

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON  
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES  
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**CITIZENSHIP AND MARGINALISATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE  
EXPERIENCES OF FULANI AND ZABARMA MIGRANTS IN THE NORTH TONGU  
DISTRICT OF THE VOLTA REGION OF GHANA.**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that except for references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged, this work is a result of my own research work done under supervision and has neither in part nor in whole been presented elsewhere for another degree.

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Fulanis and Zabarmas in North Tongu district.



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## GLOSSARY

*Groupement d'éleveurs*: A group of livestock farmers.

*Fulfulde*: A language spoken by Fulani people.

*Fulbe*: A term used by Fulanis to refer to themselves in their language.

*Maasa*: A popular West African snack made from fermented rice or maize.

*Lele*: A type of body art that forms a significant part of cultural celebrations.

*Trypanosomiasis*: A parasitic disease transmitted through the bites of infected tsetse flies.

*Mallam*: a term widely used in West Africa, particularly in Hausa and Fulani cultures, to refer to a learned person or scholar.

*Ga-Mantse*: the title given to the traditional king or chief of the Ga people, who are an ethnic group primarily based in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana.

*Zongo*: areas or neighborhoods, often urban, in West African countries like Ghana, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso, where predominantly Muslim communities reside, particularly those with roots in northern Ghana and neighboring countries like Burkina Faso Mali and Niger.

*Asante Nkramo*: refers to Muslim communities among the Asante (Ashanti) people in Ghana.

*Goro boys*: a term commonly used in Ghana to describe young men who work as informal intermediaries or “fixers” in urban settings, especially around government offices.

*Brukina*: a popular West African drink made from a mix of millet or sorghum-based yogurt and sweetened milk.

*Lakiri*: a traditional northern delicacy made from dried millet and ground nuts, often enjoyed with milk.

## ABBREVIATION

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

MoMo: Mobile Money

SIM: Subscriber Identity Module

WASSCE: West African Senior School Certificate Examination

ADB: Agricultural Development Bank



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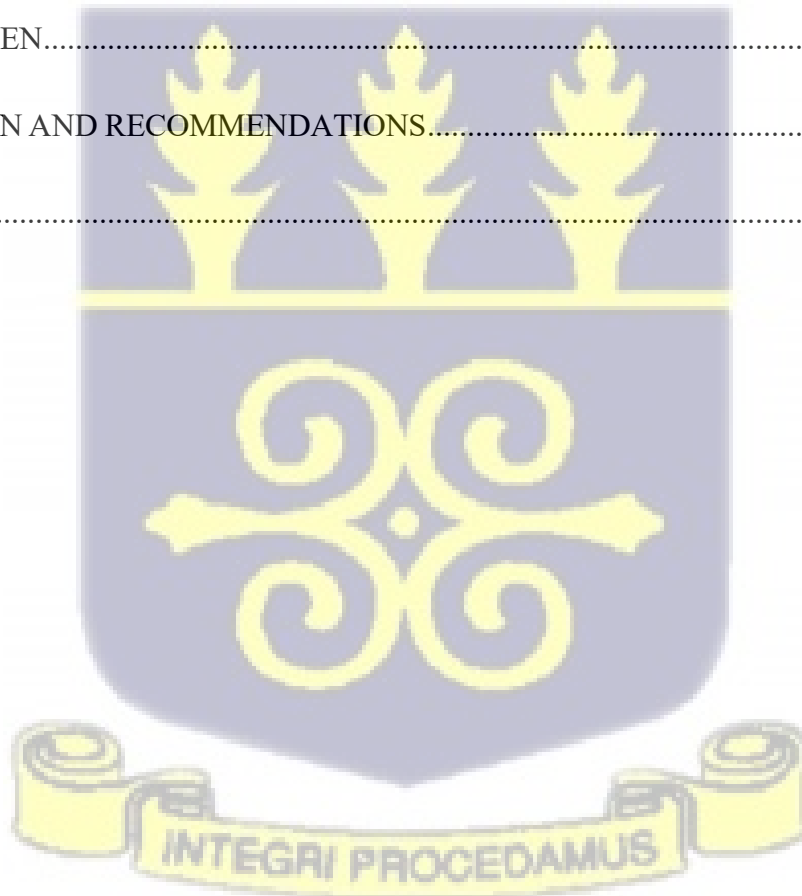
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## ABSTRACT

