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BEEN-TO VISIONS: TRANSNATIONAL LINKAGES AMONG A GHANAIAN DISPERSED COMMUNITY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Introduction¹

While migration is not a new phenomenon in Kwawu, an Akan area of southern Ghana, the social, political, and economic landscape of Ghana has changed considerably throughout the twentieth century. These changes are reflected in shifting patterns of migration. As migrants have chosen destinations within and beyond Ghana, crossing regional and transnational boundaries, questions about who migrates, where they go, and the manner in which they leave challenge the academic legacy of typologies and theories deployed in migration studies. Scholarly accounts of the 1950s and 1960s standardized the strategies and variations of peoples' experiences, all of which were classified with the same descriptive catchword "labor migration," either as rural-rural (Rouch 1956), or as rural-urban journeys (Caldwell 1969). In fact, the diversity and complexity of actual patterns and experiences of migration confound simple models.² Moreover, economic "push-pull" theories present migrants as mere victims of socioeconomic transformations, seeking economic refuge, later characterized as an urban and a rural "problem." In such accounts migrants are granted little agency to cope with adverse

¹ We are deeply grateful to Edna S. Sampong and to E. K. Addo for their time and interest in this project. While revising drafts of this paper, Edna Sampong unexpectedly passed away in December, 1998. We are saddened that Edna Sampong did not see the completing of this project and dedicate this paper to her memory. We also thank Takyiwa Manuh and Alice O'Connor for their comments. Stephan Miescher wishes to acknowledge financial support to conduct oral and archival research in Ghana (November 1992 to November 1993, and August to December 1994) from the Wenner-Gren Foundation (Gr. 5561), the John D. & Catherine T. McArthur Foundation, the Janggen-Pöhn Stiftung, and Northwestern University, and from Bryn Mawr College which enabled him to return to Ghana in July 1997. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 41st Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Chicago, 1998.

² Hill's (1963) study is an early example exploring the complexities of migrants' experiences; she argued that migrant cocoa farmers from Akuapem were not just responding to economic forces by becoming dependent laborers but, as "rural capitalists," actively shaped the economy of colonial Ghana at the beginning of the twentieth century.

circumstances, in both their home and host settings. The scholarly convention to focus on *one* research site in describing migration has obscured migrational experiences (cf. Zachariah and Nair 1980), especially in regard to post-colonial transformations of space in a globalizing economy. A closer exploration of migrants' strategies for economic survival and life organization indicates that their relationships as people and the resources available to them have radically changed over time. The unfolding complexities make simple accounts of their activities difficult.

This paper foregrounds the story of an eldest daughter who ultimately succeeded as the head of a female household, after migrating from Ghana to the United States over thirty-five years ago. Our study includes *two* research sites and highlights the interconnections between members of dispersed communities, stretched across regional and transnational boundaries. We examine the life and work histories of migrants whose personal accounts reveal the subjective *experience* of migration. We argue that African migrants have been historical agents responding to changing socioeconomic environments while relying on social relations. Since the 1960s, migrants have expanded these complex social networks while increasingly crossing the former divide between colony and metropole, forming new transnational linkages that have led to a redefinition of home, identity, and space. Thus, not only economic access to resources in home and host settings, but also social relations—shaped by gender, age, marital status, presence and number of children—influence the experience of migration.

Context

In Ghana, Kwawu people are well known as migrant traders.³ At the beginning of the twentieth century, they began to concentrate their economic endeavors in the commercial centers of the cocoa growing areas in southern Ghana. Kwawu migrants formed diaspora communities in towns like Nsawam, Koforidua, and later Accra, while still investing their profits back in Kwawu, launching a cocoa industry and erecting buildings in their hometowns (Garlick 1967, 1971). For example, E. K. Addo (born 1906), belonged to the second generation of traders migrating to the south. In 1928, Addo opened his store selling imported goods in Nsawam and, subsequently, built a home in Kwawu. Addo and other Kwawu migrants engaged in "cyclical migration," as Phil Bartle later observed in the 1970s, since most of them frequently returned to their

³ For a fuller account of Kwawu since the late nineteenth century, see Miescher (1997) and Bartle (1978).

hometowns to attend funerals and to participate in family business. Although many migrants settled in their host communities, they returned to Kwawu later in life where they died, or were at least buried (Bartle 1978, 1980). E. K. Addo gave up his store in the early 1960s. While Addo kept his residence in Accra, he still maintained a strong presence in Abetifi, taking an active role in the "development" of his Kwawu hometown.⁴

