

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

ETHNIC TRANSFORMATION AMONG THE GAO PEOPLE OF

ZABRAMA LINE, ACCRA

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that except for references to other people's work which have been acknowledged, this essay is the result of my own research work carried at the Department of Sociology under the supervision of Prof. Steve Tonah and Dr. James Dzisah.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to my wife Anita Gamado and our children, Selorm and Kafui for their continuous support to reach this far.

Also to my mother and siblings, Adjovi Dzamenu, Moses and Patience Gamado.

Finally, I will like to appreciate my friends at Wordlife Family Chapel for the encouragement.



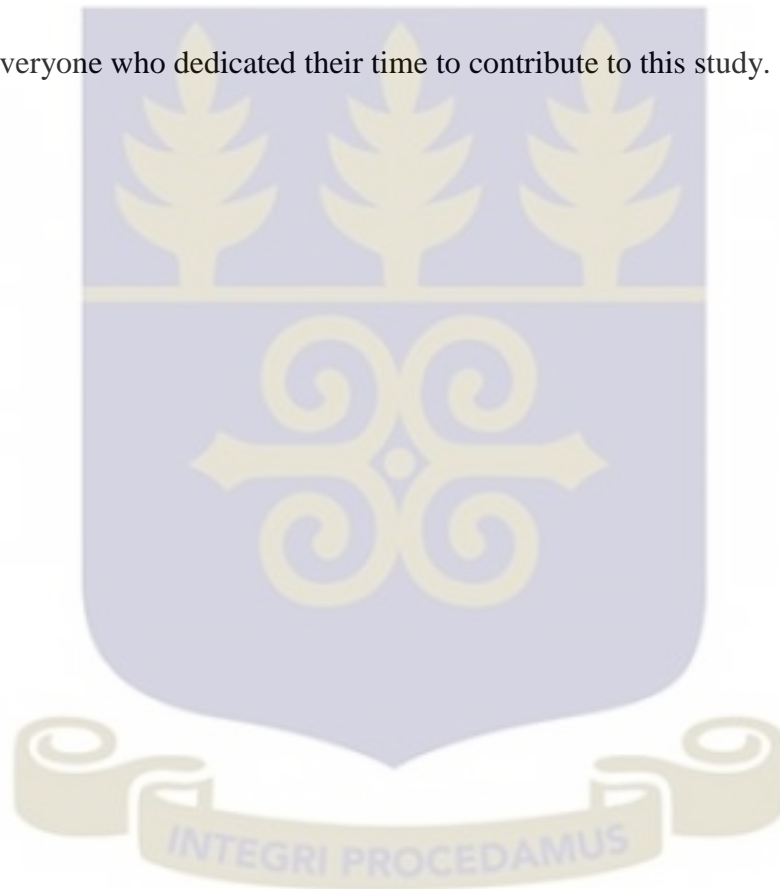
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To God be glory for providing everything required to reach this far.

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ABSTRACT

Urbanism carries within itself a complex web of social experiences and systems which rewards creativity and innovation other than a routine repetitive lifestyle. Social change remains a constant encounter in all human settlements but appears to be most visible in the urban social space. Change in itself is the hegemony between existing and new social ideas which is measured by how these ideas improve social lives. People in urban areas are bound to encounter temptations to alter their normative ways of life owing to the prevalence of new and different ways of doing things.

This research explores the effect of urbanism on the social lives of ethnic migrants from the West Africa regions who have settled in the city of Accra. It examines how the different generations of Gao people in Accra cope with city life. Especially, the cultural practises and intergenerational gaps between the youth, adults and elderly Gao people. The study discusses the living arrangements, lifestyle changes, migration, settlement patterns and social relations this group of people have practised over the years. It does this by collecting qualitative data on the changing trends in the social institutional practices of the different generations of Gao people.

The data indicates changes in the lifestyle of Gao people over the years. However, in the midst of these changes, they have been able to keep their social identity and maintain their cultural heritage. They have also been able to integrate into their local community. As expected, the social outlook of younger generations is quite different from the older generations. Cultural practices such as betrothal has declined, family sizes are on the decrease and females have more freedom to socialize beyond the household.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

One outstanding fact of urban communities is the presence of people of diverse ethnicities sharing a common social space. This fact informs the choice of social interaction including inter ethnic relationships. Social interaction is about building social bridges across different ethnicities for various reasons. The presence of various ethnicities means the prevalence of divergent views of life which fuels social change at a rapid pace in the city.

According to Burgess, ethnic migrants in the city essentially go through the process of ethnic “disorganization, reorganization and differentiation” (1984:2), a process synonymous to essential bodily changes or growth for humans which is necessary to maintain social identity. This implies that migrants in the urban space let go off some of their cultural practices for the preservation of the vital others which they deem necessary for urban social life. Though social change is visible and traceable across all societies, it seems to be most expressed in ethnic groups who have less influence in the city such that they are often influenced by the social dynamics of the city, to wit, “when in Rome, you do what the Romans do”. This can lead to the creation or formation of new social identities which may be different from the indigenous cultural ways.

However, ethnic transformation amongst ethnic minorities in the urban space is most visible over appreciable periods of time especially among ensuing generations. Younger generations are most susceptible and predisposed to ethnic transformations compared to their forbears. The rate of transformation is however subject to certain prevailing factors depending on the space and time. People of the same cultural origins who find themselves at different locations or periods will encounter different types of transformation, thus the

need to investigate ethnic transformations in the social institutions of ethnic minorities in order to succinctly describe the changing trends of their social lives in the city.

1.2 Problem Statement

Internal and external factors contribute to ethnic transformations which ultimately results in alterations in the traditional institutions of communities. Change in one social institution often has repercussions on the others thus affecting the cultural ways of life as a whole.

Gao people as migrants from the northern rural parts of Mali reside in cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic, secular and Christian dominated city of Accra therefore have to adjust to city life over the years. Their interaction with neighbours and people with different ethnicities, religion, cultures and social practices inevitably results in change. Thus traditional Gao cultural practices are undergoing several changes due to urbanization, education, secularization and so on.

This study intends to analyze how the different generations, age groups and sexes are coping with life in the city of Accra. For instance a cursory look at Gao people in Accra reveal differences among the aged, middle aged and the youth. The aged and the middle aged appear to resort to their customary practices often whereas the youth refer to traditional customs occasionally when the need arises. Also, older generations of Gao people seem to prefer Arabic education due to its religious significance though the same cannot be said of younger generations who seem to prefer formal Ghanaian education.

Traditionally, males are the breadwinners whereas females are supposed to be bread processors. Females are supposed to shun the public space and so cover themselves with long black robe (Hijab or Jilbaabu) which is largely a religious compliance. They are to exhibit shyness in their social interaction with others especially males. However city life

seems to have altered this since some females have ventured into trade which has led to some form of economic freedom for them. Also, single parenting appears to be prevalent among Gao people where the welfare of children or the young is mostly left in the hands of their mothers. This situation appears to be as a result of the traditional marriage practices especially preference for large family size. Gao people mostly practice marriage by betrothal where females are married to men who are seen to be capable of caring for them. However, some females get married to older men who may have other wives and children as old as themselves. There is thus a high tendency for such men to marry more wives, divorce or even die interstate leaving their younger wives and their children with less support. This has largely led to a situation where parents seek to equip their female children with some economic skill before they get married.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 Main Objectives

Provide an overview of the changes in the cultural practices of Gao people in Zabrama Line.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To describe the migration and settlement of the Gao people in Zabrama Line.
2. To explain changes in the living arrangements, family sizes and inter ethnic relations among Gao residents of Zabrama Line within the last two decades
3. To explore lifestyle changes among the Gao people in Zabrama Line over the last two decades.

1.4 Definition of Terms

- Youth: - Persons aged between 15 and 30 years.
- Adults: - Persons between the ages of 31 to 45 years.
- Older Adults: - Persons who are 46 years and above.

1.5 Study Area

This study was conducted at Zabrama Line, a suburb of Accra which is one of the communities in the Shukura locality of Ablekuma Central Sub Metropolitan District Council of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA). Zabrama – Line is about 11 kilometers from Accra and is between Fadikafuuta (in Shukura) and Dansoman Sahara in the western parts of Accra.

Much of Zabrama Line and its catchment area was believed to have been covered by dense forest of which only a few remnant trees survive. Climatic change and human activities have adversely affected the vegetation in the area. Constant felling of trees, sand winning and burning of rubbish has altered the vegetation from “dry forest” and greatly depleted the fertility of the soil. Most roads in the catchment area are not surfaced and side drains are mainly uncovered. The channels become convenient places for the dumping of refuse. This, combined with erosion, results in choked and silted drainage channels.

With an estimated 2010 year population of about 47,844 people (2010) as projected from 2010 National Population and Housing Census by the Ghana Statistical Service, Sukura, one of the localities in Ablekuma Central Sub-Metropolitan District Council has contributed to the fast growing population of the sub Metro. The 2000 census estimates the sex ratio at 1:1.04 males to females. The housing landscape of the area is characterized by

an area comprising of a mixture of very low-density development with under-utilised service infrastructure on one hand and indigenous, low class developments with depressed conditions and over stretched infrastructure services on the other. The total number of houses in the locality according to the 2000 population and housing census is 2,626 with 6,540 households.

Zabrama Line is a low income area surrounded by other communities such as Fadi Kafuta, Losso Park, New Russia, Banana Inn and Dansoman. The AMA (2010) regards the area a fourth class residential area mostly inhabited by non indigenous Muslims from various origins in the West Africa Region. Some of the notable ethnic groupings in the area are Zabarima, Gao, Fulani, Yoruba, Akan, Ewe, Ga, Dagomba and others. The Accra Metropolitan Assembly regards Zabrama Line a fourth class residential area along side others such as Shukura, Chorkor, and Darkuman. The main sector of economic practice in the area is private informal trade. Islam appears to be the predominant religion in the area compared to others since mosques are common sites.

The study site is traditionally referred to as Sempe New Town and falls under the jurisdiction of the Sempe Mantse who is a sub – chief in the Ga state. The Sempe Mantse extends his authority or influence in the area via the leader of the ‘headmen’ in the area – Alhaji Zaaku III. The lead headman – himself a Zabarima – leads and represents a council of other headmen who are representatives of ethnic groups like the Gao, Ewe, Fulani, among others though the presence of the council appears to have waned down since younger generations seem disinterested in inheriting and playing such roles.

1.6 Organization of Work

This work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter includes the introduction, problem statement, objectives, conceptual definitions, literature on the study area and the limitation of study among others.

Chapter Two looks at existing literature on the social lives of urban minority groups emphasizing on discussions on ethnicity, ethnic transformation, migration, formation of migrant communities, social status of urban migrants and economic practice of ensuing generations of migrants. It also delves into the main theory guiding the research.

The third chapter covers the history and social lives of Gao people in Zabrama – Line providing a retrospective account of the group in the study area. Emphasis is made on the political arrangements, religious lives and educational aspirations of the Gao people. It chronicles the family / marriage, economic and health practices of the study group.

Chapter four provide details on the research method used in the study and the rationale for the choice of method. It also discusses the data collection tools used in the study.

The collected data is analyzed in chapter five based on thematic areas where findings are presented in narratives and quotes.

The final chapter of this study is Chapter Six which provides a summary of the study, recommendations and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reading through studies on the subject of ethnic transformation among minorities in urban areas, it is clear that scholars have concentrated on areas such as ethnicity, ethnic transformation, the status of migrants and economic practice of ensuing generations of migrants in the city among others. The chapter also discusses ethnic transformation in light of an acculturation theory.

2.1 Ethnicity and inter – ethnic relations

According to Assimeng (2006), “when we are born, we are basically organism. We are not born as persons, although we bring into the world the potential and the capacity to become so” (p. 16). Being a person implies socializing a biological organism – that is humans – with a set of norms which could be traced to a social group. This indicates that though humans are basically organisms, their social reality is constructed on the type of human relations they find themselves in. The popular phrase “no man is an island” indicates the extent to which people cherish their social relationships and networks. For Evans – Pritchard (1940:282), “a man is a member of a group in virtue of his non – membership of another group”. Membership to a group is the basis for the formation of ethnic groups. Van der Berghe (1978) describes an ethnic group as a “collectivity that defines itself, and is defined by others, as possessing certain distinguishing cultural attributes in common. The most common characteristics chosen as a cultural badge of identity are language (or dialect) and religion” (p. 97). Thus members of an ethnic group share lots of things in common including history, tradition and linguistic origins. Almost all Africans belong to an ethnic group and there is nothing fundamentally wrong with belonging to one. However, ethnicity has a strong influence on the social lives of people. The ethnic origins

of people influence their choice of social life in their choice of food, clothing, marriage partners and many others. It is partially responsible for the ‘irrationalities’ of others, conflicts, weak national identity and many more.

However, people are bound to alter their line of social behaviour at a certain point of time. The subject of ethnicity has been studied by many scholars such as Gordon (1964) since it forms the basis of defining individual or group identity or aspirations. Ethnicity is also essential in determining the social behaviors and choices made by people for instance in their choice of marriage partner. Variations between ‘individualism’ and ‘romantic collectivism’ have largely influenced a concise definition for ethnicity. It is thus a common practice to distinguish between Constructionist (or formalist) and Primordialist (or essentialists) perspectives of explaining ethnicity. According to Lentz (1995), “constructionists emphasize that ethnicity is not supra – historical and quasi – natural membership in a group, but rather a social identity constructed under specific historical – political circumstances... but in relationship between ‘us’ and ‘others’.” (p. 306). Thus constructionists consider how objective reasons lead to the formation of ethnic identity. Essentialists on the other hand define ethnicity based on the significance of ‘primordial ties’ via a common or shared ancestry, history, culture and language. Van den Berghe’s (1978) ‘sociological model’ is largely an essentialist perspective in that it traces ethnicity to the ‘expansion of kinship’ based on “biologically evolved mechanisms of pursuing self or group interests” (p. 12).

Other studies like the Nationalist Approach attempt to find common grounds for all ethnicities towards achieving a ‘Global Ethnicization’ of different social identities. The ‘Global Ethnicization’ school profers global or world citizenship as panacea to all social conflicts since it seeks to build social boundaries across various social identities. Longdale (1995) for instance explores the morale of ethnicity by highlighting the possible positive

aspects of ethnicity. To him, “ethnicity has a moral core which constitutes a requirement for states that want to construct collective citizenship with local roots. The challenge is not to oppose nation state to ethnicity but to develop more plural forms of nationalism which can incorporate ethnic variations” (p. 11). Thus the nationalist theory sees a need to overlap and interlock different ethnic groups towards developing multiple and alternative collective identities. This approach appears to promote the adoption of seamless social identities thus its support for multicultural theories like modernization, globalization and the likes.

However, some have argued that no universal theory can define ethnic identity due to historical and regional situations leading to the formation of the group. One of such proponent is Comaroff (1993) who argues that:

arguing that ethnic – indeed all – identities are not things but relations; that their content is wrought in the particularities of their ongoing historical construction. This is why... the substance of ethnicity or nationalism can never be defined or decided in the abstract. This is why there cannot be a ‘theory’ of ethnicity or nationalism per se, only a theory of history and consciousness capable of elucidating the empowered production of identities (1993:10)

This assertion suggests that ethnicity can be best explained based on prevailing historical factors in the geographical space the group originates from.

2.2 Ethnic Transformation

Several studies have been done on ethnic transformation across urban settlements. One of such is the work of Cohen (1969) who posits the glue theory by maintaining that colonialism exploited ethnicity to the benefit of the colonial masters thus ethnicity transformed into a tool for easy governance. He states "that the colonial state acted as glue in keeping the ethnic groups together within the framework of new artificially established,

centralized states. At independence, once the glue was removed, each packaged state began to disintegrate and to fall into regional parts" (p. 8). Southhall (1970) appears to suggest that colonization led to the creation of new ethnic identities or 'super tribes' in rural and urban settings alike. Thus ethnic associations have uses other than for colonial ease. He states that:

the fact is that many tribes have come into existence... through a combination of reasonable cultural similarity with colonial administrative convenience, which in more recent times has often coincided with peoples' own sense of need for wider levels of organization to enable them exert more effective pressure on events (1970:5)

The transformation of different identities into one social nucleus appears to have rewarded colonial governments in ruling their colonies by instituting and authorizing unconventional social ways. For instance English became and is the lingua franca of most countries Britain colonized to the detriment of the development of obvious indigenous languages like Akan in the case of Ghana. It is thus clear that the glue theory seems to have taken various forms in contemporary times like the World System structure where common national decisions are taken with the interest of multinational political interest.

Economic factors have also been identified as one of the reasons for which ethnic practices can transform for a period. In his study on Fulani in Ghana, Tonah indicates that the Sahelian drought is a major determining factor in changing former pastoralists to nomadic people. He indicates that "herdsmen, who had hitherto adopted a sedentary and transhuman form of livelihood, were compelled to revert to more nomadic lifestyles... other household abandoned their pastoral lifestyles altogether..." (2005:31). Change in the economic practice of those affected by the drought implies an alteration in their economic ways of life which will ultimately affect their social structure like relocating to places where good vegetation is assured for farming or nomadic practice which may lead to breaking of marriage, family and ethnic ties.

Relocating to places considered 'greener pastures' comes with lots of alterations in the ethnic lifestyles which is most visible in ensuing generations. It is thus not out of place to note that the social lives of economic migrants transforms significantly if they stay away from their ancestral homeland for long. For instance, Tonah (2005) reveals how the social lives of migrants are susceptible to various outcomes depending on their social interactions with the settled group. According to him, the lifestyles of youthful generations of Fulani people in Ghana have transformed over the years. He states that:

Migration can result in the revival of the traditions of the migrant group and the evoking of the group's ethnic consciousness. Furthermore, migration can lead to process of solidarity between group and the settled group. The results of migration are therefore varied and can only be deduced from the nature of the inter ethnic relations between the two groups... and consider themselves as Ghanaians. They speak the indigenous language better than their own Fulfulde and are more conversant with the cultural and religious practices of their host ethnic groups than their own... Just as elsewhere in West Africa, the younger generations of Fulani are able to move between their own culture and those of their host. They also share similar experience in terms of exposure to "foreign" culture as depicted in the schools, radio, music, dance halls and video centres. This group of Fulani have been able to find their own niche within the local situation (Tonah, 2005:56-65)

The above indicates that exposure to non indigenous cultural affects on the social lives of those who have relocated. However, the resultant effect of exposure is largely dependent on the rate of social interaction at a particular place. For instance, social interaction in urban areas will be at higher levels compared to that of rural areas.

Transformation is necessary for several reasons including gaining comparative advantage or fitting into a new environment. People are bound to encounter alterations in the social lives in urban areas especially because of the increasing agglomeration of people. For Schlee, social contact ultimately leads to some form of alteration when he states that "groups can change their composition, or their status, or their name, or their affiliation, or even all these features. There is no reason to believe that the ethnic group is exempt from such processes of remoulding" (1994:1). Thus the flexibility or otherwise of cultural

practices depends on the rate at which they are changed. Ake confirms this when he suggests that:

ethnic groups are no less real for existing intermittently, for having fluid boundaries, for having subjective or even arbitrary standards of membership, for opportunistic use of tradition or even for lacking propriety claim over a local space. They are real if they are actual people who are united in consciousness of their common ethnic identity however spurious or misguided that consciousness may be. The concreteness of ethnic groups is invariably affirmed by ethnic markings which society categorically pins on them, markings which underscore the social existence of ethnicity even when they are arbitrary or shifting (Ake, 1993:1)

This implies that relatively permanent cultural practices could be replaced with newly constructed ones which may become the existing norm. However, the rate of remold or adaptation to new situations is subject to the conditions within the particular space and time.

2.3 Migrants in the City

It is obvious that the desired destination of most labour migrants is the cities which promise better economic opportunities. This has led to the proposition of a number of theories in an attempt to explain migration within the West Africa region. They include the 'Neo – classical Equilibrium', 'Push – Pull' and the 'Intervening Obstacles' perspectives. The neo – classical equilibrium perspective on migration posits that migration movements have the propensity to follow a definite spatial – economic equilibrium, that is, people move from relatively low income areas to high income areas or from densely to thinly populated areas (Castles and Miller: 2003). Thus people move to economically attractive places to harness the capital that is accumulated in the high income areas. It also means that migration is a single traverse where people move in a unilateral process thus rural – urban migration. This form of migration is seen as an essential part of the whole development process where labour moves from the rural sector to become the workforce in the urban setting. According to Todaro it “is a well – known fact of economic history that

material progress usually has been associated with the gradual but continuous transfer of economic agents from rural based traditional agriculture to urban oriented modern industry” (1969:139).

The neo – classicals see rural – urban migration as necessary for the modernization of the city. Push – Pull theory as posited by Ravenstein (1889) suggests that undesirable situations in a particular location repel people from that place while desirable conditions in another location attracts them to relocate to those desired places. For instance land grabbing on a large scale in the rural and satellite towns in Accra has led to an unfavourable condition of farm hands being deprived of their economic practice thus ‘push’ from their undesirable geographical locations while the pomp and pageantry of city life as shown and shared on mass media attracts them to the city of Accra. The Intervening obstacles perspective indicates that the decision to migrate to another place depends on factors associated with the area of origin, condition of desired destination and personal factors. The place of origin, final destination and the migrant’s wherewithal to relocate are intervening obstacles for people to migrate to (or stay at) a desired location. Lee (1966) thinks knowledge of these intervening obstacles serves as ‘plus’ or ‘minus’ factors which determines the choice of migrants. It is thus obvious that since men are supposed to be rational thinkers who will normally seek to gain utmost satisfaction in every action they take, people will be generally be attracted to the urban areas or cities for the realization of their vanities.

According to Wirth (1938:8) “a city may be defined as a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals”. He also indicates that:

the central problem of the sociologist of the city is to discover the forms of social action and organization that typically emerge in relatively permanent, compact settlements of large numbers of heterogeneous individuals... thus the larger, the more densely populated, the more heterogeneous a

community, the more accentuated the characteristics associated with urbanism (1938:9)

Thus the social setting of the city is characterized by three distinct features which are Size, Density and Heterogeneity. These three factors affect individual behaviour in the city such that social interactions become impersonal and highly segmented. People in the city will need to find social leverage thus build social bridges between their associational (or civic public) vis – a – vis their ethnic (or primordial public) ties in the city. Though it may be challenging to balance primordial and civic responsibilities in the city, the city still remains the desired destination of many because it presents greater opportunities for the realization of cultural goals.

