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Special Issue Editors' Note

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The Ghana Studies Association held its first triennial conference from March 23 to 26, on the campus of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi. It was an exciting three days that bubbled over with scholarly panels, day-trips to historic sites in and around Kumasi, cultural presentations, engaging intellectual exchanges between panel sessions and over shared meals, and, of course, lively debates. The conference theme was "Perspectives on Ghana" and the goal was to fully capture the myriad issues, methodologies, and fields through which scholars currently explore the country. Forty-five scholars from nine countries presented papers that examined such themes as urban planning and oil wealth in Takoradi, nineteenth-century Gold Coast intellectuals, the West African film industry, Ghanaian immigrants in Canada, the challenges of deforestation, and the politics of sexual techniques among heterosexuals, to name but a few. The nine articles in this special issue of *Ghana Studies* are representative of the excellent scholarship that the conference brought together.

Samuel Amoako's contribution examines union activism among teachers during the Rawlings regime to highlight the challenges to workers and unions during the transition from military to democratic rule. Focusing on the same period, Prince Osei-Wusu Adjei, Peter Ohene Kyei, and Kwadwo Afriyie's study of Ghana's economy during the so-called "lost decade" of the 1980s explores the effects of the global economic crisis and Ghana's embrace of structural adjustment.

Kwame Essien's contribution compellingly links the histories of three diasporic communities to three different historical periods,

to make the case that “returnees” have been integral to Ghana’s history and development. Drawing on archival records and oral interviews, he reconstructs efforts from within these “returnee” groups to establish a place within Gold Coast and Ghanaian society. Florian Carl provides a performance-oriented analysis of popular Christianity and gospel. He examines the various forms of gospel music in Ghana and richly illustrates the interface between ritual and media. In their article, Albert A. Arhin and Mohammed-Anwar Sadat Adam examine the various approaches that the Ghanaian government has taken to address deforestation and forest degradation.

Two articles in this special issue address local society and politics in Northern Ghana, one from a historical perspective and the other taking an anthropological approach. Felix Y.T. Longi historically contextualizes recent ethnic conflicts in Bawku. He argues that British colonial rule fostered ethnically-based political competition by defining local power along ethnic lines. Similarly, Giulia Casentini looks at the ways in which the British demarcated borders in the eastern part of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast and examines contemporary conceptions of these borders among the Konkomba, Dagomba, and Nanumba communities who live along and astride them.

Nineteenth-century histories are examined in two articles. Esperanza Brizuela-Garcia interrogates cosmopolitanism in the Gold Coast through the writings of Joseph Ephraim Casely-Hayford, John Mensah Sarbah and Carl Christian Reindorf. Pierluigi Valsecchi presents an original analysis of two 1849 estimates of the population of Dixcove and Appolonia as windows to the status of slaves and pawns in the western Gold Coast within the colonial archives.

Taken together, the articles in this special issue speak to the rich diversity of methods that scholars continue to employ toward providing a deeper understanding of a wide range of topics concerning Ghanaian societies, past and present. We are grateful to our colleagues who peer-reviewed the submissions for this issue, and to Sean Hanretta and Akosua Darkwa, the editors of *Ghana*

Studies. Generous support from Temple University, Wake Forest University, and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science Technology helped make the conference possible. Dr. Wilhelmina Donkoh was a gracious and resourceful chair of the Local Arrangements Committee in Kumasi, and serves as co-guest editor of this special issue. Finally, special thanks to the Ghana Studies community for its continued support of *Ghana Studies* and the Ghana Studies Association.

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