Since the 1950s, migrations of Kwawu men and women, as well as other Ghanaians, have broadened. *First*, the coming of independence changed the flow of inter-African migration through the introduction of visa and passport regulations. Up to the 1960s, Ghana was a immigration country within West Africa. This had changed by the end of the decade, followed by mass emigrations in the 1970s and 1980s, due to Ghana's economic decline.⁵ In 1969-70, the Busia government expelled about 250,000 guest workers without residence permit, who were blamed for Ghana's economic problems (Peil 1974). Not unrelated to these drastic xenophobic measures, and reflecting Ghana's worsening economic crisis, thousands of Ghanaian men and women migrated in search for work, most notably to Nigeria during the oil-boom of the 1970s (Pellow and Chazan 1986; Rimmer 1993). In 1983, when the Nigerian economy faltered, over a million Ghanaians who had entered Nigeria without proper papers, or had over-stayed their work permits, were expelled from their host country and returned in a mass exodus to Ghana.⁶ Many of these migrants only stayed in Ghana temporarily. Either they returned to Nigeria or, especially those with more educational skills, looked for other destinations in West Africa, Europe, and North America.⁷ *Second*, since the 1950s, an increasing number of formally educated Ghanaians left for Europe and the United States to continue their studies following the example of Kwame Nkrumah who had attended Lincoln University and the University of Pennsylvania from 1935 to 1945 (Nkrumah 1957). The U. S. government, supported by private foundations,

⁴ E. K. Addo provided funds for the construction and maintenance of the Abetifi post office, and most recently, in 1994, financed the renovations of the local clinic. These investments gave him much prestige and status in Abetifi, see Miescher (1997: ch. 7).

⁵ In 1960, 828,000 people of foreign origin lived in Ghana, according to the 1960 census, representing 12 percent of the total population. By 1970, this number of foreigners dropped to 562,000, representing 6.6 percent of the total population, and by 1984 only 3.1 per cent of the total population, see Adeku (1995: 2) and cf. Zachariah and Nair (1980).

⁶ The figures of expelled Ghanaians are contested, Adepoju (1984: 432) mentions 700,000; the official record ranges from 900,000 to 1.2 million, Brydon (1985: 570). This event launched a scholarly attention for return migration, cf. Awusabo-Asare (1995).

⁷ See Peil (1995: 350ff) and Ter Haar (1998: 133).

provided funds to educate students from Africa, shaping the new leaders of emerging African nations, while also assuring African support for U. S. positions in an intensifying cold war struggle (Takougang 1995; Veroff 1963). Some students only sojourned briefly abroad; Rev. E. K. O. Asante from Abetifi, for example, received a scholarship to pursue theological studies in Scotland for one year in 1960 as a sign of recognition for his services as a Presbyterian missionary in Tamale.⁸ Others decided to remain in their host countries—due to the political and economic crisis in Ghana—forming new communities as Kwawu people, Ghanaians, and Africans.

African migrants to the United States have received little scholarly attention, especially compared to those from Eastern European, Latin American, and Asian countries (Kamya 1997: 156). Most studies of post-colonial African migrants focused on “involuntary migrations,” the fate of refugees who were forced to leave their home countries due to conflicts and natural disasters (see Malkki 1995). A few scholars explored “voluntary” migrations. Kofi Apraku (1991) and Joseph Takougang (1995) examined the economic impact of the so-called “brain drain” to the United States. They argued that highly educated professional men left their African countries because of political instability, “high rates of unemployment, low wages, corruption, and economic mismanagement” (Takougang 1995: 53), hence participating, as the 1972 UNCTAD conference stated, in a “reverse transfer of technology” (cf. Grey 1995).

According to a recent study, about ten to twenty percent of Ghanaian citizens live abroad (Peil 1995: 365). The history of these expatriate Ghanaian communities, however, has yet to be written. There is some incipient research on the experiences of Ghanaian migrants to Europe in the post-colonial era. In her study on African-led churches in the Netherlands and Europe, Gerrie ter Haar (1998) focuses on migrants from Ghana who, by the 1990s, have become the largest migrant minority from sub-Saharan Africa within the European Union.⁹ Ghanaian migrants to the United States have not been the focus of academic research (but see Manuh and Takyi in this volume). Their numbers have increased since 1965, when legislation eliminated the system of national

⁸ Interview with Rev. E. K. O. Asante, Abetifi, January 26, 1993 (#11).

⁹ In 1993, there were almost 80,000 Ghanaians officially registered in the European Union. This figure would be much higher, if it included all undocumented Ghanaian migrants. See Ter Haar (1998: 130), who explores the activities of an African church founded by a Ghanaian pastor in the Bijlmer district of Amsterdam since the 1980s. Cf. other recent studies about West African migrants in Europe by Carter (1997) and Manchuelle (1997).

quotas that had favored migrants from northern and western Europe.¹⁰ Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut (1990: 90ff.) have noted the high educational attainments of Ghanaians in the U. S. According to the 1980 U. S. census, 39.7% of the 7,564 Ghanaian migrants had completed four years of college or more. Rather isolated, but pertinent in the wealth of studies on this “new immigration” to the United States (Portes and Rumbaut 1990: 7), is the ongoing work of scholars who have examined the experiences of African migrant communities in North American metropolitan areas. Paul Stoller (1996) has studied West African traders in New York City; JoAnn D’Alisera (1997) and the African Immigrant Folklife Project at the Smithsonian (N’Diaye 1997) have focused on migrants in the Washington D. C. area. Most important for this paper is Takiwaa Manuh’s (forthcoming) study on the Ghanaian community in Toronto, Canada.