According to Little (1970) urban migration is the result of the financial, educational and cultural gains that Africans were able to make in the cities and industrial centers which were established in colonial times. For Wirth (1938), migration into the city is a necessary condition for the survival of the city irrespective of the challenges city life presents. He indicates that:

Since the population of the city does not reproduce itself, it must recruit its migrants from other cities, the countryside... and from other countries. The city has thus historically been the melting – pot of races, peoples, and cultures, and a most favourable breeding ground of new biological and cultural hybrids. It has not only tolerated but rewarded individual differences. It has brought together people from the ends of the earth because they are different and thus useful to one another, rather than because they are homogeneous and like minded (1938:10)

The above assertion somewhat puts a strain on the city to create social space for the population recruited from elsewhere to perpetuate its existence. Thus city stretches its administrative and social boundaries to accommodate the increasing agglomeration of people it hosts on a daily basis. For instance, a 2012 report indicates that due to the increasing population size of Lagos State (est. 21 million people), satellite towns like Ikorodu, Epe, Badagry and other local councils have been created thus expanding the

landscape of the city. In Accra, population increase has necessitated the creation of several (mostly unplanned) settlements like Old Fadama, Sodom and Gomorrah, and others. Institutional arrangement by the colonial governments has been a key factor accounting for the development of settlements in Accra. It involved administrative directives and activities to transform bare lands in Accra into habitable settlements. For Pellow (1991), the transfer of the British administrative headquarters to Accra in 1877 led to the influx of people into the new city. She states that:

...growth of the population through migration to this new business center necessitated expansion of commercial and residential space. As Accra expanded, neighborhoods similar to the old Ga towns, with distinct locations and names, grew up including the Ussher Fort – James Fort area in the oldest part of the town (1991:418)

This led to structural expansions like the building of forts, castles, roads and also expansion in the supply of water and electricity. According to Addae – Bosompra (2009),

The year 1920 marked a dividing line in the history of the development of Accra. With the advent of cocoa as a cash crop, and, the extraction of manganese, diamonds and gold as a very profitable venture, Accra serving as the administrative capital and commercial centre of Ghana, began to attract firms, missions, and other bodies. The population expanded and the city grew. By 1943 the built up urban area of Accra was 40 square miles (2009:4)

The attraction of firms and other business organization in the city implies the relocation of workers to the city resulting in population increase. It also means that new settlers in the city will need to create adaptive strategies to survive. The Dictionary for Human Geography (2000) defines adaptation as “...the way of describing how individuals, households and communities respond and cope with new experiences and settings of the host society” (p. 16). This assertion is descriptive of the processes new comers or strangers reorganize their lives to fit into their new geographical or social space.

The social importance of the ‘Stranger’ cannot be overlooked in that they play essential roles in their new social space. Simmel (1908) describes this when he posits the four

Social Types of individuals. For him, social life is influenced by the operations of The Stranger, The Poor, The Miser – Spendthrift, and the Adventurer. According to him:

The stranger will thus not be considered here in the usual sense of the term, as a wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow, but rather as the man who comes today and stays tomorrow – the potential wanderer, so to speak, who although has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a spatial circle – or within a group whose boundaries are analogous to spatial boundaries – but his position within it is fundamentally affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it (Simmel, 1908:143)

Thus though strangers are distant, they play important economic roles since “in the whole history of economic activity the stranger makes his appearance everywhere as a trader, and the trader makes his as a stranger” (1908:144). It is thus not strange that the Stranger is bound for the city since it serves as the hub of economic practice in modern civilization.

Park (1967) seems to confirm this when he indicates that:

The ancient city was primarily a fortress, a place of refuge in time of war. The modern city, on the contrary, is primarily a convenience of commerce and owes its existence to the market place around which it sprang up... upon condition of the existence of markets, of money and other... (1967:12)

As such the city remains a good breeding ground for brisk business and profit which is a pull factor. More so, the city creates an enabling environment for the smooth achievement of social aspirations which may not be the case in rural areas.

2.4 A brief description of the city of Accra

Accra sits on the Atlantic Ocean, at the base of the Akwapim – Togo mountain range; much of the city's distinctiveness is tied to the history of settlement of Ghana's coastal areas in general and of Accra in particular (Acquah, 1958). It is located in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Areas (GAMA) of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana and also the

capital city of the nation since 1898. The term Accra is believed to have been derived from the Akan word ‘nkran’, which means ‘ants’ a reference to the numerous manner in which natives of Accra kept re-appearing like army ants during a war with the Ashanti people.

Parker (2000) writes extensively on the development of Accra. According to him,

The first neighborhoods in Accra were the largely autonomous Ga settlements of Ngleshi (James Town-English Accra), Kinka (Ussher Town-Dutch Accra, originally Fort Crèvecoeur), and Osu (site of Christiansborg Castle—Danish Accra). These places date back to the 17th century and were still the essence of Accra in 1875. During the first quarter of the 20th century, Accra grew. As elsewhere in the colonial world, advances in Western medicine interacted with imperial ideologies to create a new emphasis on sanitation, order, and racial segregation, which conditioned the reformulation of urban space and of social relations in the growing city (2000:195-196)

The growth in the population of Accra can be attributed to the fact that the town is the administrative, educational, industrial and commercial centre of Ghana. This assertion, to some extent confirms Boahen’s (1975) position that virtually all the ethnic groups in present Ghana claim to have emigrated from somewhere other than their present location. The need to expand residential settlements to accommodate the increasing population of Accra was heightened in the 1870s. According to Agyei – Mensah and Owusu (2009), it was during this time, for example, that the “Cantonments” neighborhood was planned, financed and acquired by the colonial government for expatriate civil servants. They further describe Cantonments which is located at the northeast of central Accra as one of the more elite areas of the city, which is home to many foreign embassies, including that of the United States. Cantonments harbor elite houses, business and offices of multi – national organizations and embassies which is owned or occupied by expatriates or foreign organizations which shows how African cities are losing portions of their lands to non Africans. The advisor on Land Policy to the African Union and Economic Commission of Africa fears Africa may lose a golden opportunity to feed the world if steps are not taken

to control the state of land acquisition by foreigners. A news report quotes the advisor, Manadivamba Rukuni (2013) as stating that “Africa has lost 34 million hectares of land and will lose 120 million hectares in 10 to 15 years time”. The new owners use the land for diverse business ventures like commercial farming and estate development.

Though colonial investments into housing were to build well planned neighbourhoods for expatriate civil servants, it also deepened the social class differences in the class between white and black civil servants in Accra. According to Brand (1972), the “characteristic of the rigid social structure of the colonial period were the sharp boundaries between these elite preserves and the bordering slums and squatter settlements. Administrative divisions created highly visible ecological barriers in Accra” (pp. 297). This led to the various patterns of differing residential settlements to house the expatriate workers on one hand and the Ghanaian workers on the other. Pellow (1977) suggests that at the same time, however, a more middle class neighborhood, Adabraka, was established in the 1920s as a new residential and commercial area to the northwest of the older parts of the city. At the same time, obsolete or old settlements were being developed to become settlement for the lower class. Parker (2000) argues that:

The original villages that eventually formed the city were scattered along the coastline because the Ga were, and still are, active in the fishing trade. Newer neighborhoods have generally been created inland. In The 1880s A “zongo” (quarter) was built north of Ussher Town. This was by Salaga market (the first and largest market in the city) and the area was settled by Hausa (Muslim) Settlers from northern Nigeria (2000:32)

We have so far identified the development of a three tier housing models in Accra yet Pellow (2000) provides a fourth dimension of the housing models in the city. According to her, another predominantly Muslim quarter, ‘Sabon Zongo’, was settled in 1907, in order to relieve some of the congestion in the older quarter. These settlements were and are mostly inhabited by Muslim travelers who are now permanently domiciled in Accra. The post World War II era witnessed the building of the airport in north west of Nima, and the

University in Legon to the north of the airport. Weeks et al (2011) agree that these new settlements have been relatively elite areas since their inception.

In his studies on city life, Wirth (1938) describes the city as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlements of socially heterogeneous individuals. Accra appears to fall within such category in the sense that it has permanent settlements, increasing population and diverse social actors. Though the city fits this description, it is also challenged with alarming housing problems (IEA 1993). The inadequate descent housing in Accra has led to the creation of satellite but temporary settlements like Sodom and Gomorrah near the Agbogbloshie market. According to Nukunya (2003),

as all the people who depend on the economic resources and opportunities could not get accommodated in the new township, many commute from Accra. However, those who find commuting inconvenient or cannot afford to do so have to find somewhere to live. The result has been the emergence of a number of satellite settlements of which Ashiaman and Tema New Town are the most prominent. A number of temporal structures are also found near the fishing harbor (2003:23)

The quotation above confirms that housing in Accra can be grouped into two broad categories: high and low income areas. The low income housing zones may be divided into indigenous and non – indigenous areas. Indigenous areas are those areas occupied by the natives of Accra including James Town, Chorkor and Ngleshie whereas the non indigenous areas are predominantly migrant areas such as New Town, Maamobi, Sarbon Zongo, Town Counsel Line and Shukura. According to the AMA (2010), the low income areas altogether accommodate about 58% of Accra's population. Most of the informal businesses are located in the low income areas and they are the first place of abode for any new job seeking migrants.

2.5 Accra as a Millennium City

The Accra Metropolitan Assembly and the Earth Institute of the University of Columbia in the United States declared Accra a 'Millennium City' in 2010 with the aim of raising the living standards of the people especially the poor, vulnerable and the excluded. This task is to be achieved by providing and maintaining basic services and facilities in the areas of education, health, sanitation and other social amenities. Another reason for the declaration is to bridge the gap between the wealthy and the poor in the city by attracting investments into the country. The project intends to upgrade the city by hastening the development of areas like James Town, Mamprobi, Osu, New Town, Adabraka, Maamobi, old and new Dansoman. The declaration of a millennium is premised on modern ideologies of urban social living which seeks to promote comfort and dignity in human settlements.

For instance, Maslow (1970a) identifies the primary need of all humans in his Hierarchy of Needs as physiological needs. Physiological needs are the essential needs of life such as air, water, food, sex and shelter. These are so vital that their absence creates a sense of uneasiness, illness, pain and many other undesired social problems. The desire to satisfy the need for shelter is so primary such that they create pseudo shelter to replace the actual shelter they crave for with the hope to work towards or realize their dreams someday. This is essentially tied to the broad perspective of individual ingenuity being able to realize their goals irrespective of the challenges they face. The quest to transform communities has resulted in the formulation of several theories, modules and concepts. Most African countries are racing towards development which includes building infrastructure to solve their housing problems. For Cooper and Packard (1997:21),

...‘development’ may connote improvements in well-being, living standards, and opportunities. It may also refer to historical processes of commodification, industrialization, modernization, or globalization. It can be a legitimizing strategy for states, and its ambiguity lends itself to discourses of citizen entitlement as well as state control

The above definition suggests the enhancement of the living standards of people which is a conscious intention of developing or improvement in the quality of lives of the people at affordable cost. The definition also suggests the deepening of class differences in the sense that economies which can enlarge their markets by industrializing, modernizing and globalizing become more developed than those who have not. Thus people in a developed economy can those afford basic necessities like good shelter at a relatively affordable cost compared with thus in developing areas. The United States' Department of Housing and Urban Development see increased home ownership in urban cities as a key feature of a developed society. They describe the situation where people settle in new areas within large cities like Atlanta, Baltimore and Washington D.C as worth celebrating which could be a model for other local authorities (2000:50).

One global development agenda being trumpeted by multinational institutions is the Millennium Development Goals. Hulme (2009:7-8) indicates that:

the MDGs are not the first time that global promises have been made about eradicating or rapidly reducing human deprivation. Antecedents can be found stretching back to President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 'Four Freedoms' speech in January 1941 and to the *Declaration of Human Rights* of 1948 and its stipulation that 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing housing and medical care

These goals were set to improve upon the standard of lives of people irrespective of the specific challenges they face at any location. The declaration is a brave step towards ending poverty at a global level. Sachs agrees with this when he asserts that "the end of extreme poverty is at hand – within our generation... [t]here already exist a bold set of commitments that is halfway to that target: the Millennium Development Goals...are bold but achievable... [t]hey represent a crucial meditation on the path to ending extreme poverty by the year 2025" (2005:6). They are eight international development goals established by the United Nations' Millennium Summit in 2000. The mission behind the

declaration of Accra as a ‘Millennium City’ is to hasten the eighth milestone of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which is to build partnership for development. A millennium city is thus a city within a city, a complete township with attendant benefits such as access to health, housing and trade.

The goals have been criticized as a poorly thought through process or utopian which is to create jobs for the development industry which Easterly (2006) confirms by stating that “the setting of utopian goals means aid workers will focus efforts on infeasible tasks, instead of the feasible tasks that will do some good” (2006:20). Antrobus (2003) seems to be in agreement when he states that ‘I do not believe in the MDGs. I think of them as a Major Distracting Gimmick...’ (2003:16) which is to say that the focus of developing countries has been shifted from providing essential needs of the nation to a state where they are chasing a developmental hoax.

Five years down the lane, it appears as if the declaration of Accra as a Millennium City is to score political points since no major change in service delivery and infrastructure has occurred. The city is still burdened with erratic electricity and water supply, poor market structures, fire outbreaks, poor sanitary situation and many others. At best, the city authorities have built about 5 two – storey classroom blocks at some selected schools in the metropolis which is referred to as “Millennium Cluster of Schools”. The city authorities have also erected large ‘Millennium City’ Billboards at key locations with inscriptions such as ‘keep the city clean’ though there are no dustbins beneath for proper waste disposal. The educational standard of the city is falling fast as suggested by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA, 2010). According to the agency, over 90% of pupils could not solve basic arithmetic problems and over three quarters could not read basic comprehension. The agency identifies high ratio of students per teacher as one reason for this occurrence. Increasing population size in the urban areas has resulted in a

larger youthful population of school going age. This has led to high student population in urban schools such that the ratio between teachers to students has risen to 1:70 from about 1:30 especially in government managed or public schools. Some of the schools that have experienced such phenomenon include the Ministry of Health (MOH) Basic Schools, Dansoman Basic Schools and Laterbioshie Basic Schools even at the university levels. The effect of this is that teachers do not have adequate time to track the qualitative development of students due to the large class size. Due to work overload, teachers are easily tempted to phase off or pass students to the next class to release the burden of managing large student size. The agency posits that some teachers engage in 'grade inflation' where good grades are given to non deserving students.

Accra central has evolved into a large market where people are concerned with making financial gains with less consideration on the environment. According to Hart (1982),

The British did succeed, however, in developing their West Africa space – dividing it, building it up and building on it, and increasing its value. They recognized the importance of erecting and maintaining infrastructure – roads, railroads, harbors and telegraph lines – to facilitate the export of products (Hart, 1982:44)

The above suggests that Accra, like other African cities, was thus built to facilitate the transportation and export of primary products for industries in the West. That is to say the colonial administrators created the environment for cash crops like cocoa, cola, cashew and timber are often assembled in the city's shores to be exported abroad thus was less concerned with non transit areas though being a transit point opens up the city to the world.

Grant (2009) describes the three movement globalizing Accra. They are “globalizing from above”, “globalizing from below” and “globalizing from in – between”. “Globalizing from above” started in the last part of the 20th century when international organizations, the

government and other institutions made attempts to harness international capital. Globalizing from in – between was triggered in early 2000 when the state sought to attract capital from resident Ghanaians, Ghanaians in the Diaspora as well as non Ghanaian. The idea was championed by the former head of state – J.A. Kufour – in his famous “Golden Age of Business” phrase. The national posture of attracting capital from non-resident Ghanaians seems to have had a positive effect on the national economy. A clear example is the large number of return migrants in Accra. Asare (2012) reveals the high spate of return migrants when she states that “the proportion of Ghanaians among persons who arrived from 2000 to 2007 steadily increased from 18.6 percent to 34.6 percent.

Capital investments from non-resident Ghanaians and non Ghanaians alike serve a very important role in the economy of Accra. The activities of multinational and returnee organizations expanded the private formal sector of the economy. Their contribution is so crucial to Accra’s economy making Grant (2009:15) suggest that:

One of Accra’s main strengths is its link to the international economy, at the corporate, individual and family levels. These links manifest themselves in high transnational entrepreneurship, remittances from abroad and an overall increase in productivity due to the regular contact with other business practices

The businesses of returnee Ghanaian and multinational enterprises include investments in education, banking, telecommunication, mining, wholesale and retail services. Some of these organizations include MTN, Vodafone, Glo, Expresso, Game, Melcom, Maxmart, Anglo Gold Ashanti and many others in Accra. Their activities provide some benefit in that they have expanded the economy such that the city can provide employment to its increasing population. Multinational businesses however presents some negatives when one considers the cost of engaging multinational workers.

The third globalizing movement involves a process of “globalizing from below” where locals seek to benefit from the urban economy of the city. This can also be described as ‘In – Migration involving the movement of people from rural or other urban areas into Accra. One reason for in – migration is the perceived presence of a strong industrial and commercial base in the city which provides hope of being easily employed which may not be the case in rural Ghana. Economic In – migration is generally premised on the fact that the new is fairly developed and ready to employ the migrant. According to Escobar (1992), ‘Development’ is an unstable term. It is an ideal, an imagined future towards which institutions and individuals strive. Or a destructive myth, an insidious, failed chapter in the history of Western modernity. This description of development is relevant when it comes to the issue of housing in Accra. There are many admirable residential neighbourhoods in the city of Accra like Cantonments, East Legon, Airport Residential Area and many others which are pretty expensive. However, a stroll through the market or business centres in Accra, especially at dusk reveals scenes of the high levels of the housing problem. People sleep under market stalls or in front of stores (or in the stores if they are lucky) on the cold cement or wooden floors. The scene even worsens in the event of a heavy down pour at night where some have no option than to wait till the rains subsides.

The phenomenon of slums is not absent in the city of Accra. Several studies have been conducted on the phenomenon of slums in urban settlements. In a study of slums in New York, Clinard (1966) concludes that slums have commonly been defined as those portions of cities in which housing is crowded, neglected, deteriorated and often obsolete. He states that “many of the inadequate housing conditions can be attributed to poorly arranged structure, inadequate lighting and circulation, poor design and lack of sanitation facilities, overcrowding and inadequate maintenance” (1966:4). Irrespective of the description

above, some people in the city prefer to settle in the slum due to several reasons including access to affordable housing.

2.6 Some Factors Influencing the Agglomeration of Population in Accra

Population growth is of key interest to social scientists, researchers and city planners for several reasons like the drafting of appropriate planning policies and the distribution of essential goods and services such as housing, food, health, utilities and others. An analysis of the 2010 Population and Housing Census by the Ghana Statistical Service Report indicates that for the first time since 1960, more than half of Ghana's populations (50.9 per cent) live in urban areas (GSS, 2013). Several reasons can be attributed to this which can be grouped into Pull and Push factors. Pull factors can be seen as those admirable conditions which attracts people to move to the cities like the availability of social amenities like good roads, schools, health facilities, employment, recreational and entertainment centers in Accra. Push factors can be seen as those unfavourable situations which force people in other locations to relocate or move out from those locations. For instance, a prospective university student in a village in the Volta region of Ghana will necessarily have to relocate to the location that has a university to pursue his academic dreams.

One primary reason for the increasing population of Accra is the developments in medical delivery systems which have led to excess birth over deaths. Access to good medical services which have become more affordable upon the introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) have led to a drastic reduction in the death rate. The introduction of the Community – Based Health Planning Service (CHPS) concept in Ghana has further brought good medical care to each household. People in Accra have access to good medical services thus get good ante natal care leading to high numbers of

successful births whereas death rates is reduced. According to AMA (2010), Chorkor for instance has high birth rate even among teenagers because of access to good medical services at Korle Bu Hospital and Mamprobi polyclinic. Some people believe and practice the tradition attached to having a large family size, which they see as a necessary condition to become an ancestor.

Governmental and institutional arrangements also lead to higher populations in some areas compared to others. The transfer of Ghana's capital from Cape – Coast to Accra and Nigeria's case from Lagos to Abuja resulted in the swelling of the population of the new cities. According to Pellow (1991), the transfer of the British administrative headquarters to Accra in 1877 caused Accra's population to increase drastically. She states that

...the growth of population through migration to this new administrative and business center necessitated expansion of commercial and residential space. As Accra expanded, neighbourhoods similar to the old Ga towns, with distinct locations and names, grew up including the Ussher Fort – James Fort area in the oldest part of the town (1991:418)

The above suggests that new neighbourhoods began to grow at the fringes of the city thus expanding the city further away from its old towns. One result of this occurrence is the building of a bridge over the Korley lagoon in Accra to reach its fairly new settlements.

Acquah (1958) chronicles the history of Nima settlement where he states that village of Nima was built outside of the city boundaries after World War Two for returning Hausa soldiers. These soldiers relocated from their previous homes to the 'village' which have now transformed into being part of the Accra Metropolis. Mass relocation by governmental arrangements implies the movement of people who will provide services to make life easier in the new location. For instance, the relocation of the Central University College (CUC) from Mataheko to Prampram has resulted into increasing population at the new site. Though large chunks of the numbers are students, workers and service providers have also moved to the new site to engage in various businesses.

Long durations of conflicts or wars propel migration to other places. People will not be able to realize their social aspirations in a war situation especially when it is characterized by killings, rape, robbery and other social vices. They thus relocate to places where they can achieve their goals in an orderly manner. Their choice of place is mostly influenced by the availability of the essential needs or structures that promise the fulfillment of their desire to live. Ghana has experienced its share of emigration due to wars when she hosted Liberian refugees at the Buduburam Camp for many years. The population in that area increased in no time because of the high numbers arriving on frequent basis and the brisk business it provided for the locals. Companies have stretched their services to the location meaning the expansion of their personnel to the area. The United Nations High Command on Refugees (UNHCR) reports that though the Liberian refugees' cessation was invoked in June 2012, about 5,000 Liberians are currently resident in Ghana under the suspended effect (UNHCR, 2013). The report further revealed that there are 9,800 Ivorian refugees in three emergency camps in Western, Bono Ahafo and Central regions of Ghana. The numbers alone transform the host locations into urban areas going by the population definition of an urban area in Ghana.