The frequent migration and diverse nature of ethnic groups in West Africa have led to citizenship and identity crises in the region. In recent years, there has been a trend towards citizen registration with biometric identification in most of the West African states. Within the literature, there is a debate on whether these forms of citizen identification exercises extend civil rights and security to citizens or increasingly marginalises and excludes the poor and minorities. This thesis focuses on the construction of citizenship in Ghana and the experiences of well-established migrant communities in gaining recognition as Ghanaian citizens. Interviews, focus group discussions, library and internet sources were used in collecting data for this research. This research argues that excluding Fulani and Zabarma migrant groups from Ghanaian citizenship by linking it to migration and mobility is historically unfounded. The state's approach relies on stereotypes of indigenous communities and “aliens” rather than historical context, ignoring the actual conditions in Ghana in which the “aliens” are second, third, or fourth generation migrants. Bureaucrats often use this flawed model to mask unprofessional practices, highlighting a need for greater transparency. Rather than blocking people from registration, the system should support the inclusion of marginalized groups, ensuring access to essential services and civic participation. The findings reveal that many people are excluded based on appearance or arbitrary factors, creating feelings of alienation. Additionally, it argues that bureaucratic definitions of national identity overlook people’s historical connections and integration within their communities, which can lead to community tensions. A broader perspective on citizenship is required to embrace West Africa’s long-standing traditions of mobility, migration, and cultural diversity.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

West Africa has a long history of migrations and development of trading towns with Pan-West African populations participating in long-distance trade which extended into the Sahara and North Africa. In Ghana, the archaeological and historical record shows that the first development of significant urban towns was associated with the expansion of the Dyula (Malian) trading diaspora into the transition zone of Ghana. Begho emerged as the largest trading town in 15th century Ghana, with a significant population of Dyula traders (Wilks, 2009).

Under colonialism, migrants from Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali formed an important part of labour in the cocoa industry. The Hausa and Yoruba traders also formed an important part of small-scale trading and the livestock industry. Additionally, during the First World War, 9890 African troops were employed in the Gold Coast Regiment of the West African Frontier Force. Of these, 5,608 were recruited during the war, 4,908 were enlisted in 1917 and 1918, and 3,499 in the peak year, 1917. Of the total, 3,879, or over 69%, were recruited in the Northern Territories. A breakdown by ethnic groups of those recruited in the Northern Territories shows several groups originating from outside the Gold Coast, although some individuals would certainly have been born on the Gold Coast or have been long-term residents. These included large contingents of Zabarma, Fulani, Hausa and Mossi (Rogers, 1975).

After independence, while migrants continued to play a significant part of the economy, the bid to define national boundaries, national culture and to extend control over the informal sector trading resulted in attempts to control migrant populations, who are frequently referred to as ‘aliens. This was evident in the 1968 Alien’s Compliance Act, which resulted in the mass expulsion of many migrants from other West African countries by the Busia government (Adjei, 2009). Similarly, during the economic depression years of the 1970s many Ghanaians migrated to Nigeria, which was experiencing an oil boom, only to face a similar fate in the early 1980s, when Ghanaians were subject to mass deportation from Nigeria (Adjei, 2009). This shows the interconnectedness of West African people and their mobility throughout the region.