So far, much is missing in published migration studies. Few include an examination of the various sites through which a migrant moves (cf. Konadu-Agyemang this volume). Demographers, anthropologists, historians, and census takers tend to focus on *one* research site, while migrants come and go, facing expectations in home and host locations (cf. Ashbaugh 1996). Further, gender as an analytical category has been neglected; in most studies the experiences of women have been overlooked.¹¹ When women are mentioned, it is in their involvement in migration as wives accompanying and supporting their professional husbands (see Apraku 1991). Finally, we know little about those African migrants, with few educational credentials, operating at the margins of the host society.

Images of Migrations from Kwawu

When Stephan Miescher conducted historical research in Kwawu during the early 1990s, young men and women expressed their desire to go abroad. “Just for a few years,” they would say, “to get some capital for starting a business

¹⁰ National immigration quotas had been introduced in the United States during the 1920s. The 1924 National Origins Act limited immigration of each nationality to 2 percent of the number of persons of that nationality as determined in the 1890 census; in 1929, these quota were adjusted to the 1920 census. The 1965 amendments established annual ceilings for countries from the Eastern hemisphere and introduced immigration visas according to a seven-category preference system; see Tienda and Liang (1994).

¹¹ Cf. Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994. While most migration studies foreground male migrants, only a few examine questions of how the experience of migration has affected notions of masculinity. See Rouse (1992) and Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994).

back in Ghana."¹² During the course of many discussions and interviews, the names of children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews were mentioned. Lineage members were said to be living and working in localities as dispersed as Lagos, Ibadan, Lusaka, Johannesburg, London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Chicago, New York, Seattle, Toronto, and East Orange, New Jersey.¹³ Lineage members in *aburokyiri* (abroad) were quite present in the every-day lives of people in Kwawu, despite their physical dispersion over three continents. The pictures of these migrants hung on the walls. Their gifts of electronic equipment dominated sitting-rooms, their letters were eagerly read, or the absence thereof deplored. Their lives and possessions were debated, and their visits, often in combination with a major funeral, anxiously anticipated. Many of these migrant Kwawu men and women were frequently sending money home, helping to erect or renovate buildings. A few of these migrants had constructed impressive mansions for themselves. It appeared that most of them planned to return to Ghana, at least at retirement if not before. In case of unexpected death, their remains were, whenever possible, shipped back to be laid to rest in Ghanaian soil. Hence these mobile Kwawu men and women were not *immigrants* to North America, Europe, as well as to countries in West and Southern Africa, but rather participated, as Roger Rouse has argued for Mexican *migrants*, in a "transnational migrant circuit" (Rouse 1989: 26).

Upon Miescher's return visit to Ghana in 1997, another story began to emerge that diverged from the image of the idealized migrant. E. F. Opusuo, a retired educational officer (born c. 1923), narrated how his son went to Nigeria in 1987. Opusuo had been quite worried, for he did not hear from him for five years and only later learned that the son had migrated to the Netherlands. He commented that his son "did not do much there," since the son neither completed his education nor accumulated any capital to invest back in Ghana.¹⁴ Recently the son returned without showing any material benefits from his sojourn abroad. Another acquaintance, E. K. Addo, a retired trader and well-respected elder in Abetifi, spoke with pride about the migrations of his children: Andrews Adjei-Addo, a veterinarian in the United Kingdom, and Edna S. Sampong, a teacher in Seattle.¹⁵ Neither of them, however, returned to live in

¹² Miescher field notes, 1992-1994

¹³ Cf. interviews with E. F. Opusuo, Pepease, December 21, 1992 (#2); with Adelaide Saka Opong, Abetifi, April 14, 1993, with the assistance of Joseph Kwakye (#22); with Elizabeth Ntim, Abetifi, August 26, 1993, with the assistance of Pearl A. Fosu (#53); and with E. V. Osei Addo, Abetifi, July 24, 1997; see Miescher (1997).

¹⁴ Interview with E. F. Opusuo, Pepease, July 22, 1997 (#94), and see Opusuo (#2).

¹⁵ Interviews with E. K. Addo, Abetifi, July 21, 1997, and Accra, July 28, 1997.