2.7 Settlement Patterns of Poor People in Accra

One important determinant in human settlement is the availability of land for residential purposes. Land is also considered an essential (if not the most important) physical asset necessary for economic production and development of any human endeavour. Most social interactions in performed and experienced on a landed environment compared to aerial or marine environment.

Just like most African countries, land is generally regarded as family property in Ghana thus managed by family heads, clan leaders or chiefs. Traditionally, these leaders are

supposed serve as custodians of the land and allocate portions of it to their family members for productive purposes. Nukunya (1992) reveals how traditional authorities have thus occupied important and powerful role in the community because of their control of family or clan lands under their jurisdiction. The clan leader oversees a “territory, has a clear – cut boundaries and the ruler’s authority is supported by well developed administrative machinery...” (1992:5) which suggests that there are traditionally institutionalized bureaucracies which protects the role of chiefs. Busia (1968) confirms this when he posits that “kinship, reverence for the ancestors, and belief in the spiritual power of the earth have combined to give customary land tenure a unique character” (p. 11). This means that customary land in most African communities is owned by the living, the dead and the yet to be born whose representative is the chief or leader of the area. Being a chief implies controlling a territory and having a clear territory means exercising influence over the people in that stretch of land. Traditional leaders are likely to abuse their role as custodians of family lands since land has become a scarce commodity especially in urban areas. According to The Financial Times (2005) editorial,

over 80% of Ghana’s land space is owned by local community leaders called chiefs and their traditional institutions which constitutes a powerful and non transparent local political actors existing alongside the trappings of modern democratic state... since most land is vested in local chiefs, transactions are often messy and uncertain

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Though the above description appears to put custodians of family lands in bad light, it shows the extent to which the commercialization or commoditization of lands has made their custodians operate in shoddy deals to prospective buyers. For instance several reports flash the media of how chiefs, queen mothers, princes or officials of traditional rulers sell the same portion of land to several prospective buyers or even swindle them of their money.

Land is a scarce commodity in urban areas such as Accra because of the increasing numbers of people who desire to acquire this commodity in this metropolitan environment. A former Malaysian High Commissioner to Ghana is said to have lamented the situation by stating that “several Malaysian investors were willing to establish plantations and to invest in the housing sector in Ghana, but they are unable to do so due to problems with land acquisition” (GNA, 27 – 01 – 2006). Thus family members in urban Accra are bound to compete with both local and foreign investors to the lands in the city. This puts urban migrants who may not be economically endowed in the situation of seeking to occupy the undesired and less demanded land area because they cannot afford the cost of living in the prestigious areas. Those who settle in undesired locations push the boundary of the urban area further out which can have long term implications on that location such as attracting similar new comers.

The state where people settle in polarized parts of the city like Sodom and Gomorrah could lead to some unpalatable developments such as dilapidated residential structures, poor (inadequate or lack of) social amenities, alienation and overcrowding which could result in ghetto or slum formation. These areas are likely to attract new comers in the city who are poor since they provide affordable housing to the urban poor. Urbanization has brought to bear the poor planning structure of Accra as a city. Locations such as Chorkor, Shukura, Sarbon Zongo and Russia in Accra are examples of the failure of the planning systems by city authorities to forecast population increase. As the city grows, poor people have no option than to settle in the fringes irrespective of the conditions they provide.

2.8 Muslims in Accra

One common characteristic of Muslims is the wearing of long robes warranting Nukunya (2003) to use their dress forms as the first clue in indentifying one. He states that “a Moslem is identified largely by his dress, the long, flowing robes and the turban to march,

his name and his observance of the open or public prayers. A Moslem lady is also identified by her veil and the antimony she applies around her eyes..." (2003:128–129). Though this assertion is not entirely reflective of those who wear long robes in contemporary times, first generation of Moslem settlers were easily distinguishable from others since their costume is quite different from what prevailed in those days. Oppong (1973) suggests that the arrival of Islam in Ghana actually preceded Christianity though its penetration begun from the northern parts of the country. Her study confirms the role of trade in the 'Islamization' of parts of northern Ghana in that those (Hausa traders) responsible for the introduction of Islam were traders in gold and kola though the trickle – down – effect of Islam to southern Ghana was slow.

In – migration from or to other West African states is not a new phenomenon. Till date people migrate in and from the region for various reasons including economic, marital, conflicts or in pursuance of a social goal. Surdarkasa confirms this when she states that:

For hundreds of years, West Africans had moved from one area to another, creating stranger communities and deriving their political rights from the local African authorities, whose rules they were expected to obey (1979:143)

Adamu (1978) records the earliest known Muslim settler in Accra as "Malam Idris Bako Nenu... arrived from Katsina around 1860 and is described apocryphally as the first "Hausa Man" of Accra" (p. 166). Cohen stipulates that wealthy Muslim migrants were known as 'Mai Gida' meaning landlord or settled stranger making Malam Nenu the first known "Mai Gida" of Accra. He states that "trade, especially kola and cattle, was an important source of wealth in Accra as elsewhere in the Hausa Diaspora" (1965:10). Thus the basis for the patronage of Hausa migrants in southern Ghana was because they dealt in essential commodities just like in the case of Ghana. Cohen (1965) indicates that the economy of Hausa migrants in Accra was lucrative such that other Hausa people from Katsina

relocated to Accra. They formed groups and elected representatives or 'Mai gida' who was influential in their acquisition of a piece of land located outside the central business area of Accra fondly called 'Zongo Lane' making the area the first known Moslem enclave or 'Zongo' in Accra.

According to Awde (1996), the term should rather be 'Zango' (plural 'Zanguna') which means a camp, stopover or a range. By implication the term refers to a temporal resting place for travelers to rest for a while after which they continue their journey. He states that:

The word has its root from 'Zunguna' (best pronounced 'Sunguna') meaning to squat. Also the word Zango could mean an unscientific method of measuring distance, of which refers to as range. Hence a typical Hausa person will state, he/she has covered one, two or more zangos and left with X number of zangos to reach his/her home or final destination. There is the geographical meaning of Zango, which explains that zangos are often located at the peripheral part of townships (Awde 1996:7)

Though the above reflect the temporal intentions of these settlements, they appear to have enjoyed relative permanence over the times. Most people who reside in these locations live in enduring physical structures which are bound to last longer while others have either raised or are raising their families in these areas. For Schildkrout (1974), "Zongo, is a Hausa term, meaning the camping place of a carrier or a lodging place of travelers... it is also a term which referred to the section of a town where Muslim traders lived" (p. 67). She chronicles the historical precedents behind the spread of Zongos in another study when she states that:

Nevertheless, most of the communities that are recognized as "stranger" or "settler" communities today date back to the end of the nineteenth century. While many have earlier precedents, based on ancient trade routes as well as pre – colonial patterns of warfare, in the beginning of central Ghana, labor migration increased. Seasonal migration from the Sahel – essentially Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali – and permanent immigration into the urban centers in central and southern Ghana caused the growth of numerous "stranger" communities, known as Zongos (2006:588)

Being secluded in a particular geographical location means being able to maintain their cultural identity for some time though this will change over a period especially due to continues social contact with people of other cultural orientation. The social lives of migrants in the city are bound to experience a form of change over a period of time. It will be more beneficial to adopt the social life of the city like learning the common lingua franca to be able to communicate smoothly with others. Thus the social lives of subsequent generations of migrants will experience drastic transformations compared to their forebears. Schildkrout (1974) confirms this in the case of Moslem migrants in Accra by stating that “today most of the residents in these communities were born in Ghana and think of themselves as Ghanaians, although they have not necessarily become culturally assimilated into Ghana’s indigenous communities” (p. 588). Pellow (1991) reiterates this in her study of people in Sarbon Zongo by hinting that the notion of being strangers have transformed over the years and has resulted in a state where power influences the social lives of people in the ‘Zongos’ especially because of the hegemony among the ethnic groups in such areas. She states that:

In coastal Accra, Muslim settlement began about one hundred years ago, developing a "stranger" collectivity - made up of Yoruba, Hausa, Nupe, Fulani, Wangara, and others - in old Ga section of town, although alliances were situationally defined as ever shifting. In Accra, as in Kumase, the Hausa, perceiving themselves to be superior to all other Muslim ethnic groups had a disproportionate influence on them in dress, language, roles and offices (Pellow, 1991:422)

The above indicates that the Hausa people in the Zongos influence those of other ethnicities in several ways per their dominance in trade, language, religion and social roles. Thus power, superiority and influence have become reality of people who settle in the Zongos other than regarding themselves as strangers. The Hausa language has become the commonest lingua franca of most (if not all) Zongo settlements in Accra. Waibel (1998) (cited in Tonah, 2005) has referred to this phenomenon as the “Hausasation” of other

ethnics where non Hausa people will “be doing everything these days like the Hausa” (192 – 201). She made this assertion in her study of Tuaregs in Southern Niger where she realized that Tuaregs no longer speak their language but rather communicate in Hausa. They have also adapted the Hausa cultural lives in many other ways including dressing, polygyny, seclusion of women and resort to Islamic principles in their daily lives. Schildkrout (1974) hints of the hegemony of Hausa culture across migrant Muslim settlements in Ghana in her study of Mossi migrants in Kumasi. According to her:

While the immigrants abandon many traditional forms of behaviour when they move to the Zongo, they do not become socially or culturally assimilated into the local Ashanti society. Rather a new identity emerges in the Zongo, associated by the immigrants with Islamic values and to some extent with Hausa culture due to the early numerical, economic and political pre-eminence of the Hausa in Kumasi... most children who are raised in Kumasi Zongo learn Hausa... they are, therefore, socialized with very little awareness of ethnic differentiation (Schildkrout, 1974:199-200).

The quotation above discusses the emergence of a new identity among ensuing generations of Zongo settlers which is not subject to ethnic differentiation but based on the strong influence of Islamic values and the Hausa culture. This appears to be the social fact of Zongo communities across Ghana (if not the entire West Africa sub region). Thus the non Hausa Zongo dweller (who may be a Muslim or otherwise) is forced to relegate their cultural life forms for the dominant culture of those who wield social influence. Over time, these non Hausa dwellers may not be able to identify with or relate to their ethnic cultural forms since their social reality is based on the interplay of Islam, Hausa culture and city life.

2.9 Fitting In: Social Realities of Migrants in the City

One result of social interaction is the creation of unwelcomed social relations also referred to as social problems. Social problems can simply be seen as a condition that at least some

people in a community perceive as being undesirable. All human societies encounter various forms of undesirable situations though social problems are more prevalent in urban areas. Some of the social problems identifiable in the city include rising cost of healthcare, falling standards of education, poor sanitation, unemployment, increasing number of slums, corruption and many others.

For Nukunya (2003), one of the main social problems of urban areas in Ghana is the loosening relation of kinship ties. Kinship refers to social relationships derived from consanguinity, marriage and adoption (Nukunya, 2003:17). He further states that:

In a rural homogenous community in Ghana, therefore, kinship looms large and determines almost everything; property relations, political relations, economic and legal obligations, to mention only a few. In urban situations, on the other hand, as a result of social change, spatial mobility or migration, its importance tends to diminish. People no more depend on lineage property; status is no longer dependent on age or a person's position in the kinship system; kinship groups are no longer localized. The result of all these developments is the decline in the importance of kinship as basis of social life (Nukunya, 2003:18).

His assertion is reflective of the importance of kinship ties in the social lives of people in Ghana which is reflective of most social lives in Africa. It also indicates that kinship is most evident in rural areas which make these areas concentrate on ascribed social identity. Urban social life is largely dependent on achieved milestones in defining their social status, their role, laws, duties and responsibilities.

Another social reality of the city is the issue of ghetto life or 'streetism' which has been studied by several urban scholars. Ghetto life is of special interest to development entrepreneurs including government organizations especially since they are considered as 'slums' or areas with undesirable urban housing coupled with social ills such as crime, breakdown of family ties, drug abuse and many others. Wirth (1928) describes the Jewish ghetto of medieval Europe as the:

Little Sicilies, Little Polands, Chinatowns, and Black Belts in our large cities, along with the 'vice areas' hosting deviant types such as hobos, bohemians and prostitutes – all of which are said to be 'natural areas' born of the universal desire of different groups to 'preserve their peculiar cultural forms' and each fulfilling specialized function in the broader urban organism (Wirth, 1928:6)

Associating hobos to the ghetto place the ghetto as a social space in the city which harbours migratory workers finding work where they can. Though Wirth (1928) seems to suggest the ghetto play functional role in the city, the social life in the ghettos reveal the class structure of city life. The high class resides in the prestigious areas of the city whereas those in the lower class are sidelined to the undesirable locations in the inner – city like the slums or ghettos. In Accra, such places like Chorkor, James Town, Shukura, Sodom and Gomorah, are mostly overcrowded with poor or low income workers. However, the larger debate of ghetto life is whether those who reside in such places get to achieve their social goals or get assimilated into the high class over a period. Another discussion is the multi ethnic nature of ghettos could be a catalyst for building participation in national life or segregating or marginalizing others.

Though access to jobs is the one of the reasons people migrate to the city, landing preferred jobs remain a daunting task in the city. Todaro (1973) appears to confirm the reality of industrial city life when he states “the failure of modern urban industries to generate a significant number of employment opportunities is perhaps the one descriptive generalization that has almost no geographic, demographic, institutional, political or cultural bound in the less developed countries of the world” (p. 42). This assertion is reflective of the World Bank (2007) report on the employment situation of Accra which reveals that almost half of the workforce in Accra is unemployed. Accra however play host to migrants irrespective of the unemployment situation. Many scholars have summarily blamed the roots of the unemployment situation in Ghana (for that matter Accra) to the Structural Adjustment Programs especially since the projection that the private sector will

create employment did not materialize. One of such proponents is Hutchful (2002) who posited that:

...during the 1980s, Ghana, as well as many other developing countries, adopted a large number of structural adjustments, with the intention of transforming its economy by granting the private sector a more important role. The policy shift allowed international companies to increase their activities in Ghana, and also fostered the development of local companies (2002:13).

One of the projections of the adjustment programs was the increased penetration of private business and investment into Ghana. Increase in the activities of private companies in Ghana meant an increase in migrant workers in Accra though their migrants' goal of being gainfully employed was not entirely achieved thus workers resort to the informal sector of employment to make ends meet. This rather led to what Hutchful (2002) describes as the 'informalization' of the economy. He states that:

By 'informalization', we refer to the diversion of economic transactions beyond the reach of the state and formal economic sector. 'Informalization' actually involved two structures and processes (the informal or petty commodity sector on the one hand, and the so called 'parallel' economy on the other... (Hutchful, 2002:21)

Cities in developing countries are noted for their large informal sectors. For instance, many people in Accra ply their business in the informal sector like street hawkers, table top sellers and artisans. One danger of the informal sector is the boom of the underground economy which Derdiyok states that the "underground economy can be defined shortly as, unrecorded and therefore uncontrolled activities by government officials. In other words the underground economy is where activities cannot be predicted by the national accounts estimation techniques" (1993:54). The informal economy of cities in the developing world is a non desirable situation in the sense that their state governments cannot adequately tax the exchange of goods and services. Increase of activities in the underground economy is catalyst for social disorder especially if the players engage in illegal trade activities.

For Lipset and Bendix (1959), lower class migrants are underprivileged in the city since they occupy the least economic positions in urban areas. They posit that:

...migration from rural and smaller communities to metropolitan centers influences the placement of people in the occupational structure in the way that large - scale immigration once did ... The cycle in which lower - class immigrants or migrants into large cities take over the lower - status positions while native urbanites from similar class backgrounds move up in the occupational structure has been one of the more important processes underlying social mobility ever since cities began to rapidly expand (Lipset and Bendix, 1959:204 - 216)

The above statement posits that the migrants from rural areas integrate into the economic base of cities because they are socially placed in the least or lower status economic ladder while the native urbanites move to higher urban economic statuses of the city. Applying the underprivileged model to Accra implies that migrants who do not have secondary or advanced levels of education are likely to become messengers, cleaners, gatemen and the likes.

Another theory actually posits that urban migration by rural folks is beneficial to urbanites since the urbanites move up the economic ladder. Blau and Duncan (1967) seems to describe how this play out in the Push Up Model. They state that:

The natives in large cities as well as the migrants from other urban places gain from the influx of rural migrants into the least desirable occupational positions there, for this influx means that fewer natives must occupy the lower positions that would otherwise be necessary... (1967:269)

The statement above validates the 'underprivileged model' in the sense that in – migrants occupy the less desirable urban economic base because they are less privileged in the city.

It is not entirely clear if such a notion can be applied to developing countries like Ghana especially since the economy of most cities in the nation is largely informal. To Dawson (1990) the effects of the adjustment programs made Accra's economy even more formal such that "while the informal sector in Ghana has historically been large, a major effect of the crisis was the rapid growth of this sector, given its lower cost structure and greater

flexibility vis – a – vis the formal sector” (p. 41). However, the educational background of employees to a large extent affects their productivity either in the formal or the informal sector.

One of the values of the Hausa culture is the practice of Arabic education which is largely influenced by their religious practice. Thus Arabic schools (or Makaranta) are a common feature across all Zongo settlements in Ghana. This form of education has however not proved to be helpful enough in the general economic atmosphere of Ghana. In her study of Accra, Acquah (1972) indicates that the educational systems of Muslims affect their economic position in the city. She states that:

as Muslims pursue their own system of education, which is essentially religious and does not teach the English language and skill taught in government approved schools, Muslims children are at a disadvantage in securing employment. Unless they are petty traders, cattle dealers, or tailors of Muslims robes, they are confined to the menial unskilled jobs which are relatively poorly paid (1972:117)

The above suggests that the educational preference of Muslims have a direct effect on their economic practices to the extent that they are relegated to menial unskilled jobs. This assertion appears to have changed over the years especially since some Muslims now pursue formal Ghanaian education. Others have and do occupy important administrative positions in Ghana to the extent of becoming Vice President during the Kufour administration. Thus the Arabic educational hegemony appears to be waning down on Moslems in Ghana at the micro level.

2.9.1 The Pattern of Migrant Settlements in Accra

Access to land is essential in determining residential space in the city. The stretch of land an individual or family control determines their affluence and influence over people in a community. To Ollenu (1962) land ownership in Ghana is communal to promote the

collective authority of the community which is vested in the occupier of a stool or skin who “is a trustee holding the land for and on behalf of the community, tribe or family” (p. 6). For Nukunya (1973) “the primacy of agriculture in traditional economic life makes land the most important asset in these societies. It is, therefore, not surprising that it is highly valued with many rigid rules and rituals associated with it” (1973:70). One can thus conclude that land is an important factor of economic activities across all societies. It is even more pronounced in the urban centers than the rural areas especially since the unit cost of land will cost more in that city than in the rural community.

It appears earliest Muslim settlers in Accra depended on their social network to aid their process of settling – in their new localities by linking their resources to acquire a parcel of land. This confirms the importance Bourdieu (1985) ascribe to social network as the “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (p. 248). This assertion considers those tangible and intangible assets that an individual contribute, share or exploit in their interaction with one another to the benefit of individual members or the group as a whole. To Cohen (1965) “trade, especially in kola and cattle, was an important source of wealth in Accra as elsewhere in the Hausa diaspora” (pp. 10). This assertion indicates that Hausa migrants built social networks in trade leading to the expansion of their business and wealth. Thus the basis for the patronage of Hausa migrants in Accra was because they dealt in essential commodities – such as meat products and kola – thus the need to host them in Accra. Odoom (1971) suggests the first settled stranger (or Mai Gida) expanded his social network with the indigenes warranting the traditional authorities to provide a parcel of land for him and his group as a token. He posits states that “in 1881, taking the role of Accra's first ‘mai gida’, Mallam Nenu Bako acquired a piece of property from the local Ga Mantse, which became known as Zongo

Lane” (1971:5) making the area the first ethnic enclave for Muslim migrants in the city of Accra. He further hints that the settlement, which was at the outskirts of town and largely uninhabited, became densely populated with other migrants of Muslim origin from the West Africa Diaspora in a relatively short while. Their increasing numbers transformed the location in an enclave which Portes defines as “dense concentrations of immigrants or ethnic firms that employ significant proportion of their co – ethnic labour force and develop a distinctive physical presence in the urban space” (1987:343). Though settlers in Zongo communities cannot entirely be described as having an encompassing ethnic identity, they appear to be bound by strong religious commitment and adherence which gives them a unique social presence and description.

Several factors determine the formation of urban centers though Ntewusu (2011) identifies two key determinants in the historical development of Accra. According to him:

Urban planning in the newly created capital of Accra was driven by two main concerns: sanitation control and disaster management. The bubonic plague of 1908, the yellow fever outbreaks of 1911 and 1913, and the influenza epidemic of 1918 gave the British colonial administration the opportunity to persuade people living in the congested coastal neighbourhoods of Ga Mashie, Nleshie, and Cow Lane that it was in their interest to move to the newly developed outlying neighbourhoods of Adabraka and Tudu (Ntewusu, 2011:34)

Dretke (1968) seems to validate colonial concerns on sanitation management and disaster management when he suggests that a plague spread in and around the environs of stranger quarters which may have been as a result of the line of work the migrant Moslems engaged in – the herding and slaughtering of cattle, sale of meat and related products in open space (p. 44). The British colonial government thus relocated the inhabitants of Zongo Lane so it could be rebuilt – which could pass for a historical account of gentrification in Accra.