Despite the mobile nature of West Africans, the state has tried to control migrants through the issuance of citizen registration documents. However, this has been highly problematic since forms of registration and citizenship documentation have been poorly developed. This can be attributed to the fact that many people do not have access to birth certificates or means to prove their identity. Thus, many second, third, and fourth generation migrant families continue to be treated as aliens by the state and suffer from ambiguous identities that can render them stateless. This has become a major issue with the recent citizen registration programme, which was launched in Ghana in 2017. The study critically examines claims in the policy literature that biometric registration in itself facilitates social inclusion and development.

Citizen registration has affected many people in Ghana, not only “migrants”, who have struggled to meet their requirements for registration. It has severely affected migrant populations who are often well integrated into communities but find themselves rejected from citizen registration based on not having “Ghanaian names”, “sounding Ghanaian”, “not looking Ghanaian”, and “not dressing Ghanaian”.

This research investigates the construct of citizenship in Ghana and the experiences of well-established migrant communities in gaining recognition as Ghanaian citizens. It focuses on a case study of Fulani and Zabarma migrants in the North Tongu district of the Volta region of Ghana.

The Fulani pastoralists trace their migration to Ghana from Futa Jalon in present-day Guinea, a movement that began as early as the eleventh century. Unlike in Nigeria, where their numbers allowed them to establish strong settlements, their presence in Ghana remained smaller and marked by a migrant identity (Tonah, 2006). Census records reflect this long history: about 20,000 Fulani were recorded in 1948, rising to 25,050 by 1960 (Oppong, 2017: 51–52), with most living in the Northern, Ashanti, Greater Accra, and Eastern regions and Volta regions. The Zabarma came into what is now northern Ghana in search of trade and to spread Islam. They were part of a wider Islamic movement that aimed to expand the faith and establish Islamic rule. When they arrived in Dagomba, they worked as traders, soldiers, and religious leaders, attracted by the area's position along trade routes and its political divisions (Holden, 1965). The region was unstable due to invasions and conflicts, which gave the Zabarma a chance to build influence. By joining local leaders in trade and war, and drawing on both their fighting skills and religious mission, they secured a place in the region (Holden, 1965).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM**

The emergence of modern African states after colonization has led to persistent challenges regarding citizenship and identity. The long histories of migration in West Africa before colonialism; the existence of long-distance trade, regional trading towns with many migrants and migrant quarters; and the reliance of export agriculture on migrant labour largely drawn from the Sahelian region (Amin 1974, 1972) have created complexities and challenges in relationship to

national identities and citizenship following independence. While the colonial borders were often arbitrary, intersecting ethnic communities, these have remained relatively stable following independence, reflecting the significant interests that political elites have developed in maintaining them (Dorman, Hamett and Nugent 2007). This results in simple notions of citizenship that do not reflect the life experiences of people, and often lead to citizenship and identity crises in Africa. Manby, (2018:3) highlights this through the illustration of a person born to Kissi people in Sierra Leone, who has many relatives in Guinea and Liberia linked together by lineage and ethnic connections. However, this network of people experience different citizenship laws and processes of exclusion in these countries, which all have different citizenship laws. Narrowing this to Ghana, the citizenship law emphasize that a person can be a citizen of Ghana either through birth with either parent or grandparent being Ghanaian after the coming into force of the 1992 Constitution, through adoption by Ghanaian parents, or through



marriage to a Ghanaian. However, the rights of minority groups that often took up residence in Ghana in the pre-colonial and colonial period are often not upheld, and the citizenship rights of members of these communities are not clearly established. They are often regarded as non-citizens despite their lack of connections with the hometowns of their ancestors. The legal definition of citizenship in Ghana poses significant challenges for some ethnic minorities. Setrana (2021) points out that the Fulani in Ghana are often classified as migrants rather than citizens despite a history of long residence. This frequently prevents them from accessing resources and owning land. This study investigates the impact of national registration of citizens in Ghana on two marginalized ethnic groups with long histories of migration, the Fulani and Zabarma. It examines the impact of citizenship registration programmes on migrant groups, the history of migrations of these groups, and their integration into town and rural settings in Ghana. The research is based on a case study drawn from the North Tongu district in the Volta Region.