Ghana. Andrews Adjei-Addo had died in the early 1990s and his remains were repatriated to Ghana. Edna Sampong had only visited twice in her thirty-seven years in the United States. Yet Kwame Fosu, who had witnessed an earlier conversation with Addo, commented afterwards: "He has done well and he is an accomplished man, because he has children abroad."¹⁶

For Fosu, the fact of having children abroad meant success for those left behind, regardless whether these migrants had fulfilled the expectations of the "ideal migrant." On the one hand, from the Ghanaian perspective in Kwawu, there is the image of the ideal migrant. This notion refers to young, ambitious sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews who will go abroad and further their educational credentials. They will earn enough money to establish themselves back home, or at least help relatives with expenses and investments at their place of origin. Upon the migrant's return, he or she will make parents and lineage elders proud. In Kwawu, there is much explicit discourse about this trajectory of migratory experience. On the other hand, there is a different reality. Some migrants do not return to resettle in Ghana. Others return without degree in hand, or without any savings to speak of. There are fewer conversations and more an implicit discourse about this other migratory reality. Statements about this latter experience are expressed with a sense of disappointment and loss. This discrepancy leads us to explore the following questions. What are the *experiences* of migration? How are migrants coping? Are they returning? If not, why not? How do the "been-to-visions," images of the world abroad produced by those left behind, compare with the lived realities of migrations? How are migrating men and women challenged to accommodate conflicting expectations from new environments and from extended families in Ghana, crossing cultural, geographical, and national boundaries? How do migrants cope with leaving behind social networks of support and entering harsh, often racist, cold, and unwelcoming surroundings and climates?

In this paper, we foreground the life of Edna S. Sampong. Her experience and her struggle with juggling conflicting expectations are not unique, although the details and specific circumstances of her life are. We do not strive to produce a representative study, rather we believe that the exploration of one subjective account provides us with a deeper insight into different aspects of a migratory life which would otherwise remain hidden behind quantitative figures. Our approach is not new, although it is less tried within the present context of expatriate Ghanaian communities in the United States.¹⁷ We are interested in

¹⁶ Interview with E. K. Addo, Abetifi, September 28, 1994, with assistance of Kwame Fosu (#81).

¹⁷ See Rouse (1992) for a discussion of the cultural politics of class transformation and workings of transnationalism played out in the subjective experiences and daily lives of two Mexican men living as migrants in the United States.

transnational linkages, in the complexity of the relations between migrants and family members left behind, especially in their symbolic importance played out in Edna Sampong's self-presentation, particularly in her relationship with her father. The literature on transnationalism and migration is growing rapidly, much of it based on research among Caribbean and Mexican migrants to the U. S.¹⁸ This "transnational approach" (Goldring 1996: 76) privileges transnational social spaces and focuses on multiple identities of migrants; it builds on an earlier work emphasizing social networks in facilitating the logistics of migration in sending *and* receiving countries (see Massey et al. 1987).

Edna S. Sampong's Migration

Our account of Edna Safoa Sampong's life is based on fifty hours of interviews in Seattle, conducted between January and November, 1998, mainly by Leslie Ashbaugh.¹⁹ Edna Sampong strongly feels that her story should be told and brought to the attention of wider audiences in the United States and Ghana. She was born to E. K. Addo and Beatrice Ohenewaa in March 1932 as the oldest of seven children. Her mother, Beatrice Ohenewaa (born 1913), a devout Presbyterian, attended Presbyterian schools, established by the Basel Mission, in her hometown of Abetifi. In 1931, Edna Sampong's parents had married. She was raised outside Kwawu in Nsawam, where her father owned and managed a store. Due to her father's successful trading business, she had access to wealth and enjoyed a certain privilege. Unlike many of her siblings, who were sent to stay with relatives and neighbors when Edna Sampong's mother became ill in 1945, she remained with her father and mother in Nsawam. Presbyterian values of discipline, hard work, and a strong emphasis on formal education were important in her childhood.²⁰ In 1948, after Edna Sampong had completed Standard VII, she enrolled as a boarding student at the Scottish Mission Girl's School in Aburi, one of the most renowned educational institutions for girls in colonial Ghana operated by the Presbyterian Church. She was encouraged by her parents to pursue a career in education emulating the model of the late I. O. Sampong, a relative and teacher, whose premature death has shaped the lives of Edna Sampong's father and his children up to the

¹⁸ For an introduction, see Glick Schiller et al. (1992) and Basch et al. (1994).

¹⁹ On January 11, 1998, Miescher had a long conversation with Edna Sampong in Seattle and introduced her to Ashbaugh (#1). In the course of a series of phone calls and exchanges of cards, Edna Sampong agreed to participate in this project. Ashbaugh continued the interviews in September, 1998.

²⁰ Interview with Edna S. Sampong, Seattle, September 2, 1998 (#2). For a discussion of the Presbyterian school system in colonial Ghana, see Miescher (1997).

present day.²¹ Following two years of teachers' training college, Edna Sampong started teaching elementary school at Suhum, Akyem Abuakwa, in southern Ghana.²²

Edna Sampong's life took an unexpected turn in 1955, after she gave birth to her daughter, Patience, out of wedlock. This caused quite some tensions, particularly with her father, E. K. Addo, since Edna Sampong had no intention of marrying Patience's father. While pregnant with Patience, Edna Sampong was also courted through letters by a distant relative, Paul Nketia Sampong, an Asante man pursuing a technical degree in London. Edna Sampong replied that she was "too heavy with a baby" and could not marry Paul Sampong. Still, he pursued the correspondence. He wrote, as Edna Sampong recalled, that he knew "how Ghana life could be. You carry somebody else's child, but you don't want to marry this person." Reminiscing about Paul Sampong sending a pair of shoes when Patience was born, Edna Sampong exclaimed, "he was so special!"²³