The Muslims, now with a new leader (who was the son of Malam Bako) were relocated to the northwestern fringes of then Accra city now called 'Sabon Zongo' meaning a new settlement irrespective of the challenges the settlers encountered. According to Braimah (1982):

...Sabon Zongo was at first a town apart, outside Accra's city limits. It was described as 'bush': they had animals, bad animals even ... wolves... At that time, if you were going to Sabon Zongo, you came to a river - they called Korle. You paid a penny before you could cross. At that time, there was no street (Cited in Dretke, 1968)

The statement above and indeed the development of Zongo settlements in Ghana appear to validate the underprivileged economic theory by Lipset and Bendix (1959) though it is played out in the residential pattern of migrants instead of economic practice. Colonial directives appear to have rewired the residential pattern of the city of Accra to promote class culture which is heavily dependent on wealth and ethnic association. According to Brand (1972), the "characteristic of the rigid social structure of the colonial period were the sharp boundaries between these elite preserves and the bordering slums and squatter settlements... administrative divisions created highly visible ecological barriers in Accra" (p. 297). Thus the geographical space of Accra was divided to achieve the colonial aim of creating elitist preserves for the affluent in society and others (including squatter settlements) to host the less affluent in the society. This notion appears to be the logic behind the development of ideal settlements like Cantonments, Roman Ridge, Dzorwulu and more recently Spintex Road on one hand compared to the commitment of city authorities to places such as Maamobi, Sarbon Zongo, Shukura and Zabrama Line on the other.

2.9.2 Theoretical Framework

One of the main reasons for social research is to develop a linkage between the various social patterns. This can be done by testing existing perceptions or presentations of social

life vis-à-vis the results from social research. Theory can be defined as a universal and a more or less complete set of statements or propositions that describe different aspects of a social phenomenon (Babbie, 2003). This study depends on Berry’s acculturation strategies framework as the lens to unearth ethnic transformation among Gao people in Zabrama Line. To Berry (1992) acculturation is “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p. 7). It is thus obvious that continues social contact with others will result in some form of modifications of the social lives of those involved. It is also largely true that the rate of change depends on the level of exposure to ‘foreign cultures’. For instance, first generation settlers and their ensuing offspring adapt to different situations differently. He presents the four varieties of acculturation below:

Table 1: Berry’s four varieties of acculturation process

Possible outcomes of the adaptation process		Maintenance of relationships with other groups	
		Yes	No
Maintenance of Cultural Identity	Yes	Integration	separation / segregation
	No	Assimilation	Marginalization

Source: Berry (1992:28)

Table 1 above, to some extent, depicts the point to which cultural lives become transformed or altered when heritage and mainstream culture meets. One can depict from Table 1 that Berry (1992) is of the view that the culture and practice informs the acculturation process of all human settlements. The theory itself is a bi-dimensional

approach in analyzing acculturation process which involves the interplay of independent variables such as heritage and mainstream culture in forming new identities (see Ramirez, 1984; Zak, 1973). The unidirectional school led by Gans (1979) and Gordon (1964) hold the view that social change traverse in a single continuum over a period. People are bound to loose or relinquish the attitudes, values and behavior of their ethnic origin whiles they simultaneously adopt those of the new society.

A common feature of the city is its cultural heterogeneity or a state where unlike rural areas, several ethnic groups reside and interact in a common social space. Thus Table 1 becomes most visible in urban areas because of the city's features of harbouring and rewarding distinguishable social groups that fit in or play out the virtues of city life. According to Berry (1992), people integrate with other ethnic groups when they maintain their cultural identity and build relationships with other groups. Integration connotes how people incorporate into the larger social setting and yet maintain their unique cultural qualities. Thus the loosening of social boundaries towards realizing shared goals which are acceptable to different ethnicities. The ghetto is a typical social space where people are bound to create trans – ethnic social boundaries or networks for livelihood due its multi ethnic nature.

Zongo communities across West African cities and elsewhere exhibit such social reality since they provide a relatively affordable cost of living for less economically endowed new comers in the city though the Hausa culture is paramount in such places. For instance most Muslims are comfortable with the cultural practices of Hausa people since it is reflective of their shared religious goals. For Henderson (2004), integration as a reciprocal approach where minority cultures integrate with the dominant culture and vice versa. She states that:

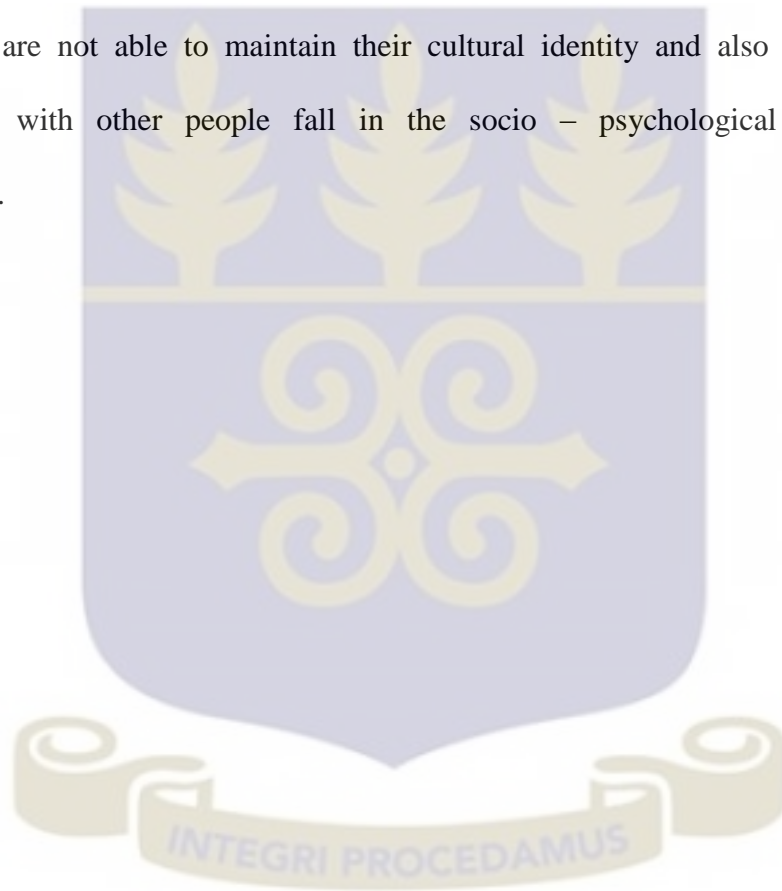
Settlement is a process that focuses on the experiences, adaptation and acculturation of the immigrant within the social context. Integration, in contrast, is more likely to be identified as a reciprocal process involving the adaptation not only of immigrants but also of structures within the host society; it implies some form of multicultural policy where immigrants are able to retain aspects of their own culture rather than an assimilation model, which expects only one party (the immigrant) to adapt (Henderson, 2004:8)

A minority social group could find themselves on the path of being socially segregated or separated when they maintain their cultural identity but are not able to build relationship with other cultures. Separation has summarily been referred to as a process of social differentiations into spatial settlement patterns which takes place usually at the urban scale (Dictionary of Human Geography, 2000). Segregation in this context does not imply being totally cut off as in the case of total institutions but rather reduced forms of influence on other cultures.

To Berry (1992), assimilation is the socio – psychological path that results from people who develop and build relations with others but are not committed to their cultural identity. Thus, people who are assimilated have been re-socialized or acculturated into new or dominant forms of livelihood justifying Park's (1928) assertion that assimilation is “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (cited in Alba 1997). Assimilation is the basis for which the city could be described as the ‘melting pot’ of all ethnicities since new comers will likely express the culture of the city after staying awhile. This implies recourse to a new way of life which means denial of the traditions and practices. For Schildkrout (1974), the process of assimilation is based on voluntary forms of association as a substitute to traditional kinship ties in the rural areas. She posits that:

for example it has been noted that in the urban context, instead of traditional kinship groupings, we find voluntary (including ethnic) associations. The functions of these associations have been described as equivalent to the functions of kinship groupings in the rural context. In other writings, dealing with the modern nation state, associations in which recruitment is based on ethnicity have been regarded as stopgaps, performing social and political functions that incipient national organizations, such as welfare departments and political parties, are expected eventually to assume (1974:188)

The above hints of how ethnic associations and practices could be replaced with others like civic associations since they play complementary roles. Finally, Berry (1992) posits that people who are not able to maintain their cultural identity and also cannot maintain relationships with other people fall in the socio – psychological path of being marginalized.



CHAPTER THREE

ORIGIN AND SOCIAL LIFE OF GAO PEOPLE

Gao people are Songhai (or Sonrai) people, a negro ethnic group who originate from the bend of the River Niger in the modern Republic of Mali. The ancestors of the Songhai founded the Gao city in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The city grew to become an important trade route and also served as the capital city of the Songhai Empire – one of the three great West African ‘medieval’ empires. According to Dramani – Issifou (1992) “Gao has been seen very much as a political and historical entity, partly because of its role as the Songhai capital, and partly as a result of the many important Arabic historical documents concerning the city and region” (1992:59). Going by the above, Gao people cannot be described to be an ethnic group except that they could be said to be people who trace their ancestry to the geographical areas of Gao city in Mali. However, Ligers (1964) provide a hint which could imply that Gao people may actually be the Gow people – a specialist Songhai sub – group, who were hunters in land animals though the majority of the Songhai are agriculturalists who grow staple cereal crops and also fish. It is interesting to note that though an appreciable number of those interviewed say they are Songhai, they are comfortable being referred to as Gao people thus associating with the ancient city.

According to Ligers (1964), Gao people speak the Songhai languages which is part of a Nilo – Saharan collection of various Songhay languages including Tasawaq and Zarma (or Djerma), which is spoken by Zabarima people – the largest sub group of the Songhai. Traditionally the male (referred as Aru) is the breadwinner and head of the household while the female (known as Wei) process food and is mostly responsible for the primary socialization of their young. The family life of Gao people is mostly gender based, thus household tasks are performed based on the sex of the individual. For instance, males are responsible for herding livestock, building structures which serves as home, protect and

provide for the family. An interview with a respondent, Razak (Arpil, 2015), females are to keep the house by performing routine household tasks and also raising the offspring. Gao people are a patrilineal ethnic group who cherish large family size mainly because of its religious and economic significance including the social prestige it brings the male. A male may marry up to four wives if he is capable of providing their needs including those of their children. A large family size with lots of male offspring is indicative of the blessedness and readily available farm hands the head of the household commands. This prestige has a trickledown effect on the wife with the most male children such that she gets the lion's share of the farm produce and other rewards from the male. The dietary culture of Gao people reaffirm the gender role such that food is eaten basically in age groups of males and females. Thus male teenagers share a bowl of their main food (Hauru and Faku) likewise females except young children who may join any parent till puberty. Gao people enjoy the 'Ataya' tea which is a bitter beverage drunk warm after meal and is believed to have lots of medicinal qualities.

An observation of the study reveals how gender roles is more pronounced in the communal life of Gao people to the extent that minimal contacts is encouraged between grown males and females during social events such as marriage, naming and burial ceremonies. Like other Sahelian ethnic groups, Islam is the main religion of Gao ethnic group thus they adhere to the Islamic principles which are the declaration of faith (Kalimat Shahada), prayer (Salat), alms giving (Zakat), fasting (in the month of Ramadan) and pilgrimage to Mecca. Emphasis is laid on bio – social milestones of growth thus those who reach puberty (especially females) are seen as grown irrespective of the age of puberty. According to a respondent Taata (April, 2015) the physical determinants of growth for females include the sight of menstruation, developing breast and more curved body whereas that of males is silent and more dependent on the male's ability to be economically productive. Activities

of male groups are most evident in the Gao social setting compared to that of female groups. Though both sexes often wear long robes (or Janlabia) in the community, women tend to wear black overall robes (Jilbaabu) to cover their entire body except their feet and the region from their fingers to their wrists. Male chiefs (Amiri) are the traditional political head of any community who are supported by a counsel of males. However, female queen (Amiri Wei) tasked with the duty of seeking the welfare of women and their children in the community.

As hinted above, males mostly engage in various economic activities like farming, fishing, herding of animals, clerical jobs, wholesale, retail and petty trading to fend for their households. Family heads (themselves males) control access to lands and determine which male ward farms a particular parcel of land. Thus Gao males have economic advantage compared to females who mostly engage in knitting and sewing for domestic or household decorations. This situation makes females depend on their male wards like their fathers or husbands for their survival. Dependence on males for wealth creation is one of the main reasons why male offspring is cherished compared to females.

Gao people pursue Arabic forms of education mainly because of its religious significance. Thus heads of households ensure their wards attend Arabic schools (or Makaranta) after their primary socialization. Males are privileged yet again in the pursuit of education especially since females are communally trained to become responsible wives whereas males are supported to pursue higher academic laurels (if the means is available) to provide for the household.

Another respondent Tibsiru (April, 2015) identifies marriage (Higayi) as one of the cherished social events Gao people look forward to because it is a significant social milestone of growth. This event is said to honour females since it presents them the

opportunity to start and raise their own families. It is also to reward the sexual purity of females since it is a taboo for females to deliver outside wedlock. Emphasis is laid on the social age of marriage for males thus they enter into marriage when they become capable of caring for a woman whereas biological milestones of reaching puberty are the criteria for females. Just like other Sahelian groups (see Tonah, 2005), Gao people customarily practice child betrothal where young females are engaged (to older males) to be married during their puberty. However, some males inform their fathers who approach the parents of the prospective bride for their consent. The male's family presents a bride price ('Hijal' maano') of cattle or sheep, kola nuts, rice and other assorted products to the bride's family upon their readiness to give their daughter into marriage. The activity often takes place on the traditional weekends – Fridays and Saturdays – to afford older males the chance to grace the occasion. The age mates of the female – married or otherwise – smear herbal mixture (called 'Lenle') on parts of her body to form temporal body arts on the first day of the event which take a couple of hours. The exercise is interspersed with singing, merry making and some form of teasing. The ceremony is sealed by the recital of verses from the Koran by the Imam who also performs prayers (or 'Aduwa') after which there is merry making including eating and dancing to their traditional song (called the 'Takemba'). The bride is sent to her husband after the merry making on the second day with a young female to help the bride with her chores though the young female returns to her parents after eight days. The Imam also performs the naming ceremony in case a new baby ('Ize buuna kicho') is born.

A discussion with one of the elders revealed that Gao people, just like other ethnic groups in Africa, point to either germ or social irregularities as causes for sickness ('Wuruchie') thus mostly herbal based drugs ('Tafari') are administered to patients otherwise an Imam or a cleric recites verses from the Koran or performs prayers ('Aduwa') to ward off evil

spirits that cause sickness. Death (or 'Bu') of relatives is essentially seen as the will of God (Allah) thus not assigned physical or spiritual cause. They follow the Islamic practice of burial where the dead is buried on the same day they died after the Imam recites verses from the Koran and leads group prayer (Aduwa) for the departed.

3.1 Settlement History of Gao People in Accra

According to a United Nations Population Fund (2013) report, 232 million people - 3.2 percent of the world's population – lived outside their home country of origin. The report identifies among others, the search for better economic and social opportunities as major factors for which migrants cross borders. The city, per its characteristic of being the net provider of fairly better economic and social opportunities, remains the desired destination of migrants for its survival. Migrant population thus serves as a major contributing factor to the entirety of the social life of the city.

The city of Accra play host to several migrant populations with some occupying specific geographic locations spread across its landscape. For instance, Ewes are known to reside in several 'Ayigbe' towns just as most migrant Muslims settle in the 'Zongo' settlements. Gao people are one of the minority groups which may be found in Zongo settlements across Ghana. The history of Gao people in Accra is synonymous to the intents of other non indigenous settlers in the city though not enough is documented about their settlement history. Most of what is known about Gao history in Accra are accounts based on oral tradition.

Discussions with three key Gao elders – the headman, son of the former national headman and chief linguist - detail the history of Gao migration and settlement in Accra. According to Alhaji Tebsiru, his father, the former national headman is the first known Gao man to

have settled in Accra. He indicates that his father, in his youth, practiced the family business of subsistence farming and petty trading in their homeland of Tina Feza in Mali. However his father, like most young men join Fulani pastoralists who move the herds of cattle they care of to greener pastures down the Sahel during the dry season and return to their farmlands in the rainy season. He indicates that the Fulani herdsmen often exchange young Gao labour for guiding their cattle with daily food or provision till they reach a point where they return or decide to stay in any city along their path. Some adventurous Gao young men follow Fulani herdsmen to as far as Kumasi because it served as an important trade route and because it has large portions of green vegetation which makes Kumasi the desired settlement point of most young Gao men who hope to relocate.

All the elders agree that Alhaji Fatawu – the former national headman – migrated to Kumasi in 1942 and landed a job with a Lebanese as a store keeper for imported fabrics. His relationship with his employers continued till he was made the store keeper in the Accra branch at Zongo Lane. While in Accra, Alhaji Fatawu resided in Sarbon Zongo and commuted to Accra Central daily except Sundays. The son of the deceased national headman, Alhaji Tebsiru indicates that his father befriended one Mali Gurubune, a Malian from Timbuktu who buys their wares and sells at retail price. They become close due to their shared ancestral home thus was helpful to each in terms of residence and acquiring of lands at a later date. Alhaji Fatawu resettled with Mali Gurubune in Accra New Town till he left for Zabrama Line.

3.2 Gao People in Zabrama Line

The settlement history of Gao people in Zabrama Line is directly linked to the networks they created with other ethnic migrants in the city of Accra. Zabrama Line, traditionally referred to as Sempe New Town, falls under the Sempe territory of the Ga people. One

name that resonates among elderly respondents is one ‘Doctor’ Musah Abochie - Ango a wealthy Hausa settler in Sarbon Zongo who was a traditional healer, conducts circumcision (known as ‘wanzam’) and also a trader in kola nuts. He was allocated a portion of the land by the then Ga Mantse, Nii Kpikpitse IV, in Zabrama Line per his desire to expand his trade thus was referred to as the ‘Care taker’ though he did not settle on the land. ‘Dr.’ Abochie - Ango however named portions of his land ‘Nasarawa’ which has Arabic roots ‘Nasa’ (freedom) thus ‘Free Land’. He leased portions of his land to Busanga people who resettled from Sarbon Zongo. The land itself was then a vegetative stretch mostly used for farming. The current headman of Zabarama people who is also the chief of the area, Alhaji Zaku IV identified one Yusif Abeka Odametey as the known indigene who settled on portions of the Mamponse stretch of the land because he was into farming.

Alhaji Zaku, a Zabarama who was friend to ‘Dr.’ Abochie – Ango expressed interest in acquiring a portion of the land in Sempe New Town and was led by the ‘care taker’ to the Ga Mantse who granted portions of the land for residential purposes to Alhaji Zaku upon meeting certain traditional requirements. Alhaji Zaku thus migrated from Sarbon Zongo to the new location in 1957 and led other migrants to the traditional authorities for portions of the land. One of ‘Dr.’ Abochie – Ango’s servants, known as ‘Alhaji’ Haruna, a Gao is said to be one of the people who expressed interest in relocating to the ‘new land’. ‘Alhaji’ Haruna is said to have joined his master in Accra in 1942 as care taker for his livestock in the outskirts of Sarbon Zongo. ‘Alhaji’ Haruna did not however relocate to Zabrama Line though he gave portions to another Gao migrant by name Alhaji Fatawu who resettled to the new location.

Alhaji Fatawu is thus identified as the first Gao individual who developed portions of his land in the study area for residential purposes. One reason that could explain the peoples’

unwillingness to move to the ‘new land’ was because it was covered with green vegetation and inhabited by wild animals like venomous snakes, wild cats and many others though its footpaths were not visible at sunset and early dawn. This notwithstanding, Alhaji Fatawu and his family, like a few others relocated to the new land from Accra New Town upon releasing he could lose his property to encroachers.

Alhaji Fatawu was then a store keeper for Lebanese traders who dealt in ‘Atuapa’ fabrics and was brought from Kumasi to manage his employers’ stretch of stores in Accra Central around 1965. It is believed that Alhaji Fatawu, a semi literate in Arabic studies, joined Fulani herdsmen as labourer or cattle caretaker to Kumasi from Tina Fese, a Gao city of Mali in search of green pastures for the flocks. As a caretaker, his reward was the daily provision of food, security, clothes and other daily provisions till he reach Kumasi where he had the choice of continuing with the herdsmen or fend for himself in the city. According to his son Alhaji Tibsiru, his father chose to fend for himself in the city just like most young men do. Unlike others who often become scrap dealers, his father’s favour with Lebanese businessmen was mainly because he could recite the Koran during Islamic prayers and was active in congregational ceremonies. He thus became a store keeper for the Lebanese store owners and soon rose through the ranks to become a store keeper till he was appointed to manage their office branch in Accra.

Whiles in Accra, Alhaji Fatawu met Alhaji Haruna, a fellow Gao, Alhaji Haruna Gurubune when the later came to buy fabrics at his shop. According to his son, Alhaji Tibsiru, though the language they communicated in is Hausa, they were able to make themselves out per their dressing and marks on their face. Alhaji Haruna is said to have joined kola dealers who ply their trade through Niger to Accra through Nigeria and settled with his employers in Accra New Town. Alhaji Tibsiru indicates that the union between his father and Alhaji Haruna became reciprocal till the demise of the latter.

Alhaji Fatawu is said to have assisted other Gao and Songhai settlers who moved to Accra at later dates by hosting them in his residence till they became capable of renting or accommodating themselves. He led others with the wherewithal to acquire portions of the new land for residential or business purposes. He thus became a known figure among Songhai community in Accra to the extent that his fame reached his home country where he was known as an individual who hosts any Gao or Songhai traveler in Accra for no fee. Thus it became the desire of many Songhai people who travel to Accra for various purposes to meet Alhaji Fatawu.

According to his son, his father stopped working with the Lebanese traders around 1971 and became an agent in the sale of landed property. He facilitated the sale of lands and landed property in and around Sempe New Town for a fee. Alhaji Tibsiru indicates that their house was busy such that it always had visitors each day as if there was a special occasion or ceremony. Indeed their house never lacked food because people donated items for the upkeep of travelers who reside in their home.

After awhile, a group of Songhai families decided to take him as their leader thus Alhaji Fatawu became the first headman of Songhai people in Accra with the agreement of the then Ga Mantse. He eventually became the head of the Songhai community in Ghana where he leads functions such as installing Gao chiefs for specific jurisdiction, resolving conflicts, represents the interest of Songhai people at Ga traditional meetings and many others.