### **1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study uses an interdisciplinary social science framework that combines political science, anthropological, and sociological approaches to the concepts of citizenship marginalization to critically examine recent citizen registration initiatives in Ghana. It combines theoretical approaches rooted in social exclusion theory, citizenship, and the politics of belonging.

This study focuses on the issue of marginalization and exclusion faced by ethnic groups with long histories of migration, focusing on their experiences of acquiring citizenship and national identification cards in Ghana. Social exclusion theory highlights the multidimensional nature of

exclusion, encompassing not only economic deprivation but also exclusion from social, political, and cultural participation (Muddiman, 2000).

Social exclusion encompasses various dimensions, including economic, social, and political marginalization. Duffy (2018) notes that exclusion extends beyond material poverty to include alienation from social and political structures. Similarly, Silver (1994) has differentiated exclusion into different types: economic and social or even political ones. Exclusion is often linked to identity, as marginalized groups may be excluded based on their ethnicity, religion, or nationality. One aspect of this conceptualization is that exclusion, according to scholars such as Young (2002), is a structural problem embedded in societal institutions that is also driven by agency, in that it is something individuals or groups actively engage in (Young, 2002). Exclusion from formal citizenship processes, may limit the access of marginalized groups to healthcare, education, and political representation. This exclusion reflects broader patterns of marginalization faced by ethnic minorities who are systematically excluded from the rights and privileges enjoyed by dominant groups.

Hills (1999) emphasizes that social exclusion often affects communities over long periods, creating cycles of marginalization that are difficult to break. Exclusion from formal citizenship structures perpetuates socio-economic disadvantages. The marginalized groups continue to face barriers in accessing documentation and services, which reinforces their inability to meet the requirements of registration, resulting in long-term disempowerment and alienation. Pacione (1997) highlights that exclusion often has spatial and cultural dimensions, where marginalized groups are geographically isolated or culturally alienated from mainstream society, which further alienates them from public services and political participation.

Lister (1997) connects social exclusion theory with the concept of citizenship, arguing that exclusion undermines social rights and the broader concept of citizenship, which includes not only legal status but also the right to participate in social and political life. Marginalization reflects a denial of full citizenship, where the affected social groups are excluded from key societal structures that grant rights and privileges to more dominant groups.

In recent decades, the concept of citizenship has become a central issue in global governance, particularly about identity, legal rights, and the ability to participate fully in the life of a nation-state (Manby, B. 2020). Citizenship, traditionally defined as the legal recognition of an individual as a member of a state, encompasses rights and responsibilities that include access to services, protection under the law, and the right to participate in political processes (Marshall and Fratani, 2006, p. 19). However, in many parts of the world, citizenship is not merely a matter of legal recognition but is intertwined with complex socio-political and historical factors that determine who is considered a full member of a nation.

Turner (1990:2) argues that citizenship constitutes a “set of practices (juridical, political, economic, and cultural) which defines a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups.” These practices develop over time resulting in a dynamic construction of citizenship that changes historically and arises as a consequence of political struggle for rights. For Turner (1990) this embodies two contradictory processes, national citizenship based on creating exclusionary boundaries and political identities and confronting diversity, and social citizenship based on nurturing civil society, social capital, and community. Thus, citizenship involves forms of regulation by the state and forms of governance that integrate economic activities and institutions at the community level with the state and various social groups into community structures.

In contemporary states, citizenship has traditionally hinged on the idea of a shared national identity, encompassing a unified polity, nation, and culture (Jelin, 1990, p. 249). However, in increasingly pluralistic societies, this ideal often clashes with the reality of ethnic diversity and competing claims to national identity. Citizenship has been fundamentally premised on the inclusion of individuals within the national community based on their alignment with this shared identity (Brewer, 2009, p. 153). Yet, the pluralistic nature of modern states complicates this notion. Individuals and groups perceived as different whether due to ethnic origins, cultural practices, or other identity markers often face challenges in asserting their claims to national belonging (Brewer, 2009, p. 153).