In Paul Sampong's absence, his mother and brother arranged and completed wedding negotiations with Edna Sampong's parents in Ghana. Edna Sampong made plans for her departure to the United States, including arrangements for the care of Patience with a cousin. Edna Sampong assumed this separation from her young daughter would be temporary. Paul Sampong, who was to begin a doctoral program in economics at the University of Minnesota in the fall of 1961, requested Edna Sampong's presence and physical support.²⁴ Her father, E. K. Addo, in the meantime, also arranged the studies of Edna Sampong's younger brother Andrews Adjei-Addo in the United Kingdom. One month after Andrews Adjei-Addo's departure, in August 1961, Edna Sampong migrated to the United States with the help of her father's financial and political clout. She entered the U. S. as one of 585 "quota immigrants" who were admitted from sub-Saharan Africa during the year ending on June

²¹ Sampong (#1). After I. O. Sampong's death in 1943, Edna Sampong's father, E. K. Addo, agreed to take care of Sampong's nine children. See interviews with E. K. Addo, Abetifi, September 28, 1994 with assistance of Kwame Fosu, and November 24, 1994, (#84) and (#81); cf. Miescher (1997: 449).

²² Interview with Edna S. Sampong, Seattle, September 16, 1998 (#3), and (#1).

²³ Sampong (#1).

²⁴ Interview with Edna S. Sampong, Seattle, October 10, 1998 (#6), and (#1).

30, 1962.²⁵ At that time, Edna Sampong fully expected to return to Ghana as soon as her husband completed his studies.²⁶

Familial expectations on both sides were high for the newlywed couple. In her mother-in-law's words, as Edna Sampong recalled, she was to "bring Paul home." Instead, her husband transferred to the University of Washington in Seattle, where, through Edna Sampong's babysitting, food sharing, and financial support from Ghana, the young couple lived hand to mouth until the coup against Nkrumah in 1966. The change of government in Ghana terminated Paul Sampong's stipend. With their U. S. born daughter, Beatrice, to support, no savings, and an unfinished degree, Paul Sampong was unwilling to return to Ghana, despite the loss of his scholarship. Because of Edna Sampong's permanent visa, they both were able to remain in the U. S. Advised by a friend, Edna Sampong secured subsidized housing for the young family in a public housing project. Through Edna Sampong's contacts at her Presbyterian church in Seattle, she solicited and obtained a permanent visa for her husband. Edna Sampong found work as a nurse's aid and nutritionist. Her earnings enabled her husband to continue his graduate studies in economics at the University of Washington. Paul Sampong found part-time work as a community outreach officer for Catholic services.²⁷

The couple continued to work toward the goal of returning home. Edna Sampong had completed a teacher's certificate program at a local community college and found a job with Head Start in her Seattle neighborhood of High Point. Beatrice, their young daughter, performed well as a second generation Ghanaian-American in the public school system. They managed well until Paul Sampong's unexpected death in September 1972. Edna Sampong's father, E. K. Addo, strongly encouraged her to bury her husband in the U. S. and return to Ghana.²⁸ With tremendous personal and financial support from her church,

²⁵ Until the 1960s the U. S. immigration records never included the country of origins of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa (with the exception of South Africa). During the year ending June 30, 1962, 682 immigrants from sub-Saharan African countries (excluding South Africa) were admitted to the United States, 585 of them were so-called "quota immigrants" and 97 were "nonquota immigrants"—referring to other categories such as spouses of U. S. citizens; spouses and children of Western hemisphere countries (North and South America); ministers, their spouses, and children, cf. U. S. Department of Justice (1962: 23). The 1952 Immigration Act excluded the Western Hemisphere from the quota system, Tienda and Liang (1994: 356).

²⁶ Sampong (#6).

²⁷ Interview with Edna S. Sampong, Seattle, October 7, 1998 (#5), and (#1).

²⁸ Sampong (#3) and (#6). Whenever possible, families of Ghanaian migrants have sought to repatriate the bodies of relatives who died outside the country, cf. Bartle (1978: 391ff.). When Edna's brother Andrews Adjei-Addo died in 1992, he was cremated—a highly unusual practice for Akan people—and his ash was transported back to Abetifi, see interview with Rev. E. K. O. Asante (#11), a relative of E. K. Addo.

however, and by piecing together an income through public assistance (housing and food stamps) and her minimum wage job with Head Start, Edna Sampong chose to remain in the United States. She cites personal health problems and Beatrice's education as the reason for this choice.²⁹