3.3 Inter Ethnic Relations in Zabrama Line

Zabrama Line is currently a multi ethnic suburb in Accra metropolis which host people of other ethnic groups including Hausa, Zabarima, Wangara, Ewes, Gas, Frafra and

Dagomba. These ethnic groups are arranged such that they organize social events to commemorate their traditional milestones. For instance Ewes gather often to socialize with other Ewes in the area by forming groups. Other ethnic groups in the area are formed in such a way that they have leaders who represent their interest in the area. Currently, the chief of the area is Alhaji Zaku IV (a Zabarima) who sits in counsel with representatives of other leaders to discuss issues and also represent the interest of the people in Zabrama Line at the Sempe Mantse's palace. Islam and Christianity are the most visible religious practices in the area thus making religion a key factor in promoting positive inter ethnic relations in the area. For instance, churches are busy with activities throughout the week especially Sundays, likewise mosques whose membership is multi ethnic. Muslims can easily be identified per the forms of dressing especially among the females. Males are regarded and seen as family heads thus are the breadwinners whereas females mostly care for the upkeep of the home. In cases where there is no immediate male head figure, an immediate paternal male relative or an elderly son takes the responsibility of catering for the family. This notwithstanding, a few households I visited had women heads where immediate male benefactors are distant from the said houses in question.

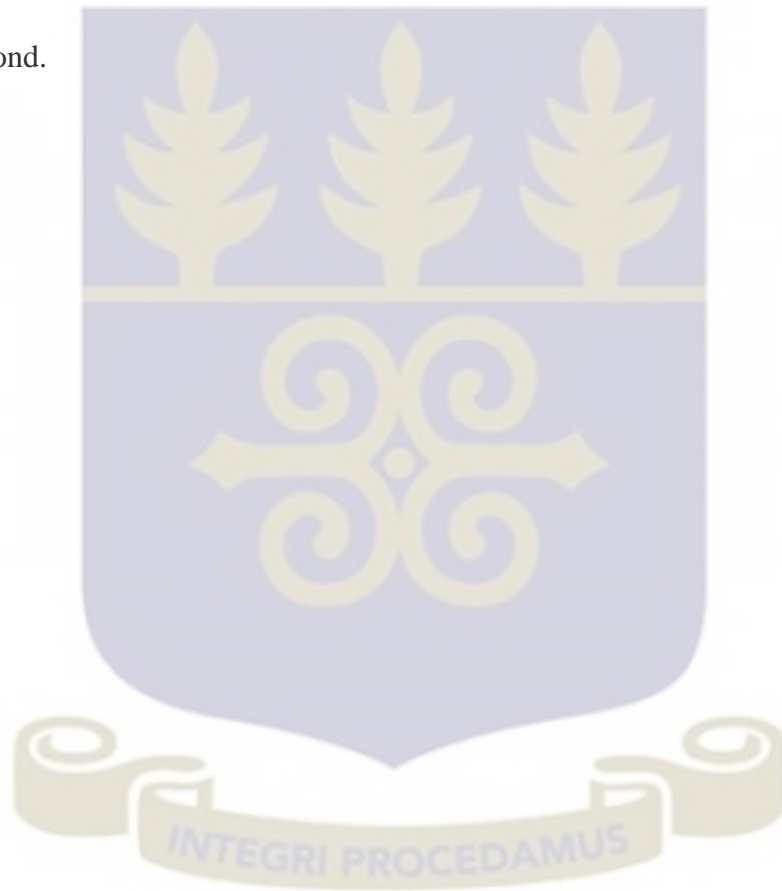
Generally, males in the area interact among themselves more than females. Men discuss several social issues ranging from politics, business and sports. Most Muslims young males in the area play, watch or discuss football thus are likely to interact often compared their female counterparts. Though females interact on several issues, non Muslim females are likely to create more social contact than their Muslim counterparts in the area. For instance, an Ewe lady who is a beans seller in the area is bound to meet several non Ewes unlike a Gao lady is likely to interact with other Gao people (especially females) and other Muslims often.

Hausa appears to be the dominant culture in the area since most people in the area speak Hausa language. Furthermore, Islam remains the main religious practice in the area so the site of several mosques. However, non Muslims also worship in their various places of worship. The need for goods and services has necessitated constant interactions in the area. For instance, one have to interact with others because need a product or pay a for utility service which their kinsman may not be able to provide.

Daily interactions in Zabrama Line is characterised by instances of cross cultural exchanges. For instance a Gao individual is likely to buy his breakfast from a Dagomba, lunch from a Ga or Ewe food vendor and taken supper at home made with ingredients bought from an Akan food stuff seller next door. He may have joined a bus owned by a Hausa, chauffeured by a Busanga whose conductor is a Frafra. That is to say people in the Hausa man, chauffeured by an Ewe whose conductor is a Ga. People in the area share close proximity such as staying in the same rented household and sharing the same washrooms. This means people in the area largely cooperate at various levels depending on the need at hand and the desired results. For instance people in a household may come together to resolve an issue in the household, whiles they will regroup elsewhere for economic, religious or cultural purposes.

Formal education is another platform for cross cultural interaction in the area. Pupils share a common space in the school with their peers who may not be from their ethnic or religious group. As such the pupils are bound to pick up behaviours from their peers which may not be the practice in their various homes. Sporting activities is also a platform where people of different ethnic groups interact in the area. The youth in the area have formed various football clubs who train and engage in competitions often. These clubs are multi thrive on skill and hard work other than ethnic considerations though their members are likely to be influenced by their colleagues or otherwise.

The drive to rent or own landed property is another medium through which people in the area interact often. This was discovered during an interaction one household which belongs to a Zabarima man. One of the tenants in the house who is a Ga facilitated the process for a Gao tenant to acquire a land around Kasoa. It is also said that the Ga tenant was also instrumental in introducing young men in the area to traditional leaders at Kasoa Amanfrom area who employ the youth as land guards. Also, rent agents in the area introduce people (irrespective of their ethnic origin) who desire to rent an apartment in the area and beyond.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter looks at the methodology which was employed during the study. It includes the study design, the study population, the sampling methods and sample size, data collection procedures and method of data processing analysis. The ethics considered in the conducting of this research has also been captured in this section.

4.1 Study Design

The study employs a qualitative research design to gather information from the respondents. Qualitatively, an in-depth interview using interview guide was used to gather data from the Gao people in Zabrama Line. Even though the researcher could have used quantitative method (like a survey), some useful details and explanations like lifestyle choices would have been left out. Also due to the time constraints, a mix method would have affected the timeliness within which the research was to be completed. Even though the work was basically qualitative in nature, respondents were made to respond to questions which were grouped into tables like their choice and level of education.

These seemingly qualitative questions helped to identify the different categories under which the respondents were placed being youth, middle aged or aged.

4.2 Research Population

The effect of urbanization on a particular ethnic group has enormous impact on other social and ethnic groups in the urban space. Several instances suggest that urban social interaction is affected positively or otherwise by the ethnic origins or cultural bias of the social players involved in the interactive process. The researchers thus acknowledges the

vital role other ethnic groups play in understanding the life forms of a particular ethnic group especially in a multi ethnic setting like the city.

However, given the language barrier this project encountered, it became difficult to include all the views of other ethnic groups in the study area though the local chief (Ahaji Zaku IV), who is a Zabarama was interviewed in the process. The study population was therefore mainly restricted to Gao people in Zabrama Line. The researcher believes that the views of respondents who were grouped in three age groups will be detailed and adequate enough to answer the research questions under study.

4.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Different sampling techniques were employed in the selection of respondents. These were: Purposive sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of the area as a study lab. Zabrama Line was purposively selected based on its proximity to the researcher and the fact that the researcher had prior knowledge of Gao residents in the area.

The study area falls under Ablekuma Central Sub Metro of the Greater Accra Region which has several ‘squatter’ or ‘Mohammedan’ settlements (referred to as Zongos) namely Sarbon Zongo, Sukura, Russia, Fadi Kafuuta, and Nasaraawa. It was practically impossible to conduct the study in all these communities given the language barrier involved to complete this study. A prior knowledge of high numbers of Gao residents in Zabrama Line made the area the obvious choice for the study.

However, the total number of Gao residents in the study area is unknown. The researcher therefore decided to select a total of 7 households for interviews in this study. A total of 11

youth, 8 adults and 5 older adults were interviewed for this research. The choice of 24 respondents is based on the fact that seven respondents is sufficient for a qualitative work.

To get the sample for the study, the purposive and snowball approaches were adopted to select the household and respondents. The purposive approach was first used to select a Gao household after which the snowball approach was used to identify the next household. Thus, the head of the households were asked to propose and give the location to the next Gao household in the study area.

The headman of the Zabarima people was also purposively selected due to the role their offices have performed in the study area over the years. These individuals had adequate information of the social lives and settlement history of the study population in the area.

4.4 Data Sources

The study used data from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were gathered through the use of an in-depth interview guide with the different age groups of Gao people in the study area. Secondary data were also obtained from the review of books, journals, articles and other internet resources. Data from these secondary sources were reviewed extensively to determine the position of other researchers and writers on ethnic transformation among ethnic minorities in urban locations.

4.5 Methods of Data Collection

To enable an in-depth understanding of the variables under consideration, the interview questions were designed in such a way as to enable the researcher to probe further to enable clarity on the issues. Tape recorders were used during the interview with the

respondents with their permission. The actual names of the respondents were omitted from the interview and even the analysis of the study.

The researcher also resorted to making some observations at the various households to determine the inter generational gaps between the age groups. Perceptions on issues like household preference, selection of marriage partners, education and economic practices were key in identifying inter generational preference. Field notebook was used to take notes on some issues that were of interest to the research.

4.6 Data Analysis

The responses from the interview were collated and where there were points of convergence or agreements on some of the issues, they were also presented in quotes. However, the main method used for the presentation of the interview data was content analysis. Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique where responses are directly quoted in the content of the discussions as exactly as it was said without any alteration.

4.7 Ethical Consideration

To begin with, an introductory letter from the Sociology Department and Ethics Review Committee (ECH) of the University of Ghana was showed or read out to the heads of the households selected to seek for their permission to conduct an interview with them in their own appropriate time.

After the permission was given, informed consent was ensured, as all the participants were informed about the purpose of the research. It was made known to them that the research was solely for academic purpose and there were no known risks involved in participating.

Voluntary participation was another ethical issue that was adhered to by the researcher. Participants were not forced to participate in the research; they were made aware of their voluntary participation in the research by allowing the researcher to interview them at agreed times. Again, they were informed about their freedom to withdraw from the study at any point in time.

Another important ethical issue that was considered was confidentiality. Participants were assured that their information will not be disclosed to anyone and for that matter their names and identity will not feature in the research so the researcher used pseudonyms to represent the respondents who were quoted in this document.

Disposal of information was also considered. The researcher assured the participants that all information relating to them will be destroyed after the work has been accepted by the University of Ghana Graduate School.

Finally, all references and information sources have been duly acknowledged in the work.

4.8 Limitation of the Study

The main limiting factor during this study was language since most of the aged respondents could only communicate fluently in the Gao language which the researcher cannot speak or understand. However, the service of a local interpreter who is fluent in the language was helpful in asking questions and follow up questions. The interpreter also did help with transcribing the audio recorded interviews.

Access to female respondents was another challenge the researcher encountered during the study due to the ‘tradition of shyness’ females are culturally socialized into. Most females are supposed to exhibit shyness or avoid lengthy discussions with non related males. This situation led to a state where females cut short their response to reduce the average time earmarked for the interview. Nonetheless the researcher was able to orient some female figures in the households the interview were conducted on the purely academic nature of the exercise. These females served as the ‘Gate Keepers’ in their various households. Also, interviews with the females were conducted in the compounds of their households especially when their spouses were not around so they could express themselves freely.

Another limitation the researcher encountered in this study is the issue of appropriate timing for interviews. This challenge was most prominent with the working class of Gao people (especially the males) in the vicinity since they return home late in the day. Thus the researcher conducted interviews for most working class males after the Magrib (or sunset) prayers since most working class people ensure they say this prayer at home and also on weekends.

Non-cooperation is also a limitation the researcher encountered during the study where prospective respondents refused to partake in the exercise. The researcher encountered respondents who were indifferent to the exercise though their participation may have been very helpful to the study. One of the prospective respondents queried if the research is to do a head count of non Ghanaian households. I was able to convince a handful of respondents who listened to the reason for the research to join in the study and those convinced appealed to some of their colleagues to join the exercise.

Finally, some respondents especially the adults and older adults did not know their age or date of birth. There were instances where respondents asked the researcher to give them

age or just write ‘something’ as their age. However, the researcher used the age on any national ID like the National Health identity card or depended on the social age of respondents instead of their chronological age. This was done by estimating the age of those respondents per the number of children or grand children they had or their physical signs of old age.



CHAPTER FIVE

TRACES OF TRANSFORMATION AMONG GAO PEOPLE IN ZABRAMA LINE

This chapter chronicles the extent to which the social life of an urban minority group – Gao people – in Accra have seen some form of transformation over an appreciable period of continuous urban location and interaction with people of other ethnicities. The chapter subjects the social institutions of Gao people in Zabrama Line to a sociological scrutiny directed at unraveling the transformations in their socio – cultural lives. It concludes by suggesting that the marriage, economic and educational institutions behaviors of Gao people have seen significant changes per their social interaction in Zabrama Line, for that matter Accra.

Table 2 below indicates that 24 people were interviewed made up of fifteen males and nine females. The imbalance in the sex ratio could be attributed to the fact that females were unwilling to be interviewed by strangers. They would rather the researcher speak to a matured male relative which reveals the level to which most Gao females uphold the principle of shyness especially in interacting with outsiders especially males. 11 (46%) respondents were in the category of youth as defined in this research, that is, they are between the ages of 15 to 30 and 8 (33%) respondents fall between the ages 31 to 45 years that is they can be classified as adults, while 5 (21%) are 45 years or above considered elderly per the contextual assertions of this research.

In all, 18 (75%) respondents have received formal education in either English or Arabic while eight (34%) have received or are enrolled for both English and Arabic studies and the rest are engaged in only Arabic studies.

5.1 Demographic Analysis of respondents

Table 2: Characteristics of respondents

No	Pseudo Name	Age	Sex	Category	Education	Employment	Married
1.	Aisha	19	Female	Youth	English & Arabic	Yes	Yes
2.	Haule	22	Female	Youth	English & Arabic	Yes	Yes
3.	Fati	30	Female	Youth	No	No	Yes
4.	Gallam	37	Male	Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
5.	Buuba	39	Male	Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
6.	Samad	32	Male	Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
7.	Yusufa	40	Male	Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
8.	Kasum	23	Male	Youth	English & Arabic	Yes	No
9.	Ageni	*60	Female	Older Adult	No	No	Widow
10.	Bula	24	Female	Youth	No	No	Yes
11.	Musah	43	Male	Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
12.	Taofeek	43	Male	Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
13.	Gedo	*44	Male	Adult	No	Yes	Yes
14.	Taata	*56	Female	Older Adult	No	No	Widow
15.	Bushira	31	Female	Youth	English & Arabic	Yes	Yes
16.	Weiya	23	Female	Youth	Arabic	No	Yes
17.	Zenli	18	Female	Youth	No	No	Yes
18.	Razak	*51	Male	Older Adult	English & Arabic	Yes	Yes
19.	Ibrahim	17	Male	Youth	English & Arabic	No	No
20.	Tibsiru	*49	Male	Older Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
21.	Sule	24	Male	Youth	English & Arabic	No	No
22.	Tijaani	47	Male	Older Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
23.	Adamu	39	Male	Adult	Arabic	Yes	Yes
24.	Alidu	19	Male	Youth	English & Arabic	No	No

Source: Research (2015)

*Estimated

Table 2 suggests that Gao people prefer Arabic education though their interest in English education is significant. Fourteen of the respondents who have had some form of formal education are males whiles four are females. Three of the educated respondents have attained secondary education in Arabic studies whiles six have attained same in the formal Ghanaian education system. However, six (25%) respondents have not received any form of classroom education of which is four females.

In addition, 79% of those interviewed were either married or had at least one child whiles five respondents were yet to be married or have a child because they were either in school or had no partners yet. Also, nine of those married are referred to as youthful per the description this research provides for the youth. Seven of the youth who are married are females who are either married to people considered to be in their middle adults or older adults. This confirms the fact that most Gao people value marriage and family life which they see as arranged by God. It is however interesting to note that four of the respondents who are unmarried are males who fall within the upper limits of the youth whiles the unmarried female has been betrothed to an elderly man and is due to get married upon completing her apprenticeship in dress making.

16 (67%) of those interviewed (made up of 12 males and 4 females) are into economically productive ventures with majority engaged in selling a range of consumer products including the sale of onions, fruits, beads, and many others. Five of those working are in domestic services such as cleaners, garbage collectors and scrub dealers. All male workers say they support their families (both nuclear and extended) especially females, children and the vulnerable with proceeds from their work. The female workers are into petty trading of consumable products like soups, candies, toiletries and cosmetics including the sale of food items. It is however interesting to note that all the female workers identify a male figure as those who provided support for the establishment of their work. The

females largely also use their proceeds to care for their family members especially their children. This also means that these women are economically empowered which implies they are able to assist with household expenses.

Out of the 24 respondents, 13 (54%) were born in Accra which means they have lived most of their lives in the city. However, five of those interviewed have ever travelled (or do travel) to their home country for various reasons including marriage, naming ceremony, illness or death rites. Seven (30%) of the respondents are migrants who have relocated from Mali or other parts of the West Africa region into the study area. The average year for which these migrants have stayed in the area is six and a half years. This implies a majority of the respondents have a fair understanding of urban social life in Accra while the minority is working towards fitting in.

The respondents were spread across seven households which has been acquired or owned by a relative or a fellow Muslim, especially, Zabarima people. Each house had rooms ranging from seven to 15 which is occupied by Gao people and those of other ethnic origin. Most of the households appear to be either deteriorating or are being refurbished. Three of the households are owned by Gao people who inherited the property from their fathers. But for married couples who share the same room, they occupy rooms based on their gender meaning all females occupy the same room likewise males. Unmarried or divorced females with male toddlers share the same room with their colleague females till the children become matured enough to join the all male rooms. The age of maturity is between eight to 12 years depending on the agreement of the occupants in the room.

Those families with high number of rooms rent out the vacant rooms to other people with preference given to Muslims. Each of the households has at least two Gao families with the majority being five families. Membership into a family is primarily based on marriage,

birth or affinity (or kinship) attraction. The eating arrangement of Gao people is gender based implying that males eat in a group just as females. However, young children (or toddlers) could join any of their parents irrespective of their age so a boy could join his mother to eat likewise a girl could join the father for dinner though this stops earlier for girls than for boys.

The nature of inter ethnic relations between those interviewed and people of other ethnicities is generally peaceful. They see Zabarima people as ‘brothers’ due to the striking similarities in their language, rites of passage and religion. Those interviewed could be described as being heavily influenced by the Hausa tradition since over ninety percent of those interviewed could fluently communicate in the Hausa language while the rest appear to be working towards gaining control over the language. All the youth interviewed could speak at least two languages apart from their mother tongue. The common languages they speak other than their mother tongue are Hausa, Ga and Twi. However, adults and older males mostly speak at least one language apart from their mother tongue which is mostly Hausa.

5.2 Political Arrangements

The political setup of Gao people appear to be least affected by urban social life in that all respondents identify male figures as the ideal person to be head of the household. The dominance of males in communal discussions and decision making has trickled down to the domain of the household. The male (‘Wei’) is seen as key in determining the allocation of family resources. However, there are some micro or family based developments which are worth noting in this research.

Respondents identified certain issues ranging from social to natural causes as reasons for which males are not able to perform their functions as family heads in some families. Sickness and death remain two natural causes which incapacitates family heads from performing their duties though there remains a remedy for those who have lost their family heads. Traditionally, the next male kin should take responsibility of providing for the family but this does not materialize in instances where the dead does not have a male relative resident to take over the responsibility of providing for the family. A male relative could be a family relation (either near or distant): thus a son, brother, nephew, uncle or father who has the wherewithal and is capable of providing for a household.

A female respondent who is a widow with three children and also the eldest of an all female household indicates that she has become the breadwinner of her family. She states that:

...I now have to fend for myself, siblings and mother because my father and husband have passed away for several years now. Most male suitors who come my way seem to become disinterested when they realize I am a mother of three children. I do not want to abandon my children for marriage like some have done. I intend to send my kids to school if it means I have to stay single. My kids should become 'big men' someday

(Ageni. 60 years. March 2015)

She states that their surrogate family head, a brother to their deceased father, has been bedridden and his male children are concerned with providing for their nuclear family, parents and siblings. She adds that "do we go hungry till death?" She however does not necessarily see herself as the head of the household since they call unto their paternal uncle in special cases like marriage. Another responsibility of the paternal uncle is to pay property rate of the deceased brother's household which has been transferred to the female bread winner almost a decade now. Her husband's family is also not forth coming though

she receives some funds from the younger brother of the deceased husband periodically. The desire to educate her children with or without external support till they become ‘big men’ is itself reflective of how city life has informed her plans for her three male children. “...no, I don’t want my children to become ‘bola boys’ (collecting scraps or empty bottles) or ‘any-work-boys’ like our people do, I want them to also wear coat and sit in nice cars” was her response when she was asked about her capacity to see them through formal education.

Another case of interest is how a woman who is in her second marriage funds her child from the first marriage to learn a trade. The woman in question is an adult who was a divorcee till she remarried and has two children with her current husband. She however is the youngest wife in a large household with three other women married to her husband. Her child currently resides with her parents since she relocated to her paternal home after her divorce in the first marriage some nine years ago. According to her:

My former husband has divorced me for reasons best known to him. Initially, he used to support her daughter but stopped when after we had a disagreement over the fact that the money was small. I have made several attempts to get him to support his daughter but yielded no result. So I have taken it upon myself to fend for my daughter with the support of my parent. I do not see anything wrong with caring for her except I am now married to another man and fear he may be annoyed when my daughter visits

(Bushira. 31 years. March 2015)

Bushira does not necessarily think she is usurping the authority of the father as the family head though even though he is not catering to her daughter. She however asked “what will the father or his family say if his daughter appropriates all the good things she gets in marriage to me and my family especially since my daughter sees my father as her father”? Her ability to forecast the behaviour of her daughter when she becomes well to do in itself reflects the extent to which a continuation of the current trend of events in her first marriage will change the authority structure at a micro or single family level by thinking

that her daughter will resort to her maternal family for support when she is ready to marry. It must be reiterated that this research did not see a sharp transformation in the political structure of Gao people except the increased occurrence of such cases discussed above implies some alteration in the authority structure at micro levels. Though urban areas are characterized by loose familial relations, Gao people in fairly urban Zabrama Line have been able to keep to their family ties.