Political interests within the state apparatus often results in a determination to establish clear distinctions between aliens and citizens that do not reflect historical processes, and which marginalize the targeted groups. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2007) argues that exclusive notions of citizenship have been utilized in Congolese politics to quell political opposition in the 1959-1962 and 1992-1995 periods. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2007) concludes that the politics of belonging, or citizenship have been used to deprive Kasians residing in Katanga of their full citizenship and obstruct the progress of political democratization, and that a more inclusive approach to citizenship needs to be implemented to bring about genuine democratic reforms.

The perception of citizenship is significantly influenced by how others view and react to these claims. In a diverse society, the majority's beliefs about what constitutes citizenship can shape how minority groups are perceived and treated (Dorman, Hammett, & Nugent, 2007, p. 22). Those seen as different may encounter scepticism or outright exclusion based on their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, manifesting in various forms from subtle biases to systemic discrimination (Manby, 2016, p. 150). Moreover, members of minority groups may also self-exclude from the

broader national identity. This self-exclusion may arise from a lack of personal connection to the dominant national identity or from the anticipation of negative responses from the majority. For instance, during an interaction with a participant in Podoe in the North Tongu district, he expressed not wishing to be associated with the Ghanaian identity because Fulanis are consistently labelled as non-Ghanaians by the natives. As a result, he has come to accept this exclusion and no longer desires to be identified as a Ghanaian, choosing not to participate in national activities like voting.

In the context of West Africa, the question of citizenship is particularly contentious due to the region's colonial past, migratory histories, and ethnic diversity. The arbitrary borders imposed by colonial powers often split ethnic groups across multiple nation-states, complicating notions of identity and belonging. As a result, many individuals find themselves navigating multiple identities which include ethnic, national, and regional while struggling to meet the legal criteria for citizenship in their countries of residence (Dorman, Hammett, & Nugent, 2007, p. 22).

At the national level state regulation of citizenship is becoming increasingly defined by registration schemes that limit citizenship rights to those with identity cards and papers. These documents delimit the political right to vote, but also, they increasingly determine the ability to access vital social services such as health insurance schemes, financial institutions such as ability to hold bank accounts, mobile money accounts, and access to SIM cards and mobile phone networks. These registration schemes are increasingly implemented through biometric identification systems. The policy discourses of these programmes are often couched in terms of creating inclusiveness and transparency in access to state services. However, in their implementation they often reinforce the exclusion of the poor and marginalized, those groups who are most likely to struggle in meeting the basic requirements of registration, and the required

documents, such as birth certificates or proof of residence. These hurdles to registration reinforce the challenges faced by these marginalized groups and create further barriers for their integration into society (Dorman 2005).

The exclusion of migrant populations from citizenship rights in Ghana reflects a broader tension between the legal frameworks of the Ghanaian state and the lived experiences of ethnic minorities. Citizenship, in this context, becomes not only a legal designation but also a marker of socio-political inclusion or exclusion. As global migration trends, environmental changes, and regional conflicts continue to drive population movements, questions of identity and belonging will remain at the forefront of citizenship debates in West Africa (Setrana, 2021).

## **1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.4.1 Research Aim**

The aim of this research is to explore and compare the experiences of migrant groups in obtaining citizenship in Ghana. The study seeks to understand how these groups perceive and navigate issues of identity, nationality, and belonging, and how their experiences reflect broader patterns of socio-political marginalization. The study further seeks to understand the role of biometric technologies in the inclusion and exclusion of migrant groups in the citizen registration process and its impact on their social wellbeing. The migrant groups included in the study have long histories of residing and working within Ghana.

