaced by accountable democracies. The president further described the economic transformations evidenced by remarkable growth in GDP, the continent's attraction of significant portions of global direct foreign investment, as well as rapid and increasing adoption of information

technology. Emphasizing the continent's growing economic empowerment, urbanization, and educated middle class, President Mahama noted, "The opportunities are tremendous. The growth in a youthful working population with preference for urban dwelling means opportunities for investment in communication technology, energy infrastructure, housing, social security, multi-modal transport networks, quality education, healthcare systems, and the public services." One of the highlights of his visit and talk was a student question from the audience asking about the role of women in leadership positions in Ghana. It came as quite a surprise to the audience when President Mahama began listing the numerous women in high-ranking governmental positions. These include six cabinet ministers (Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Justice and Attorney General, Education, Health, Transport, Women and Children's Affairs), as well as the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts, and the Chief Justice.

Like the tortoise in the story of the hare and the tortoise, Ghana has exercised patience, diligence, intelligence, and a cooperative spirit in moving the country forward. It is conscious of maintaining important traditional values while advancing modern solutions to emerging issues. Kwame Gyekye, in his book *African Cultural Values* underscored the significance of: 1. dignity and respect in our shared humanity; 2. the common good, interdependence, and mutual obligations of society; and 3. moral character, human rights, political participation, and consensus decision-making. These values are important to Ghanaians and are critical for a world faced with dwindling resources and increased demands. The world of the future will need a well-educated and responsible citizenry. It will require shared understanding and shared solutions to complex global problems. For these reasons, we selected as the theme of the Year of Ghana Conference "Ghana: A Model for Democratic Governance, Economic Growth and Sustainable Development?" Posed as a question, the papers in this volume seek to define the issues and point a way forward.

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