5.3 Religious Improvising

Another institution that has seen minimal or no change is the religious practice of the Gao people. It has been stated above that Gao people are Muslims who practice the faith with utmost adherence to the tenets of the faith. Perhaps the notable change in the religious institution is summarized in what one respondent indicated when he said that “we are happy there are several mosques in the area now. Even people have converted their balconies to worship centers and more people are now becoming Muslims...”.

Islam is based on the adherence and practice of the ‘Five Pillars of the Faith’ which are the confession of faith, alms giving, fasting, prayer and pilgrimage to Mecca. Prayer is said five times on daily basis at specific times though the some respondents miss out on the exact times for prayer. Seven respondents (three students and four workers) indicate how their routine activities debar them from praying at the exact times of prayer. One senior high student hinted that:

I do not miss early morning prayers but cannot say afternoon prayers because I have to do class work. I however say the afternoon prayers when I return home thus spend much time in the mosques in the evenings. Most Muslim students in my school do same except instances where the class teacher does not show up, we pray at a designated place at the school compound

(Sule. 24 year. March 2015)

The above statement reveals or indicates that the educational system of Accra (for that matter, Ghana) has affected the religious practice of younger generations of Gao people pursuing formal education. Thus the educational setting of Accra appears to incapacitate Muslims from performing their religious obligations especially their daily prayers. This issue has become topical in recent times in Ghana where Christian mission schools are calling for Muslim students in their schools to among others attend school worship programs (which is Christian oriented) and call on female students not to wear the Hijab (or veil) during school session. This directive by the Christian mission schools appears to defeat the modern agenda of co – existence and religious liberty especially since Ghana is a secular state.

The 25th February, 2015 edition of Joy News reports on Ghana Muslim Mission’s call for religious coexistence in mission schools. The chairman of the mission is reported to have stated that

...tolerance, respect for fundamental human rights, freedom of religion, respect for the rule law (constitution of Ghana) and kindness are among the factors that will ensure peaceful coexistence in our homes, schools, institutions, communities and nation as a whole. This is an important aspect of our civilization as people in this 21st century

(Joy News, 25-02-2015)

The mission presents a five point resolution with a key recommendation to mission schools to desist from compelling all students to worship against their will. This shows how urban social life appears to whip people into place in relation to practicing what the general society accepts as normal. This means students, for that matter Muslim students, are being supposedly forced to live by the dictates in the schools they find themselves in regardless of their faith.

Sule further states that he gets frustrated during the fasting (Ramaddan) period. He states that “I get over worked during the fast not because I have not eaten but because of the thought of missing congregational prayers because I have to sit in class though I say all the prayers I miss after class”. One other respondent indicates that he agreed with his colleagues to transform part of the rest area at their work for prayers. According to him:

...we had to discuss with our employer to allow us use that area for prayers since he does not like us going to the mosques for prayers during working hours. Only five security workers are Muslims at my worksite. We thus ensure the place is always clean so it will be appealing to pray there so we hardly miss prayers unless we are on errand

(Tijaani. 47 years. April 2015)

As such work and school appear to have altered the religious practice of those respondents who find themselves working or schooling. It must be stated that those Gao people who own their own businesses have the liberty of following the prayer patterns to the letter except they may have to find ways to attend to clients or customers who turn up for service just when afternoon prayer is about to be said or is in session. One such respondent reveals that “I close one of the doors to my shop and pray. I do this to alert my neighbours and customers that am busy for that brief period”. His response to a follow up question of what he does when there were customers present just before prayer was that “I make sure I attend to all customers available before I retire for prayers unless my boys are present to attend to them”. Thus very important religious practices as daily prayers become suspended as a result of economic and educational occurrence.

5.4 Economic Engagements

The economic institution is perhaps the most rapidly changing institutions for all ethnicities represented across urban spatial location. Economic transformation connotes an alteration

in the dominant economic practices characterized by increased productivity due to increasing demand for a product or service.

As discussed in earlier chapters, Gao people are originally an agrarian ethnic group till a natural occurrence – Sahelian drought – forced some of them to venture into other trades involving instances where some migrated to seek greener pastures in some urban centers across the West Africa region for work. According to the current headman for Gao people in Zabrama Line, the original intent of their forebears was to remain productive during lean seasons thus they relocate to cities for jobs with a plan to return when the sowing season is due because of improved vegetation. He reveals that “they travelled for temporal jobs to raise money to support themselves and their families back home till they go back. However, they realized that they could make much income compared with their former work back home so they stayed over in the urban locations”. According to him, some were just being adventurous while others migrated because they desired to live the ‘good’ lives their traveled kinsmen exhibited when they visit their ethnic origin. People, especially young people who see the extravagance of their colleagues express their desire to join and work towards relocating to their kinsmen in the cities especially if they share the same lineage or family line with those in the city.

According to Tibsiru, early Gao settlers in the area engaged in various economic practices based on their financial wherewithal. Thus some were engaged in ‘descent’ jobs as owners and dealers in petroleum products, livestock, cereal and batik materials while others engaged in collecting scraps for sale, sale of natural medicinal concoctions, male circumcisers and many others which promises some form of monetary rewards. One elderly respondent stated that his uncle who brought him to Accra was into the production of tie and dye cloths and needed people as labourers in his worksite. His uncle decided to bring him and his two male siblings who were to serve as labourers whose reward will be

their learning the tie and dye business. According to him “we were happy to leave pastoral work to join city life because it was an opportunity to become wealthy since most young men who return for visits were the rich flashy ones who splash money around. They had money to spare, some even redeveloped old huts and a few built block houses thus it was the dream of most young men to travel to cities like Accra and Kumasi – seeing is believing you know”. The term “seeing is believing” appears to promote a culture of adventurism which is common among adventurous people. Thus males migrate and prepare the grounds for their female partners to join more like instances where male nomads lead in the movement of families. They had heard stories of how Accra (for that matter city life) has booming businesses, high rising buildings, lots of liberties and opportunities.

I will say I am happy to have joined my uncle, today I own a tie and dye business and also teaching some of my male children to take after me. I believe my two male sons who are learning the trade will do better when they master the trade – they will teach their children even better skills in the tie and dye business. Unfortunately, though one of my brothers has passed on, he was able to establish a tie and dye business for his sons before his death. Our youngest brother however entered into the petroleum products and now owns two fuel stations. Though I visit ‘home’ periodically and have done some projects there, Accra has become my home because I raised my family here. My family back ‘home’ will be alerted if I happen to die here unless maybe God chooses that I die back ‘home’

(Razak. 51 years February 2015)

However, one of the male children of the Gao headman is a graduate of the Institute of Professional Studies who has a dream to become a chartered accountant. The son, who works with a private firm as an accounts clerk hinted that he was glad his parents sent him to school. According to him “most people see young Gao people as uneducated people who are either into ‘any work’ or one social vice or the other but I know a handful of us, even including ladies, who are pursuing education even to the university level, am sure those perceptions will change soon, Insha Allah”. Another family head hinted that he does not want his children to ‘suffer’ like he did thus “all my children have been to senior high

school. The last girl is now in her first year at Christian Methodist Senior School”. The notion of suffering hints of how this family head struggled for good jobs in his youthful ages. These educational milestones discussed above are in response to the unexplored opportunities the elderly could not harness because of their weak or nonexistent educational background. Thus, though the elder class may not have been educated by the formal educational system in Ghana, they are making efforts to change that situation for their offspring. One adult recounts a story of how he was duped one day when he stated that:

I remember a fuel tanker driver overstated the quantity of fuel he had deposited with me for my master because I did not know how to read and write. I had to work three months without pay because my employer defrayed the cost with my three months salary. I vowed to send my children to school to at least learn how to read and write so they will not be cheated like me

(Gedo. 44 years. April, 2015)

The testimony above shows how a parent endeavored to ensure his ward does not encounter a bitter experience which has ever befallen him. He believes the event occurred because of his not being able to read and write which he thinks has handicapped him. A further consideration of being occupationally handicapped implies that his cultural practice of cherishing Arabic education over English education has not been necessarily beneficial in Accra though it may somewhere else. Thus ethnic transformation among urban minority is largely informed by and dependent on the location and period within which that group finds itself.

It appears that despite the vast difference between the social life of urban and rural settings, few Gao urban settlers permanently return to their home country. In most return cases, the returnees returned because they had committed grievous crimes, were severely ill or were stricken with old age. Whatever the case, permanent returnees are those who were likely to

have lost their economic ability to become productive in the city. The local headman hinted that at a point in time, it became necessary to develop and implement support interventions for those who have lost their capital and therefore wanted to go back because they did not receive support. This was specially made since most Gao people were not willing to return though they were not gainfully employed thus they formed credit unions which support Gao people by giving out interest free loans. They did this by forming associations of Gao people who were to make financial contributions for each member on rotation basis. The membership of each association was between six and ten and was operated such that members made financial commitment for each member per month till the last member receives his portion. The monthly rotation of contribution has resulted in a reduction of membership. The amount to be contributed varies from group to group though the earnings are expected to be good enough to support each member. However, one contributor hints that people could become members of multiple groups based on their ability to meet the requirements of each group. Others formed groups with non Gao Muslims or with people in their household irrespective of their religious or ethnic background. Household credit group formation is seen as rewarding since the beneficiaries are less likely to abscond with their contributions. It also allows capable women to join in the drive to raise capital for any purpose. According to the headman, this exercise proved to be successful since many people were able to revamp their businesses.

The shifting economic position of Gao females is worth noting in this research. As suggested above, females in Gao communities, like most African communities, are mostly relegated to 'backstage roles' of attending to the needs of the family members whereas males attend to front stage roles of interacting with the larger society irrespective of its multi ethnic nature. The principle of shyness which is a feminine practice of avoiding direct interaction with others especially males from other family groups or ethnic

background is still cherished among the elderly females in the society thus they have minimal or avoid face to face interactions with others especially males of other descent or origin. This implies that females wear clothes which cover most of their bodies including facial veils and maintain this when they receive a visitor a non familial male visitor at home or on an errand outside the home. Thus older females could only engage in limited or minimal economic practices to avoid social contact with males of other descent or ethnicities. Knitting is identified as the most common economic practice of Gao women which they practice via the networks Gao women create among themselves on one hand and with women of other ethnic groups on the other. One elderly respondent said this about his wife: “I did not make my wife work – like sell porridge, doughnuts or vegetables though we stay by the main road. I thought she could be cheated by clients or become like other women who expose themselves in the area”. Thus, some husbands prevent their wives from starting or managing a business because they think their wives may not be able to reconcile their accounts at the end of the day. The notion of working females becoming ‘bad’ connotes the thoughts that the females could adopt the lifestyles of non Gao females in the area. The economic and social position of Gao females is experiencing some form of changes on a minimal scale though this may see significant increase in ensuing generations. Younger Gao females are engaging in economic activities which expose them to several others including male. A female food vendor recounted how her business survived over the years by stating that:

...initially, my parents were not happy I wanted to start selling ‘waakye’. They thought I will become like some of the young females in the area who were single parents. My parents did not want me to go to junior high school after primary six, thus I used to help a Hausa lady who sold this food in front of our house by washing her bowls over our wall for a fee. She soon invited me to help her in her house which was few blocks away after my parents agreed to her terms. In the beginning, my brother used to escort her home before early morning prayers for fear of being attacked or raped till I had the courage to go alone. I become her chief apprentice in no time and was cooking for other social events she contracts till she

passed on. My elder brother was most supportive, he loaned me the start-up capital and see me today...

(Haule. 22 years. April 2014)

The narrative above is descriptive of one case where a Gao female is now actively into an informal business line which is giving her some rewards. Though she now stays a few blocks away with her husband and children, she is regarded as an influential member of her father's household since she feeds for her parents who are old and unemployed. Another lady shared how he became an apprentice to a non Muslim neighbour learning to become a fashion designer. Her case is such that she chose to learn the trade as the only condition to marry a wealthy Gao in Kumasi. According to her:

I wanted to be a nurse thus was studious at school till I finished Junior High School but my father wanted me to stop school and marry a famous Gao at Aboabo in Kumasi. Though painful, I decided to marry the man but not till I learn a trade and he agrees to open a fashion store and a boutique for me which he has agreed to. I hope to become a 'madam' after I marry so I can do lots of things for myself

(Aisha. 19 years. April 2014)

The scenarios above suggest that, all things being equal, these women are bound to become economically independent in the near future thus can afford other things their husbands may not be willing to provide for them which is largely not the case for their mothers. It also implies that these women will be able to take and pursue decisions they think will be to their benefit thus weakening the economic influence of their husbands on them. Other instances prove that Gao females are into active informal business in the area like trading in domestic product to managing huge stores. This development, no matter how small, suggests an impending move towards economic freedom. Though one may argue that the increased levels of Gao females in active informal business is due to the agglomeration of people in the Zabrama Line; one cannot deny the fact that most younger couples (including single parents) are sending or ensure their female wards go to English oriented schools

which promotes individual social participation thus breaking the traditional social barriers of social timidity like the principle of shyness.

Another economic occurrence which characterize Gao social life is the gains Gao and other ethnic Islamic scholars derive from promoting Islamic studies in the suburbs in Zabrama Line in the early days of their settling in the area. According to Alhaji Taofeek who was himself an Arabic instructor (or Sheik), “it is a religious obligation to study the Arabic language so our people will understand the faith they practice. No form of education supersedes Arabic education and studies in the Koran”. He continues by stating that “the only known schools in our time were Arabic schools spread across Zabrama line and Shukura. You could not easily locate English schools in this area unless to walk further or take a car to Laterbiokoshie and beyond”. ‘Our time’ as noted by Alhaji Taofeek suggests a time when he was younger, relishing the moments his family relocated from New Town to Zabrama Line. To him, “Arabic studies present enormous benefits to students both here and the afterlife”, thus most parents ensured they sent their wards to the Arabic schools. However, the economic gains Arabic schools brought to the owners and instructor was short lived based on the change to the English module of education. Thus in no time the influence of Arabic instructors (or ‘Sheiks’) begun to reduce because people were now sending their wards to state schools which is English oriented. This does not in any way imply a total neglect of Arabic studies but then such educational centers are transforming (if not transformed) into English and Arabic schools. One Arabic instructor hinted that “times have changed but I used to teach about 40 pupils but as you can see now, we have less and less students”.

Young Gao males engage in various economic practices depending on the opportunities available and benefits they accrue from engaging in such ventures. Most of them follow in the path of family business where they learn and perform the trade their parents (in this

case paternal relations) engage in. The sale of petroleum products stands out as the prevailing family business though most young Gao males engage in various other businesses from herding and sale of livestock, sales of beads, onions, dealing in clothes ('Shada') to the dressing of nails. However, the length of time most youth spend in a particular business is dependent on how quite they accumulate profit from their existing business to invest into the next desirable job they want to venture in. The sale of onions is seen as a means to create wealth to start a personal business. According to one seller:

My brother suggested I do this business to raise funds to start my own business. Just like others, we buy the onions on credit from our relatives and sale it at a little higher price. For instance, currently I buy a mini bag of onions on credit for 170 cedis and sale it between 260cedis or more within a week if the market is good. I refund the cost of the onion; spend 60cedis per week and save 30cedis. I plan to start selling electronics someday even if I have to carry them on my head for starters

(Adamu. 39 years February 2015)

The above shows the extent to which the youth have become creative in raising capital to start personal businesses they deem more profitable. They depend on the trade of the elderly members in their families, in this case, the businesses their elders engage in as conduit by which they reach their economic goals. One tailor indicated that though his uncle supported him halfway, he had to do various low income jobs to raise funds for the machine. According to him:

Nobody in my family was into this business till I ventured into it. My father referred me to my paternal uncle for support because he could not assist me. My uncle thought it was a noble idea but suggested I work for him as an attendant at his fuel station whiles he arrange with his friend who is into sewing to take me. Most young men in my family who wanted to start fuel businesses have changed their minds to start a career in sewing after seeing the good prospects sewing provides. I have several customers who liked my works thus have been able to build a store and even married with proceeds from this business. I have trained three family members already and am sure more are considering this job as their career.

(Musah. 43 years. February 2015)

This male Gao's choice of trade or career appear to have ignited the interest of other youths in his family to consider pursuing tailoring which is different from his family's known economic practices as he has revealed. One could rightly conclude that Gao people, just like other ethnic migrants in the city, are bound to encounter a diversification of economic activities in a sense that such migrants are unlikely to continue the economic activities they are known for. It will not be out of place to predict that many of these migrants, for that matter other Gao youth, are bound to venture into other economically productive ventures in the city which may not necessarily be the same with what their forebears practiced.

One elderly respondent thinks that though it was essential for the youth and subsequent generations to create or work in higher income generating activities, the responsibility of reaching such a stage is largely dependent on the youth themselves with support from their parents. According to him:

...my expectation is that our children should become better than us. We embarked on menial jobs because we could not explore the opportunities in high income businesses. The same should not be said of younger Gao folks because they are now more enlightened than we are. Unlike in our case, younger Gao people have better networks with other people and speak multiple local languages thus should not feel cheated. I am willing to support my children to become better with the help of God but it is their responsibility to work towards it

(Taofeek. 43 years. May 2015)

This respondent was however quick to state that it is not the case that majority of the youth in the area are in lower income generating jobs due to the negative influence from the other youths residing in Zabrama Line but that most of them cannot take higher economic opportunities because they did not take their education serious or had no support to do so. To him, Gao youth, like others, should be responsible for decisions they make irrespective of negative influencing factors in the area including but not limited to truancy, gangster life, drug abuse, alcoholism and armed robbery.

5.5 Developing Marital / Family Patterns

The marriage institution is one of the most visible social institutions which have experienced some transformation across the global space and time across its definition and practice. Though the marital practices of Gao people cannot be said to have seen radical changes, there appear to be sub structural alterations which is bound to transform the marital practices in the near future depending on the continuity of current activities around marriage. All the respondents agree that marriage is a sacred practice which is ultimately designed by God so He will determine who becomes married or who becomes a partner. So human efforts in marriage like the choice of partner or the number of children is just a manifestation of a divinely predetermined activity bound to occur. It is thus the will of God that for instance, a parent give their daughter's hand into marriage to a man who may be of the same age as the father or that it is the will of God that a woman delivers multiple children if they get pregnant.

To Gao people, marriage is a key determinant of someone who is grown and responsible enough to fend for a family or raise children. Owing to this, marriages are arranged by families depending on the level of relation between the parents, especially the paternal relations. It is thus a common practice for two brothers to arrange marriage between their male and female children. Male suitors are regarded matured if they are or could be able to fend for themselves and their families' whiles female counterparts are considered matured after puberty.

The process of marriage (referred to as Hijei) involves several interaction between the families of prospective partners. The male who is interested in a female is supposed to depend on his family members to arrange the process and avoid physical contact with the female till the marriage is consummated. The male's family will have to send one bag of rice and an undisclosed amount to the family of the prospective wife as "knocking fee" to

express their son's interest in marrying the lady. A date is set to discuss the bride price which is normally a lump sum of about CFA franc 30,000 which is negotiable. Some good bargainers could beat down the price by half or further down. According to one elder, "quotation in the CFA franc other than the cedi is essential since we do not spend cedi in our hometown. We should be able to send some of the money back home to show to our folks that their daughter is now married". Though the price is quoted in CFA franc, suitors are at liberty to provide the cedi equivalent of the agreed sum.

Upon agreeing on the bride price and the date for the event, the man's family sends a sheep, a bag of rice and some money for food and refreshment for the two families on the day of marriage which implies the ceremony is for two families. The male is also supposed to send assorted gifts to the prospective wife including perfumes, cloths (Shada) for both the wife and her parents. The ceremony is often marked on a weekend from between Friday and Sunday characterized by merry making after the Imam recites some verses from the Koran and prays for the couple after which the female relocates to the husband's home in company of her younger female sibling or maid who is supposed to help her with the house chores for periods ranging between two weeks to three months at the expense of the groom. For instance a maid may stay longer if the bride is in her own hut / room or if the bridegroom provides a separate hut for her. The maid's continued stay with the bride also depends on the bride's willingness and ability to take over domestic chores the maid performs. Ideally, the couple is to buy a parting gift for the bride's attendant upon her leaving as bait for her return in the event the bride needs her services later, like after childbirth.

The practice of sending a junior sister or maid to serve a bridegroom appears to have waned in recent times since the younger female siblings may be engaged in another social process or the other. For instance they could be enrolled in school, learning a trade or may

be unwilling to join their seniors. Some bridegrooms appear to be avoiding additional cost of fending for the attendants while some brides altogether avoid attendants doing their house chores since there is a possibility of the attendants being sexually attracted to their husbands. One respondent (Haule, 22 years) indicates that she “will not accept an attendant in her matrimonial home because my husband will think am lazy”.

The marriage process itself has seen some form of alteration over the times in that families seem to have relaxed the terms and conditions for marriage in relation to inter ethnic marriages and the pride price. One elderly woman indicated that “I had to convince my husband to give our daughter’s hand to marry a Zabarima man. I have no problems if the suitor is from another ethnic origin though he must be or become a Muslim to marry any of my daughters”. This decision is taken on the basis that two of her daughters who had elderly husbands died thus their return to their father’s house. To her, “they are still young and have life ahead of them” thus should not be limited to marrying Gao males which may not happen because they have children.