Despite vast cultural differences in the childhood experiences of mother and daughter, Edna Sampong was able to raise Beatrice with the core values of her *own* upbringing, a life centered around church and school. Taking advantage of affirmative action goals in education during the late 1970s, Beatrice won a scholarship to Seattle's most prestigious prep school, Lakeside. From there she was admitted with full scholarship at Harvard University. She now holds a master's degree from Boston University.³⁰ Beatrice's educational success received press coverage as an example of overcoming the odds of her "low-income High Point housing Project in West Seattle" where, according to a writer of the *Seattle Times*, "discouragement and defeatism is as pervasive as the attendant poverty."³¹

Throughout Edna Sampong's time in the United States, she kept physical as well as emotional links to Kwawu and Ghana. Twice she returned to Ghana accompanied by her daughter, Beatrice, once in 1978 and again in 1988. She maintained social relations with Kwawu by writing letters and, increasingly, by making phone calls. Extended family members visited her, and she, in turn, sent visitors to stay with kin in Ghana. Edna Sampong took advantage of visits home by fellow Ghanaians, sending gifts and small amounts of money. More recently, and since our conversations began, E. K. Addo passed away, and Edna Sampong participated in the planning of his memorial.³²

In the early 1980s, Edna Sampong became a U. S. citizen. At that time she tried to enable her older daughter, Patience, to join her in the United States. Edna Sampong received help from a lawyer whom she had met through Beatrice's student activities at Seattle's Lakeside school. Recalling additional concerns about her health, Edna Sampong commented, "When you get sick, it's better to be a citizen."³³ As a naturalized American, however, she had to relinquish her Ghanaian citizenship. Within her adopted American social

²⁹ Sampong (#3) and (#6).

³⁰ Interview with Edna S. Sampong, Seattle, September 23, 1998 (#4).

³¹ Shella Anne Feeney, "Optimism helps Lakeside grad overcome barriers," c. 1981; a clipping of the article, without date, is in the possession of Edna Sampong. Beatrice's educational achievements were also mentioned in another article, "Happy Birthday Head Start," in *Seattle Times*, October 19, 1990.

³² Interview with Edna S. Sampong, Seattle, November 11, 1998 (#8), (#6), and phone conversation, February 1, 1998.

³³ Sampong (#6).

network in Seattle, Edna Sampong constructed multiple identities, engaging with her Ghanaian origins and her North American environment. She lived her life as a cultural broker. As a teacher, a mother, and church member, she proudly educated Americans, explaining her cultural practices. Even her cooking abilities, as Edna Sampong discussed them, became a metaphor for the various identities she privileged. She recalled learning how to prepare a Thanksgiving turkey, but admitted that she often consulted recipes when cooking other American food. Ghana was more frequently evoked in her kitchen.³⁴ During Beatrice's childhood, Edna Sampong hosted parties for her daughter's friends with food and music from Ghana. Up to her sudden death in December 1998, she continued to cook and share Ghanaian food with new and old acquaintances alike.³⁵ As the only African in the Madrona Presbyterian Church—one of two Presbyterian churches in Seattle of mixed race—she sang and translated hymns for the congregation. Most recently, she introduced a Twi hymn in honor of her deceased father. Edna Sampong stated that she made a conscious decision "to keep her West African accent."³⁶ A resident in a politically conservative state that is 88.5% white, her West African accent became a protective shield against racist attack.³⁷ In many ways, through her very presence in her low-income neighborhood, Edna Sampong served as a cultural interlocutor—a representative of Ghana who renews emotional links with her home through everyday actions, inscribing her "transient texts in the minutiae of daily experience" (Rouse 1991: 19).

Discussion

Although Edna Sampong came to the United States *before* the increased migration of people from Africa, Asia, and South America following the end of the quota system in 1965, her account supports patterns that have been highlighted in the migration literature. According to the typology suggested by Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut (1990), Edna Sampong and her husband, Paul Sampong, belonged to the category of professionals, or students with professional aspirations, who did not settle in places with pre-existing

³⁴ Interview with Edna S. Sampong, Seattle, October 28, 1998 (#7).

³⁵ Sampong (#3).

³⁶ Sampong (#7).

³⁷ According to the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, "Data Sheet for Seattle," published by the Office of the Mayor, Paul Schell (Seattle, 1998), 88.5% of the State of Washington's population is classified as white, 3.1% as African-American, 4.31% as Asian, and 4.4% as Hispanic.

ethnic networks, unlike many labor migrants from Mexico and the Caribbean.³⁸ Rather, the couple moved to cities where Paul Sampong had been admitted to universities, first to Minneapolis and then to Seattle. Moreover, since few Ghanaians migrated to the U. S. prior to the 1970s, the couple could not rely on already existing Ghanaian communities upon their arrival.³⁹ At least initially, contacts with other Africans were helpful in organizing their lives. As a student at the University of Washington, Paul Sampong served as president of the African Students Association. Although there were tensions between Ghanaian and Nigerian students because of disagreements over the ideology of Kwame Nkrumah's Ghanaian government, for the most part, the organization embraced Pan-African ideas. After her husband's death, Edna Sampong maintained only few contacts with Ghanaians and other African migrants in the Seattle area. Although the community of Ghanaians grew over the years, Edna Sampong only rarely attended meetings. She acknowledged a significant age gap between herself and more recent migrants from Ghana who would not listen to her advice. Since the 1980s, she shifted her attention to relatives who had also migrated to the United States. It became easier to maintain this family network by telephone, sharing news from Ghana, due to ever increasingly affordable long distance rates.