A description of respondents corroborates the silent alterations which are sweeping across the marriage / family institution of Gao people. 19 (79%) of the twenty four respondents are either married, divorced or have lost a marriage partner. Twelve of those married are in their youthful ages between eighteen to thirty years of which eight are females. Five of the females were married by betrothal thus knew their partners before marriage, however only one is married to a man about the age of the father. According to her:

I did not have a say in the choice of a husband since my parents had arranged it in my childhood. I was informed of my future husband from by the age of eight and had to hide away anytime he visited us with gifts. I was groomed to become a good wife thus had to learn how to cook, knit, dress the bed, do household chores and other things. I looked forward to joining him though I was made to go to school

(Aisha, 19 years. February 2015)

To a large extent, her experience, chronicled above explains the culturally designed aspirations for most young Gao females (that is to get married) which could easily become their personalized social goals. Thus they are groomed or raised from childhood to become good wives to their future husbands and children. However she soon came to terms with her new status she had to live with. She states that “I soon realized I could not get my husband’s attention as often as I wanted since he has to split his time between his wives. All the house chores were transferred to me and I remain the last wife so you can imagine, me and my children do most jobs in this house”. She continues by hinting that though she was initially happy getting married, she later realized that acquiring a skill or learning a trade would have empowered her financially to buy things for herself and her children. According to her, “I forced my husband till he agreed and bought a sewing machine which I use to sew for a fee though on a small scale” which she finds essential upon arriving in her husband’s house where she has a boy and three girls. She states further that “I hope to give the hand of my daughters to fairly younger suitors so they can relate to each other in a friendly atmosphere”. This decision puts to question her control over her children since she is in a patrilineal union. The father of her daughters has a major role to play in their being married in the future. At best, she may advice her husband on this issue but not decide especially in this case where the husband’s responsibility is transferable upon his demise. Her testimony however stands to indicate the desire for a change, though wishful, a sought of desire which could change the culture of females marrying older males in the future.

Four of those married by betrothal have youthful and middle aged husbands who willingly allowed their wives to participate in the research unlike the case described above. One of the females who is a fairly newlywed and the only wife to her husband as at the time of this research defends the practice by stating that:

Our parents know what is good for us because they came to the world before us. Allah meant it to be so. Their decision on who we get married to is often the best because we could not have understood what goes into mate selection and marriage at the time of marriage. I am happy my father accepted the bride price from my husband's family. I have heard some of my colleagues are complaining about arranged marriage but I am okay with it

(Weiya. 23 years. March 2015)

The response above indicates how happy the respondent is with her marriage though arranged. Her state could be explained by several factors. Key among them is the fact that the respondent is the first wife of the husband which implies she is eligible to some privileges if the partner decides to marry again where she is due compensation per each extra wife married. Being the first wife with two male children implies she stands to benefit in case of the demise of her partner. Her two sons (and any other sons she bears with her husband) stand to inherit greater portions of the wealth and belongings of their father upon his demise.

Another respondent suggests that though the practice of betrothal was helpful in time past, it is gradually fading away especially for young Gao people. He indicates that:

I see no reason why the future partners should be determined even when those involved are kids. People are more enlightened these days thus may not necessarily go for the partners their parents choose for them. I know of such arrangements which did not happen because the male had found another woman he thought will make a better wife. Some of such marriages are short lived because the partners were incompatible or entered into the marriage to please their parent. The males often end up having concubines or marrying their preferred partners in addition to the ones proffered to them

(Razak. 51 years. March, 2015)

The revelation above appears to suggest or make a case for people to choose their marriage partners. It is not abnormal for a male to make such a suggestion since its implementation will mean young males will have the liberty to select partners of their choice. From the discussions above, it appears males are calling for more autonomy in the selection of their

marriage partners while the females are fronting for younger partners. Both ways reveal some form of transformation in the practice of marriage by betrothal where marriage partners are determined and arranged by parents beforehand is being objected to by males while females look for a state where they will be married to younger partners.

Some aged and middle aged see the culture of betrothal as essential for the preservation of family name and identity. One of such respondent intimated that he

...finds nothing wrong with the practice of young females marrying older men. The female stands to be protected and cared since the man would have adequately prepared for the ceremony. It also means the woman's family will know the prospective husband long before the ceremony.

(Gedo. 44 years April 2015)

Two noticeable issues in the above response are the need for security and provision for young females on one hand and knowledge of the future partner on the other. The need to know prospective partners fuels the betrothal practice of marriage between people

Another issue pertaining to marriage is the size of family in relation to the number of children couples are willing or plan to have. Most Gao people express the general African perspective of large family size being a sign of divine blessing as reason for which they remain unopposed to increasing numbers of children. A large family size made up of either more than one wife or four (or more) children especially male children shows how wealthy and blessed the family (in this case the family head) is.

Responses from the elderly suggest a state where couples defer the issue of childbirth and the number of children to the work of God. Thus "it is not in my power to determine the number of children my wife delivers, its God who gives. I only have to pray for God's provision to be able to care for my family". This appears to be the position of the randomly selected elders as another middle aged quizzed "what if the next pregnancy is the one to become a president, chief or richest man in my family? I cannot stop the work of God: I

now have five children, if God chooses to give another baby then may His will be done” when I asked about family planning. As such, older Gao people seem to be less tolerant on issues pertaining to family planning. Elderly females, like the males, avoided the subject of family planning and see the number of children in a family as the work of God.

Middle aged and youthful Gao people were more open to the subject of family though most middle aged men toe the path of the aged. The youth appear to be divided about the number of wives in that the males are more relaxed on marrying up to four (if they have the means to) while females think it is not worth it though one can if he can adequately cater for them. One youth indicated that he plans to have at most three children so he could provide for their upkeep especially their education. According to him “I will not want my children to experience the situation where some siblings are in school while others are not because there are no funds to care for all of them. I hope not to have several children even if I get rich because times can change”. Another young lady indicated that she has placed a limit on the number of children she intends to have with her partner by stating that “I intend to have at most three children because I want to have enough strength to care for them. I now have two and will at most have one more child nothing more”. Her decision is based on the fact that her husband has children with other women though she is the only wife. The decision could also be fueled by the fact that the woman’s step children are all males while she has female children. There is thus the fear that the man will be concerned with taking care of the male children at the expense of the females.

The discussions above show that the marriage and family practices of ensuing generations of Gao people are headed on the pathway of social change over an elongated stay in a multi ethnic environment like Zabrama Line though certain family rites remain unchanged.

5.6 Changing Educational Preference

The educational institute of every culture is essential for the sustenance of that culture or civilization. Education can be described as a lifelong process where knowledge and skill is transferred to people. The means of administering education could either be formal where students or pupils sit in a class setting with a teacher while informal education is experienced on a daily face to face interaction from the nuclear family to the larger society. Oral tradition is one example of informal education where older generations teach younger generations about ethnic practices and values. Formal classroom education has the tendency to alter the social life of students depending on the type of education involved. Thus an individual's lifestyle is bound to tow the path of the ideals of the Arabs if she studies in an Arabic school while those in Christian missionary schools are likely to pick up certain practices attributable to the Christian faith.

Gao people prefer and pursue Arabic formal education because they are Muslims. Arabic formal education among other things, promotes Islamic principles which Muslims see as having earthly and eternal benefits. It is thus not out of place for a whole family to have received formal Arabic education at elementary level. Formal English education on the other hand is only pursued for the benefit it provides, which is being employed in a good job in Ghana. One middle aged indicated that "our parents were not willing to send us to English speaking schools because they thought we will become Christian converts". Nukunya (2003) refers to this as alienation from ones culture due to classroom education.

He posits that:

...the emphasis on literacy and the foreign content of education combined to seriously alienate the Ghanaian from his tradition and environment... in fact, it was the lure of these European ways which gave the greatest attraction to education, at least for a large number of people. In this connection, it should be remembered that traditional culture was not only absent from the school curriculum but concerted attempts were made to prevent pupils from following it... (formal) education also led to

individualism and serious weakening of traditional authority structure and kin group solidarity. (Nukunya 2003:134–135)

According to him, another reason for which their parent did not allow them to go to Ghanaian formal school is the fear that state authorities will easily identify their families and impose heavy taxes or repatriate them to their home countries. Despite the challenges indicated above, most middle aged Gao people can communicate in pidgin English though many cannot read and write. Contemporary Gao families still see Arabic education as the way to go since it has eternal reward compared to the earthly benefit of English education. One middle aged parent indicated that she will always choose Arabic education to formal English education because “it is the will of Allah that we train our children in the Islamic religion and the ‘Makaranta’ (Arabic schools in Ghana) is structured to teach the principles of the faith”.

Responses by the youth generally reveal the same idea of the benefits one accrues from both Arabic and English education which has eternal and temporary blessings respectively. However, most of the youth think English education commands respect compared to the Arabic because English is spoken in most countries in the world. One such youth stated that:

...it is better to have advanced education in English in Ghana than to be an Arabic scholar because job opportunities are limited for Arabic scholars unless they become ‘sheiks’ (*teachers of the Koran*). I will rather have elementary level of Arabic education with advanced level in English education. Even the Koran is now translated in English

(Sule. 24 years. March 2015)

The above suggests a slight preference to pursue advanced levels of English education over Arabic education due to the opportunities an English educated person stands to gain in Ghana. It is thus a common practice that Arabic schools (referred to as Makaranta) in

the area, which started as formal schools teaching only Arabic studies have reorganized their curricular to include English education.

According to one Arabic school proprietor (a non Gao), there used to be about 12 identifiable Arabic schools spread across the study area whose curricular was developed on the principles of the Koran. Their students had opportunities to further their education via various scholarship schemes in Arab speaking countries such as Libya, Morocco, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and many others. However, only 4 identifiable Arabic schools were in operation as at the time of this research since most were no more in operation. The proprietor lamented on the situation by stating that:

...there are a whole lot of reasons why Arabic education is not being pursued as before. It is true that there are better opportunities for English students than Arabic students, but we (the schools), have made matters worse. We do not have good facilities to admit increasing numbers of students. How can we manage when the instructors would rather engage in other businesses outside the school yard during class hours? And you know that a class without a teacher will push its students into truancy and absenteeism.

(Taofeek. 43 years. April 2015)

The lamentation above is just one of the reasons why Arabic schools in the area, for that matter across Accra, have seen a drastic reduction in student population. A visit to one of the schools confirmed the assertion of the proprietor above. The school itself is landlocked with a gutter on one side which collects ablution water from a mosque nearby. The wooden facility is a shed separated with plywood in three compartments built close to the urinary of a mosque. There are two classes for males at the front view and a class for females at the rear of the structure. Pupils urinate into the flowing water but go home or to a public toilet away from the facility to defecate. One instructor was present on the day of visit and indicates that his other colleagues were on an errand but will report later. According to the instructor, two of them teach Arabic whiles the third teach Arabic and

English and thus rotates between classes. Teachers and pupils use chalkboards to write and recite sentences.

The highest level a student could attain in this school is primary five in Arabic studies and primary four in English speaking countries. The instructor indicates that they often move older students under a tree nearby to make teaching and learning easy for those in the upper class. They are however bound to close school by one o'clock so pupils can say the noon prayers. This cannot be said of a government primary school located about 400 meters away from the Arabic school. The school is a six block classroom with a play ground and a toilet facility on the compound. The pupils share larger classrooms and write in books which is stored in a cupboard. Teachers are almost always available thus reducing the tendency of truancy among students while school closes at three o'clock just about the time parents will be returning from work. It is thus obvious that parents send their wards to the government school though some Muslim parents whose children are in government schools ensure they attend Arabic schools on Saturdays and Sundays. This in itself puts pressure on the children who will have to sit in a class all the days of the week. There is thus the possibility that the children will become more interested in one school over the other and the situation in the Arabic schools within the area is not appealing enough though all respondents think the Arabic education has eternal rewards.

5.7 Changing Health Seeking Behaviours

The health of a people is essential for the perpetuation of their culture, to wit, it is said that "a healthy nation is a wealthy nation". The desire for healthy living in itself leads to the formation of certain habits which is intended to promote healthy life. For instance, people avoid drinking alcohol or smoking in order to remain healthy. Such people are bound to

avoid social gatherings where smoking or alcohol intake is promoted. To others like some Christians, becoming and remaining healthy means being purified via ritual bath while some maintain notion that everything (including good health or otherwise) is determined by God.

Gao people generally uphold the principles of cleanliness as believed and practiced by other Muslims. They keep and wash parts of their body clean before saying their routine prayers. However, they attribute health conditions to the work of God in that God is the ultimate decider of the health condition of an individual. Thus though sickness ('Asin Dabaani') is an unpalatable occurrence, it is a condition allowed by a divine being on an individual for several reasons including the fact that "God desires the sick person to rest at home, connect to family or ultimately return to where they came from in case they die". This rules out the effects of human behavior or the situation one finds himself as the cause of illness thus it does not matter where one finds himself, he will get sick if it is the will of God that he gets sick. According to one elder, "it is not my place to decide to be sick. My health ultimately lies with God and He decides everything, whether good or bad". This notion transfers the responsibility of staying healthy to a divine being who cannot be queried on the illness He caused on an individual. Traditionally, sick people are bound to make efforts to regain their health which includes consulting traditional healers for herbs or a spiritualist (or Malam) if they believe the sickness is caused by an evil spirit. This is however not the case for most of Gao people located in Zabrama Line in that they seek professional help for their ill health. It is interesting to note that all the aged and middle aged interviewed had National Health Insurance cards to seek help at health facilities in case they get sick.

Another health related topic respondents spoke to is how Gao people see and treat sexuality and pregnancy. Discussions on healthy sex life are to be repressed in an open space or group setting except between partners at the backstage of their shared lives. Mothers are supposed to discuss issues pertaining to cleanliness and abstinence from sex till marriage. It is interesting to note that none of the elderly respondents have ever used a contraceptive though two youthful males secretly admitted they ever used a condom. All the respondents think the use of contraceptives is contrary to the will of God thus do not support its use under any situation. All respondents indicated that pregnancy (referred to as 'Ana gunda za') is not a sickness though God determines who gets pregnant nevertheless pregnant women are supposed to seek help from diviners (in this case a 'Malam') in case they think an 'evil eye' is causing constant ailment during pregnancy. The services of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) and Traditional Circumcisers is another phenomenon which has been drastically reduced because most people go for such services at a health facility with professionally trained health workers. Whiles most elderly respondents believe the services Traditional Birth Attendants and Traditional Circumcisers rendered in times past was useful though times have changed because "people have become more enlightened nowadays though I prefer the standing posture when in labour than lying down". Some youthful respondents shun the services of Traditional Birth Attendants because of some unpalatable post home delivery stories they have heard over the years.

5.8 Chronicle of Transformation among Two Gao families in Zabrama Line

Another dimension this research adopted was to trace transformation in two families in the study area. It looks at the migration and settlement history of the heads of the families and

compares these with the activities of their offspring in contemporary times. The discussions are presented in two separate case studies below.

Case study One: Mohammed family

The Mohammed family is located about one hundred and 150 meters away from the main mosque in the study area. They reside in a large compound house with about fifty one people occupying eleven rooms (made up of five single rooms and six chamber and hall) thus a minimum of five occupants in a room.

The head of the family who is deceased is said to herd cattle moved from several places between Ivory Coast through Ghana to Sokoto in northern Nigeria on several occasions. Alhaji Mohammed as he is referred to then joined camp with a group of Gao herders who were interested in joining the cattle business in Accra and settled in Accra around 1973 in a team of four Gao migrants. The timing of their settlement was immediately or a little after the overthrow of the Busia government in 1972 which was seen as the end of the Ghana Aliens' Compliance Order of 1969. The order sought to repatriate non Ghanaians who had illegally settled in the nation to their home country. According to his surviving wife, Alhaji Mohammed sold his herd in CFA franc before relocating to Accra thus was quite wealthy as at that time. He settled in Sarbon Zongo and had established a livestock business in Accra by 1975 where he mostly dealt in sheep and a few cattle which he sold to customers in Salaga market. He joined those who showed interest in owing portions of land in the then uninhabited areas of Sempe New Town now popularly referred to as Zabrama Line. He acquired one acre of land with the help of 'Dr.' Musah Abochie Ango and Alhaji Zaku. He moved to the area around 1978 upon developing portions of the land and used the remaining parts to fend for some of his livestock.

According to the surviving wife referred to as Taata, Alhaji Mohammed's first wife joined him from his hometown in Mali by the second year of his settling in the new area. He however married two more women from his hometown in Mali of which she is the last. Each wife had a room to herself within the compound and had duties assigned to her on weekly basis. The first wife had six children and the second had four while she had seven children for Alhaji Mohammed. Their husband provided for the upkeep of the whole family by ensuring each wife and her children got enough to eat from the same pot. All young males ate from one bowl, likewise young females and the wives. Their husband often eats with other elderly male visitors or eats alone. Traditionally, having a large family size is seen as prestigious especially when there are lots of male children in the household. Male children carry their father's name into the next generation whereas females drop their father's names. Thus her children got greater part of their father's properties because she had more males than her rivals.

According to Taata, though there were a handful of households settled in the area, a greater part of the study area was bush thus Gao females and their children were restricted in their movements so were not allowed to go outside their houses because of the fear getting lost, kidnapped, raped or beheaded. They were supposed to cover themselves totally in case they necessarily needed to go outside their homes but this should be with an escort preferably a male relative or be in a company of two or three women.

Their children were prevented from going to English schools because they feared they will become Christian converts and will reject the Islamic faith. Thus their children (especially the females) were mostly indoors or attending to house chores on the compound but their male children had some flexibility thus could play outside the compound or join their fathers on errands several miles outside the home. Older male children could however run errands for their parents depending on their knowledge of where to get items needed. She

indicates that all the male children in the house were made to attend Arabic schools when those schools were established in the area leaving the females to support their mothers at the home. She hints that this was because females were seen as those who will not continue the family name since they were most likely to join another man's family.

Taata reveals that she did not know or hear of any Gao female who was in active commercial activity when she joined her husband early 1984. Though some females in the area traded in minor commodities such as knitted items (including pillow cases and hats) and household supplies such as soups and toffees, they mostly dealt with other females and children. They hid their wares from older males thus avoided displaying their wares in public. According to her, two main reasons accounted for this situation one being that those females were afraid of being tasked to pay taxes to the city authorities for operating their table top businesses and also because they thought they risked being repatriated in case their nationality is made out. Thus most Gao people avoided heavy social gatherings unless it is religious in nature since they see fellow Muslims as brothers and sisters. She hinted further that they could only speak the Gao language fluently though they were able to pick up the Hausa language at later dates.

Alhaji Mohammed traded in livestock for a while but diverted to exchange foreign currencies on the black market. He recruited other Gao people (his male children inclusive) and Zabarima people become his agents in trading in foreign currencies such as US Dollar, GB Pound, CFA franc and the Nigerian Naira. He operated his business around Tudu and Rawlings Park in Accra Central till he passed away in 1991. His two surviving wives and three daughters (who are now married with children) led on the sale of the remaining portions of land to defray a loan his extended family was unwilling to pay since almost all his male children had travelled outside the country leaving his youngest son who was still under the supervision of his mother. They did this by meeting prospective buyers

who were non Muslims and agreed on the terms in the presence of a representative of the then Gao headman in the area.

Social lives of surviving offspring of Alhaji Mohammed

Just like the entire study area, the remaining portions of the land around Alhaji Mohammed's house have been developed. Bigger and nice looking houses have been built around his house. About half of the rooms in the house have been rented out and is being occupied by two Akan families, an Ewe family, a Dagomba and a Yoruba couple. The other rooms are occupied by one of his sons with the wife, four of his daughters who are currently divorced and his surviving wife. But for infants and toddlers, all the grandchildren of Alhaji Mohammed attend government approved schools which have children from other ethnic origins and different faiths attending. Being pupils and students of these schools, they partake in the routine activities at the school especially saying Christian prayers during assembly time, partaking in Wednesday early morning worship service (which is Christian oriented) and saying Christian closing prayer when school closes. Though all the children combined Arabic schools and the government schools, they stopped the Arabic school at some point and concentrate on the government schools.

Samad, the only son residing in his father's house is now a father married to a Gao lady who was born at Maamobi. He operates a fuel station with his brothers around Mataheko which he accepts is different from what his father practiced. He has however opened a store for his wife who can read and write to operate a provision store. The wife manages the store by taking stock and stuffing it with items she acquires from Accra central. According to the wife, Haule, "I do not wear the overall black when I am going to town but keep a long dress to cover most of my body and a 'hijab' or veil for my head. My customers are not Gao people though I know of a Gao family business at Makola market".

Her assertion indicates that unlike the restrictions on her mother in-laws, she now has the liberty to go to town to do business on behalf of her husband. Though this could be attributed to the fact that she is more knowledgeable about the business terrain of the city, it reveals the extent to which urban females are bound into economic activities to either support their families or fend for themselves. Unlike some rural females they may enter into a productive venture to support the husband thus funds accrued from her labour ends up in her husband's pocket. Furthermore, urbanization 'widens' the taste of females thus they are bound to enter into productive ventures or leave some of their assets accrued from their business undeclared to their husbands.

According to Samad, he plans on having at most a family of six including his wife, four children and himself. Samad speaks at least three languages apart from his mother tongue which are Hausa, Ga and Twi unlike his mother who speaks Gao but understands Hausa though she cannot speak it fluently. He does not intend to have a large number of children but intends to concentrate his time on investing into his children's education irrespective of their sex. Unlike his father's days, Samad eats with his wife and children from the same bowl yet fends for the mother in another bowl thus creating a sense of nucleation within his children unlike his childhood days where he ate in a group with his step brothers and sisters. His sisters on the other hand cook for themselves and their children with periodic support from their ex husbands and their brothers. When asked if he will marry another woman in case he gets enough money to cater for them, he indicated that "I leave that in the hands of God, though I do not intend to have additional wives, God will determine if I will marry another woman". His response appears to be the stance of some married young Muslim males who may consider getting married to another woman in the future if they have the means.

Case study two: Abdallah family

Faisel Abdallah joined his elder brother to move to Accra around 1982 as a student in Arabic studies. His brother was contracted from Kumasi to operate an Arabic school around Sarbon Zongo. Faisel was a successful student who had a scholarship to further his education in Kano, Nigeria in 1985. He returned to Accra around 1988 with a desire to start an Arabic school though he joined his elder brother as an instructor a few months after his return.

According to his son, his father was contacted by the then chief Zaku about a year into his return to start an Arabic school in Zabrama Line since there was no such school in the area except around Shukura areas. Parents in Zabrama Line were afraid to send their wards to distant schools because they were not sure of their safety. He thus agreed and moved into portions of the land assigned for the school by mid 1989. He hinted that his father had a hard time convincing their wards, especially, females to send their children to school. This could be because the females were raised to have little (if not no) contact with other males except their fathers, brothers, close family relations or husbands. Abdallah used to move from house to house to convince parents to send their wards to the new school which has been established in the area. He embarked on several community mobilization activities like public discussions (wa'azi) with support from the chief till parents agreed to send their wards to the school. The chief handed over the parcel of land to him for his meritorious performance in convincing parent to educate their wards especially their females.