As highlighted in the migration literature, Edna and Paul Sampong planned a temporary stay in the U. S. Despite their articulated goals of returning "home," neither of them did so.⁴⁰ After her husband's death, Edna Sampong weighed her options and concluded, as she recalled, that despite lack of kin based support and without the financial support of her husband, living conditions in the States would still be "better" for herself and Beatrice than life in Ghana.⁴¹ She made this decision, when Ghana experienced an increasing

³⁸ Portes and Rumbaut's (1990: 14ff.) typology includes labor migrants, professional migrants (including students), entrepreneurial migrants, as well as refugees and asylees. The majority of Cuban migrants in the U. S. are in the Miami area and parts of New Jersey; Haitians are concentrated in south Florida; Dominicans in the New York City area. Most Mexican migrants have gone to California, parts of Texas, as well as the Chicago area, Washington D. C. and New York City, see Goldring (1996: 98n).

³⁹ Portes and Rumbaut (1990: 90ff.) argue that the lack of an established ethnic base forced Ghanaian migrants to confront U. S. labor market conditions directly, leading to significant lower household incomes (\$12,862 in 1979) compared with those of Dominican migrants with less education (\$15,290), but benefiting from strong ethnic communities in the U. S.

⁴⁰ Takougang (1995: 55) mentions marriages to U. S. citizens, the need to provide a "better life for children," or "failure to achieve educational objectives," as reasons for remaining in the U. S. Apraku (1991: 19ff.) explores economic and political reasons for continued stay.

⁴¹ Sampong (#7).

economic down-turn during the early 1970s (Pellow and Chazan 1986; Rimmer 1993). Through the 1980s and 1990s, as a single mother, as a widow, and as a black woman, Edna Sampong's life was "not easy," as she phrased it.⁴² Born into a wealthy family, dominated by her father, E. K. Addo, and his brothers, all well-to-do traders, she experienced a form of class transformation as part of her migration. In the U. S., as a widowed mother, she had to depend on public assistance and no longer enjoyed the status and support she was accustomed to in Ghana. Yet Edna Sampong skillfully navigated within the system of public aid and negotiated a place for herself and Beatrice whereby she achieved the very goals she was raised to strive for. Her daughter graduated from Harvard! Contrary to recent trends in the migration literature, Edna Sampong quickly learned the intricacies of the public aid system, when her circumstances worsened.⁴³

This said, Edna and Paul Sampong's account is not the success story of the promising migrants, certainly not from the perspective of those still in Kwawu. As far as those in Ghana are concerned, Edna Sampong's story is one of unfulfilled expectations. She did not return and resettle in Ghana. She did not build a house. She did not send extravagant gifts. Nor did she enable relations to join her in the U. S. She was not able to help others establish businesses.⁴⁴ In fact, in the early days when Paul Sampong was a full-time student, she was supported financially from Ghana. The couple did not succeed in sending remittances home and Paul Sampong did not obtain the prestigious degree he had set out to complete.

This is the point at which Kwawu perceptions of Edna Sampong's reality in the U. S. differ radically from her actual life situation, and where links to home become problematic, and must be examined beyond remittances.⁴⁵ Within the context of the United States, Edna Sampong's existence was marginal. Despite her skillful negotiation of the public aid world, Edna Sampong's hard-earned access to resources did not transfer home. Food stamps, housing subsidies, and scholarships for a child who remained in the U. S. were of little

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jensen (1989: 30) has argued that most recent immigrants remained reluctant to utilize public assistance programs and, instead, turned to informal sources of financial assistance. For an overview about the debate over the connections between poverty and immigration, see Tienda and Liang (1994).

⁴⁴ According to a report in *West Africa* No. 4041, 1995, p. 421, Ghanaian migrants in the U. S. regularly send \$200-250 million per year benefiting the housing industry in Ghana, as well as expenses for education and health care—cited in Peil (1995: 359).

⁴⁵ Discussing linkages to home countries, the migration literature foregrounds the practice of regularly sending remittance, e.g. Apraku (1991: 16) and Peil (1995).

value in Ghana. Edna Sampong did well, given the enormous structural constraints she faced. In relative cultural isolation, as a widowed black woman in the U. S. without transferable educational credentials, she maintained and created an identity for herself. She survived most obstacles and educated her daughter.