Abdallah married two women at different times from his home country. The first had six children and four children with his second wife. The marriages were arranged by his family folks who performed the necessary rites till the marriage day when he travelled to Mali to receive his brides. Apart from elementary Hausa, his wives could not communicate

in any other local language since they were to have minimal contact with non Muslim people. He ensured his six daughters adhered to the Gao tradition of wearing dresses which cover all parts of their body except their feet anytime they were to go out of his house. His male children virtually served as bodyguards to their sisters anytime they run errands outside the home. He was restrictive of the kinds of friends his children had even at the Arabic school. He however allowed all his four male children to attend government schools up to junior high level. Faisel Abdallah schooled his children in Arabic studies hoping they (especially the males) will qualify to continue their studies on scholarship basis just as he did.

Being an Islamic instructor implied managing the school according to the tenets of the Islamic faith. The females were supposed to essentially cover most parts of their body while males were to long dresses which could at least reach their ankle. Toddlers share the same class irrespective of their sex but this changes by the time they reach lower primary thus females have a different class from their male colleagues. The school building itself was a big room separated with plywood into four different portions which harbours two classes per room.

Social lives of surviving offspring of Faisel Abdallah

None of his children attained the higher levels of education their father attained in his youthful age. Two of his daughters have died while the other four are in their matrimonial homes outside Accra. His eldest son chronicles how he ended up working as a security man with a church in Dansoman. According to him,

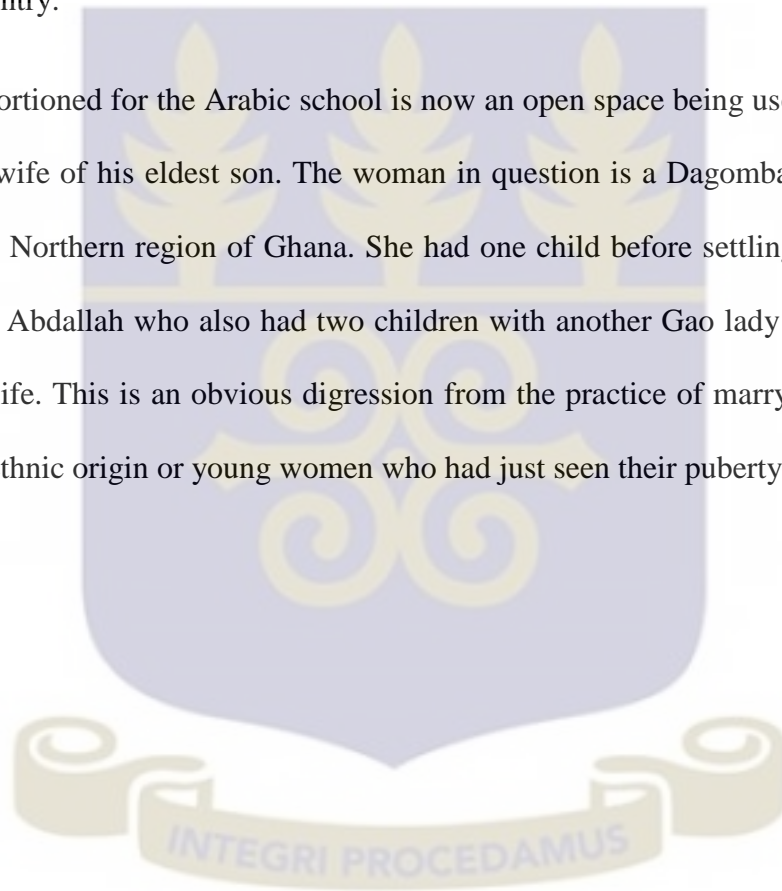
...I used to collect scraps with other guys around Dansoman after school hours to sell. We also did any work for people ranging from weeding, collecting rubbish or directing cars in flood prone areas when it is raining. I used to play football with one of the members of the families I weed for who informed me his church needed the services of a security man (popularly referred to as 'Watchman'). He led me to a church elder

who facilitated my employment at the church. By the grace of Allah, I have worked there for almost 20 years.

(Buuba. 39 years. May 2015)

The testimony above reveals the extent to which the offspring of a stout believer in Islam has relaxed his social boundaries to interact with non Muslims over a long period of time. It is thus accurate to state that the need to remain economically productive in the urban space may have influenced his line of work though he may not have necessarily done so in his home country.

The area apportioned for the Arabic school is now an open space being used as a provision store by the wife of his eldest son. The woman in question is a Dagomba who hails from Salaga in the Northern region of Ghana. She had one child before settling with the eldest son of Faisel Abdallah who also had two children with another Gao lady before marrying his current wife. This is an obvious digression from the practice of marrying people from within their ethnic origin or young women who had just seen their puberty.



CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter discusses issues pertaining to the implication of social change among minority groups in urban areas especially in Zabrama Line and how these changes affect social interaction of the urban space. It suggests that the city is bound to host ethnic migrants since they, among other things, play very significant role of reinforcing the heterogeneous nature of the city. It provides some suggestions for consideration by local authorities and city planners on improving social relations, and cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

6.1 Summary

Urbanization carries within itself a strong attractive force which compels several reactions among people across space and time. One of the main features of urbanization is the agglomeration of people in a particular social space leading to a state of continual interaction which may develop into lifestyle alterations. People flock into urban areas for several reasons including the need to create wealth and benefit from the secure nature of the city. Several perspectives have been provided towards understanding urban social life.

Berry (1992) posits one of such perspectives which suggest that heritage and mainstream practice play essential roles in understanding the lifestyles of people in the larger community. That is, one needs to consider the culture within which an individual is born and the prevailing situation within which that individual is located to be able to adequately describe the social life of that individual. The other dimensions to this perspective suggest that people either lose their culture to the practices in the larger community or vice versa. The losses makes such people become assimilated into the prevailing practices or are segregated depending on whether they loss their heritage or mainstream culture.

This research sought to understand the lifestyle of an urban ethnic minority in light of the perspective described above. The choice of the group was reached based on their seemingly small numbers in order to gain insight into the challenges such groups encounter in the larger sphere of things in the city. The notion of being a minority group can be dangerous in itself in that their rights could easily be overlooked for the interest of the majority. This situation coupled with several other challenges they encounter could adversely affect their lives in their new location. The situation is even grave in instances where the group concerned is not familiar with the customs of the region within which they have relocated. That is to say, their inability to pick up the practices in their new location or at a faster pace could result in them not benefiting from the rights or opportunities available to them.

The research was conducted among the Gao community in Zabrama Line, a suburb in Accra metropolis. The choice of Gao community is informed by the fact that they could be easily mistaken for other Muslim groups in the city. The main objective of the study is to provide an overview of the socio – economic life of Gao people in Zabrama Line and their relationship with their neighbours. Accra, like Kumasi is regarded a millennium city in Ghana which desires to provide a picture of a well built city with complete townships providing essential social amenities necessary for all its dwellers. The notion of a millennium city is an extension of the Millennium Development Goals which is tagged to be achieved in the by the year 2015.

The metropolitan authority regards Zabrama Line as a fourth class residential area and seen as a ‘Zongo’ community. The term ‘Zongo’ connotes a ‘squatter’ or ‘stranger’ settlement which is originally meant to be a temporary or transit point for travelers heading elsewhere. However, such communities in urban Ghana have now become the final destination for migrants who are not economically endowed. One major characteristic of

most 'Zongo' communities across urban and peri – urban settlements in Ghana is the prevalence of professing Muslims and Islamic places of worship.

Gao people are a native Songhai ethnic group who originate from the north eastern parts of Mali but are scattered across the West Africa region. There is a striking similarity between their lifestyle and that of the Zabarima people thus they could easily be mistaken for Zabarima people who hail from Niger. Per this research, it suffices that Gao presence in urban Accra is relatively a recent occurrence as such can be regarded as a relatively new social group in the city of Accra. The research sought to investigate the extent to which the social lives of Gao people have been transformed based on their experiences in the city. It also sought to trace the settlement history of this group of people into the city and identify the role of social networks in the relocation and settlement patterns of this minority group.

The research used the qualitative research method to trace and understand the differing dimensions of the social lives of Gao people by adapting an intergenerational study to identify changes in their lifestyles in Zabrama Line. Thus respondents were placed in age groups referred as youth, adults and older adults. The youth are those between the ages of 15 to 30 years while those between the ages of 31 and 45 years are seen as adults. Older adults are those who are 46 years and above. In some cases, the research depended on social age instead of chronological age for some of the adults and older adults. This is because some of the adults and older adults could not recollect their age or year of birth. Furthermore, the research sought to explore the intergenerational experiences of respondents in the study area per their experience in the area and Accra at large. The respondents were selected by the use of the purposive and snowball sampling methods. These methods were preferable due to the fact that the research was on Gao people thus only Gao people in the study area were selected to provide primary data. The tools used to collect data are interviews guided by semi structured questionnaires and observation.

These methods provided the researcher with the flexibility to ask follow up questions which were helpful in exploring other interesting dimensions of the social lives of Gao people in Zabrama Line.

The main findings in this research reveal that Gao people in the study area have over the period experienced significant alterations in their lifestyles though they have been able to maintain their cultural heritage to a large extent. The educational, economic, family/marriage and health practices of Gao people have seen some form of transformation over the period of their stay in urban Accra whiles their political and religious practices have remained relatively intact.

Discussing this in light of Berry's (1992) variables of acculturation process suggests that Gao people can be categorized as people who have been able to maintain their cultural heritage and have also picked up the practices of the community they find themselves in so they have integrated into Zabrama Line and to a large extent Accra as a whole. Their being able to learn the prevailing languages of the study area to promote communication with non Gao people in the area though they still communicate in the Gao language among themselves is reflective of the integrative process. That is to say, Gao people cannot be described as marginalized people in Accra since they have built relationships with other indigenous and non indigenous ethnic groups. Neither can they be categorized as people who have been assimilated into the urban culture of Accra since they still maintain their unique cultural heritage.

The educational practices of Gao people seem to be the most transformed since most families are pushing for formal English education other than Arabic studies for their wards. This implies that the social lives of younger generations of Gao people will become different from their forbears since they are being taught new or better ways of relating to nature.

There is the possibility that Gao youth who pursue formal English education could either neglect their heritage for mainstream culture or otherwise

The act of marriage by betrothal seems to be on the decline among Gao people in contemporary Accra as compared to earlier times. This has delayed the marriage age of females which implies that they become sexually productive at later stages of their lives. This affects the fertility rate of Gao people by reducing their family size and number of children they could have had if they were married at an early age. Furthermore, females, especially the informed ones, have the liberty to socialize outside their family homes which did not occur in time past.

The economic practices of most Gao people in Accra is now more of dealing in secondary or finished products instead of primary products. Though most Gao people raised livestock or dealt in dairy products, their focus seems to have shifted to consumables or fast moving goods which is another feature of urbanism. The traditional disposition of females not being actively engaged in economic activities is changing though at a slow pace. Gao females in Accra face about the same challenges as other females who may be involved in an economic activity in Accra as such could meet some needs. Some are becoming aware that not being economically active could have adverse effects on their family. They are therefore willing to work irrespective of the fact that women are supposedly tagged as being housewives instead of being productive.

One issue gathered from this research is the fact that minority groups largely contribute to the development, redevelopment, expansion or extension of the structural set up of the new locations they find themselves in. Some minority groups who were relegated to the undeveloped fringes of their new location initiate the process of building up those portions

of that location making it conducive for human habitation. Also, some of those who dwell in the fringes of settlements are ready labour for those in the main location itself.

6.2 Migrant Social Life in Urban Areas

This research raises many questions about city life especially concerning how people are able to learn new ways of doing things in order to remain productive or acceptable in their new location. For instance, a new worker in an office will do everything to perform her duty just like the other workers since she stands to gain from conforming to the practices at his new job. The city needs people to work its industries, keep its gardens, develop its physical structures, run its social institutions and its multi faceted organs necessary for its existence but these should be done based on the laid down procedures or prevailing practices within its catchment area. Thus a Gao person should be ready to change his way of dressing in Accra if he desires to be enrolled in the security services or any other profession.

It is obvious that people relocate to the city in search of betterment of their lives at all levels so will make conscious efforts at improving upon their current condition to be able to fit in. Migration is one way people work towards improving the quality of their lives because their new location is likely to provide them with a better opportunity to achieve their social goals. Relocating to and staying in a different social space for a long period of time will ultimately result in changes in the lifestyles of those migrants. For instance the desire of some people to enjoy city life to the fullest could mean a total neglect of their cultural heritage for urban practice. An analysis of any migrant family in the city will somewhat identify changes in the lifestyles of ensuing generations like a drive for contemporary music forms other than preferring their indigenous music.

The city rewards people who are economically endowed so far as they can afford the prestige it provides them. For instance, rich migrants in Accra are likely to reside in first class residential areas such as Cantonments, Airport Residential Area and Roman Ridge while other non wealthy migrants are likely to reside in places such as Bukom, Chorkor, Ussher Town, Zongo and Asere labelled as fourth class residential. Settlements such as Zabrama Line are often discriminated against when it comes to structural developments thus making such areas undesirable destinations in the city. This shows that the city treats new comers differently based on their social status. Those migrants in the higher class are bound to enjoy the luxuries of city life compared to migrants in a low class area. For instance the social life of multi nationals working for powerful organizations such as Anglo Gold Ashanti will certainly be far different from a Wangara migrant who resides in the same city.

6.3 Recommendations from the Study

From this study, one can conclude that the provision of a multi-purpose community centre in Zabrama Line will go a long way to promote inter ethnic integration. One of the activities of the centre should be a platform where people assemble to discuss key issues pertaining to developments in the area. The centre could even be more attractive to the youth if it has a library, a health facility, an open space and a rest area. Those who desire to study or read will use the library while the open space could be used for social events such as wedding, naming ceremony or funerals. The centre could also have a section which runs adult literacy programs for those who desire to read and write especially women. A community centre will help the people in the area by creating communal awareness making inhabitants understand that they are to seek the good of the community they live in.

Another thing that can be done is to start a skills development program in the area to help those who want to acquire economic skills. The sub metro could do this in partnership with the leadership of the community to encourage those who are not working in the area especially females to enrol to acquire skills which will yield them income. The program could be made more conducive for women in that females who desire to enrol will be taught by female instructors. In addition, the program could operate a microfinance scheme where members (especially females) who have graduated but need start up capital will receive soft loans to buy materials on one hand and also connect those members to prospective buyers on the other. Also, there could be flexible terms of payment such that one could spread the fee for enrolment for an extended period without paying high interest.

The sub metro should extend the services of community health nurses in the area. This will go a long way to improve the health situation of people in the area especially women and children. A Community Health Planning Services (CHPS) compound will among others conduct outreach activities where people in the area will be educated on the benefits of family planning, vaccination, environmental health and many others. A plan could be devised on how to reach out to gender groups (especially male groups) with the benefits of choosing a family planning method. The males are most likely to choose a method or influence their female partners to take a method to reduce the phenomenon of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. It also build the confidence of females in choosing a method other than resorting to unconventional means of avoiding pregnancy like drinking unhealthy concoctions. The nurses can also form youth clubs to discuss pertinent health issues relating to the youth especially female sexual health.

Sports development could be another avenue to promote social interaction among the people in the community. This implies the building of minimal sports facilities like a play field for various sports such as football, volley ball, table tennis and many others. People, especially the youth are likely to patronize such a facility which could have a minimal or no cost of registration. The facility could also be used for social events such as weddings, naming ceremony and funerals. This will go a long way to reduce instances where people block parts of the streets to undertake such events.

Another thing state authorities need to look into on a larger scale is the development of an orientation plan for new entrants into the city where new comers will be informed about what they are to expect in their new location. Orientation for migrants can also serve as the starting point for ethnic integration in that it will include all migrants who have relocated into the city. For instance this can be an add on duty of the Immigration Service, Ministry of Foreign affairs or the National Commission for Civic Education in the case of Ghana where migrants across the cities will be oriented to the city life say on quarterly basis. Thus migrants will have a chance to know the practices of the cities they relocate to and adequately prepare themselves psychologically or otherwise to fit into their new location. They will also be able to ask questions relating to the privileges and duties expected from them as migrants. Offices for migrant support should establish a database for migrants. This move will also chart the course for migrants to integrate into their new space and also lead to inter ethnic harmony and network between migrant associations in the city. The migrant offices could also lead in the establishment of a directory for migrant populations detailing their purpose of visit, intended duration of stay and contact details. The offices should be equipped with the necessary equipment to track and trace new comers in the city irrespective of where they reside. This will among other things inform state authorities of

the composition of the population which will in a long way direct the social amenities needed in migrant settlements.



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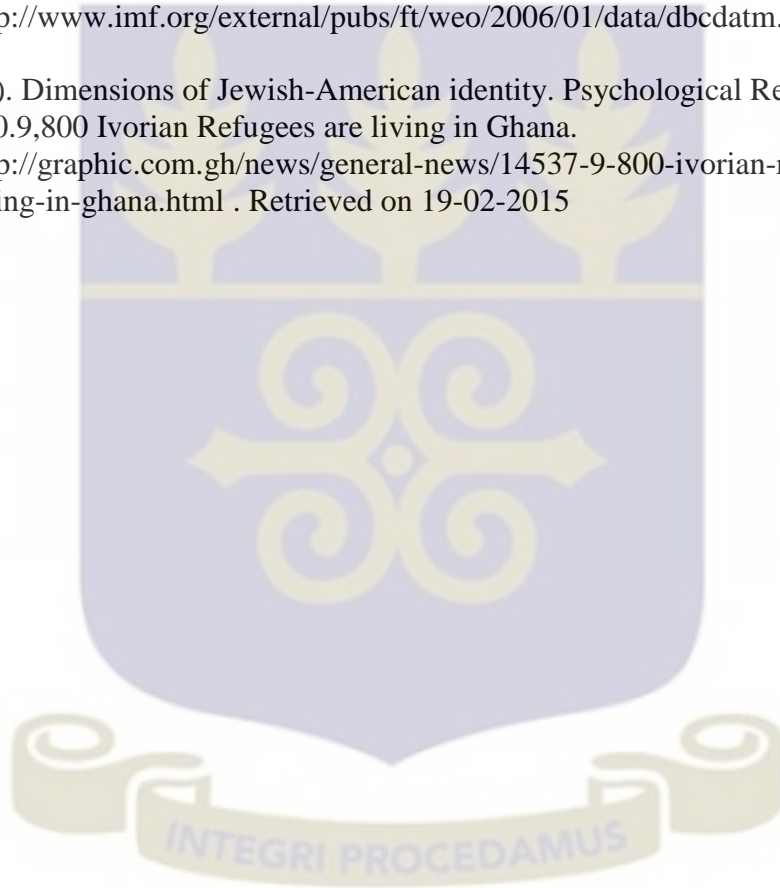
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APPENDIX

Appendix A: In – Dept Interview Questions for Respondents

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR OLDER ADULTS

Demographic Information

- a. Age
- b. Sex
- c. Occupation
- d. Marital Status
- e. Number of Children (if any)

Years of stay and political arrangements

1. How long have you stayed in this community?
2. How did you come to settle in this area?
3. Who represented the interest of Gao people in those days? What role did they play in protecting the interests of the Gao Community?
4. How were Gao people here organized?
5. What changes have occurred in the role of the ‘headman’ in recent times?

Economic Experience

6. What types of economic activities did members of this community engage in during your youthful days? Which of them did you participate in as a young man?
7. How different is the economic practices in those days and now? What type of economic practice do subsequent generations of Gao people engage in?

Educational Experience

8. What is your preferred type of education? Why?
9. What was the predominant type of education in this area in your youthful age? Why?
10. Is this type of education still preferred in recent times?

Marriage / Family Size

11. What age do you think is appropriate for people to marry? Why?
12. What age was considered appropriate for males and females to be married?
13. What role did the extended family play in marriage?
14. How many wives and children were considered as an ideal family size in those days?
15. What are some of the noticeable changes have occurred in the marriage practice in recent times? Do parents give their wards into marriage at the same age as in your youthful days? Has the preferred family size changed?

Inter-Ethnic Relations

16. What were some of the identifiable ethnic groups when you settled in the area?
17. How did Gao people relate to people of other ethnicities?
18. What kinds of the activities bring people of diverse ethnicities together in this area?



INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADULTS

Demographic Information

- a. Age
- b. Sex
- c. Occupation
- d. Marital Status
- e. Number of Children (if any)

Political Arrangements

1. What role does the 'headman' of the Gao people play for the Gao community? For headman

Economic Practices

2. Can you share with me the type of job you engage in?
3. How different is that from your forbears?

Educational Experience

4. Which type of formal education do you or your peers engage in? Why?
5. How different is it from the type of education your forbears engaged in? Why?

Marriage / Family Size

6. When do you think is appropriate to get married?
7. Do younger generations of Gao people get married in recent times?
8. What do you think of large family size? (multiple wives and children)
9. Will you prefer large family size for younger generations? Why?

Inter-Ethnic Relations

10. What are some of the ethnic groups in this area?

11. How do Gao people relate to people of other ethnicities?
12. What are some of the activities that bring people of diverse ethnicities in the area?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE YOUTH

Demographic Information

- a. Age
- b. Sex
- c. Occupation
- d. Marital Status
- e. Number of Children (if any)

Political Arrangements

1. How long have you stayed in this community?
2. Do you know the 'Headman' for Gao people in the area?
3. Can you share with me how Gao people resolve disputes among themselves?

Economic Practices

4. Can you share with me the type of job you engage in?
5. Would you recommend the same job for younger generations? Why?

Educational Experience

6. Which type of formal education did you or your peers have? Why?
7. Will you recommend the same for younger generations? Why?

Marriage / Family Size

8. When or around what age did you or your peers think is appropriate get married?
9. What do you think of large family size? (i.e. multiple wives and children).

Inter-Ethnic Relations

10. What are some of the ethnic groups in this area?
11. How do you relate with your peers who are not Gao?

Cultural Changes

12. How fluent are you in the Gao language?
13. Can you describe the commitment of younger generations to Gao associations in Zabrama Line?