In her decision-making process and in the organization of her life, she drew on North American and Ghanaian cultural values, engaging in a "cultural bifocality" (Rouse 1992: 41). Following Rouse, the argument can be made that Edna Sampong did not fuse her Ghanaian past with her North American present into some kind of syncretic value system. Rather, she learned to see the world alternatively through quite different lenses. Because of her migration and settlement experience, Edna Sampong developed a new assertiveness as female household head gaining additional autonomy, especially after her husband's death.⁴⁶ She adjusted her gender norms in the absence of a husband, father, and maternal uncle. Instead, she referred to the importance of the nuclear family in the U. S. Nevertheless, Edna Sampong continued to place emphasis on the perspective of her migration from back home, within her account reflected—almost as leitmotiv—in her complex relationship with her father. Although Kwawu people practice matrilineal descent, in her self-presentation Edna Sampong continuously returned to this daughter-father relation while saying little about her ties with her matrilineage. This close paternal connection throughout her migratory experience, as well as her silence about her matrilineage, challenges Ter Haar's (1993: 136) argument about "weaken[ing] emotional relationship[s]" between fathers and offsprings in matrilineal societies "encourag[ing] migration."

Social relationships were central to Edna Sampong's survival. In Ghana, her father, E. K. Addo, helped her to obtain an immigrant visa to the United States and sent her money in times of need. Moreover, building on her social relations, she was able to leave her first-born daughter, Patience, in full-time care with a relative. In Seattle, Edna Sampong's contacts with her church were significant in her struggle. Members of the Madrona Presbyterian Church provided her with knowledge about access to welfare programs and helped her to bury her husband after his sudden death. As the only Ghanaian in this church, Edna Sampong drew strength from the Presbyterian environment, since she succeeded in establishing a connection with her own upbringing in a Presbyterian setting in colonial Ghana. Understanding Edna Sampong's support groups, including transnational linkages, is crucial to a reconstruction of her migration experience. This importance of social relations, however, has

⁴⁶ About the connections between gender and migration, see Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994).

been largely neglected in the migration literature which remains preoccupied with a singular focus on macroeconomic push/pull factors and economic aspects such as the brain drain from Africa (e.g. Peil 1995; Apraku 1991).

Conclusion

This paper addresses a neglected area of Ghana's recent past. In the post-colonial world, the study of Africa needs to include dispersed communities, stretched across time and space, in which migrants such as Edna and Paul Sampong cross transnational boundaries while maintaining multiple and complex linkages with locations and people referred to as home (cf. Goldring 1996). A history of post-colonial migrations is embedded in dramatic shifts reflecting larger political and economic transformations of global capitalism. For example, in the 1960s, when Edna Sampong followed her husband to the United States, many African men were able to pursue their studies in institutions of higher learning abroad, in Europe and North America, with few hurdles, compared to the strict visa regulations of the 1990s. In the 1960s a sense of support of African migrants, combined with excitement about the new African nations, prevailed. Thirty years after independence, borders in the old colonial metropolises, including North America, have become tightly guarded. This anti-migrancy trend has produced metaphors such as "fortress Europe" and nativist sentiments in the United States directed against unwanted economic competition from industrious migrants prepared to undercut sinking wages, but perceived as abusing public assistance. For example, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), as well as recent legislation in the 1990s, has explicitly responded to a popular view, promoted in the media, that the United States has been "losing control of its borders."⁴⁷

Contrary to dominant trends in the migration literature, we argue for a qualitative approach by foregrounding individual life histories. We believe that tables, numbers, and graphs are limited in their ability to represent the experiences of migrating African men and women. Personal accounts and migration histories, however, reveal the social, political, economic, and emotional *relationships* between people, those migrating and those back home. For example, the crucial linkages in Edna Sampong's account between Seattle

⁴⁷ Portes and Rumbaut (1990: 222). The IRCA of 1986 introduced mechanisms to stem the influx of undocumented immigrants and placed a five-year moratorium on access to welfare benefits to legalized immigrants, cf. Tienda and Liang (1994: 361). For a discussion on the xenophobic impact of the IRCA among female migrants from Mexico, see Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994: 176ff.). For anti-immigration policies and sentiments in Europe, see Ter Haar (1998: 110ff).

and the Kwawu communities in Ghana cannot be fully measured in dollars sent home as "remittances." Rather, as Edna Sampong's case shows, the money she managed to send home does not highlight the essence of her involvement in the dispersed Kwawu community. Her account demonstrates that men and women approached migratory experiences differently. While Paul Sampong went abroad to pursue educational credentials, Edna Sampong followed him as wife, depending on *his* settlement decisions while making *her* crucial contribution to their emotional and economic survival. Migration, thus, needs to be explored as a gendered experience. Edna Sampong's engagement and struggle with hardships as an African widow and female household-head in the United States must be recognized. She negotiated quite successfully with the available options in Seattle by securing the desired education for her daughter and by making a living despite failing health and cultural isolation. In Kwawu, Edna Sampong and other migrants remained present in their absence. They became the focus of implicit and explicit expectations and hopes, while also unwillingly contributing to the production of powerful images about the meaning and possibilities of transnational migrations. Needless-to-say in Edna Sampong's account, these been-to visions had little correlation to her experience as a Kwawu migrant in the United States.

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