### **1.4.2 Research Objectives**

To achieve this aim, the research will focus on the following objectives:

1. Investigate the migration history of migrant groups that subject them to the politics of exclusion in Ghana and identify the push and pull factors that have shaped their settlement in Ghana over time.
2. Examine the perceptions of citizenship, nationality, belonging among these migrant groups and within state policy frameworks
3. Investigate the experiences of registration of these migrant groups, their access to national identity documents (such as birth certificates, Ghana Cards, voter registration cards and passports), and the impact of the registration processes and biometric technologies on their ability to secure citizenship and social inclusion.
4. Analyze the relationships between these ethnic groups and the indigenous population, and how waves of migration and changes in policy have influenced these relationships.

The Fulanis and Zabarma groups have a long history of migration. There is evidence of their residence in Ghana during the precolonial and colonial periods. However, they still grapple with being recognised as citizens. They form the largest migrant groups in the North Tongu district in the Volta region of Ghana.

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study contributes to the critical academic literature on the significance of state citizen registration programmes and their implications for inclusion and exclusion. It problematises the notions of citizenship rooted in the politics of belonging by tracing the histories of migration of marginalized groups and the histories of integration into communities. Beyond this it examines

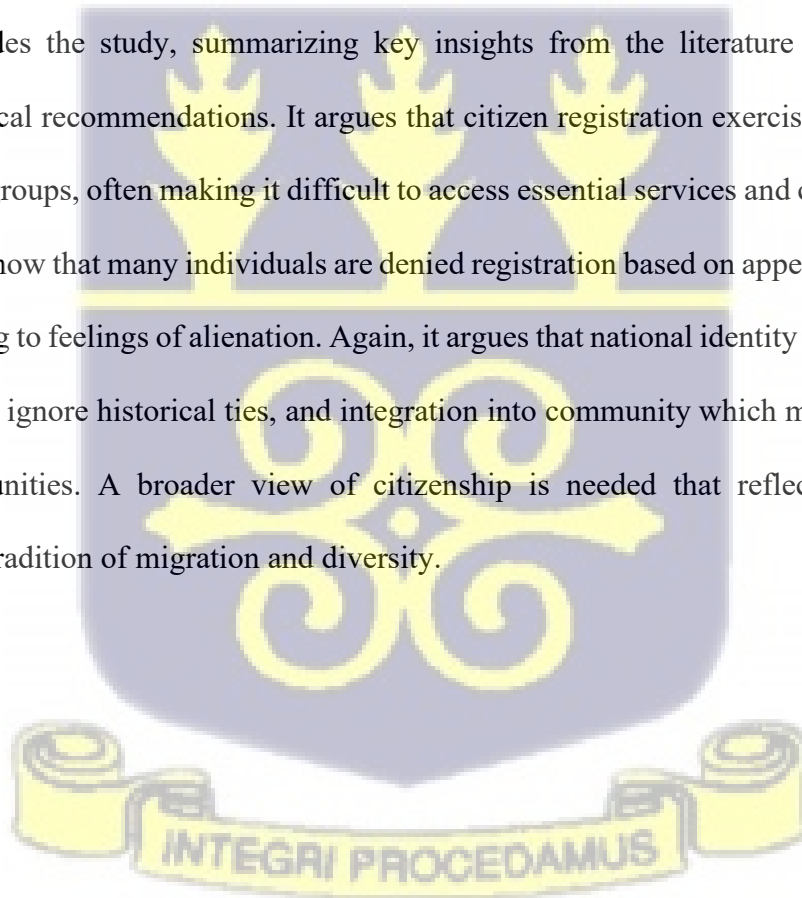
the impact of economic factors on the experiences of ethnic minorities by contrasting the fortunes of those integrated into urban town sectors and those within rural setting. It also examines the difference in experience of male and female migrants. Finally, it examines the influence of cultural factors, education, language, status, and physical appearance on the construction of national citizenship and exclusion from citizen rights. By focusing on the interactions between national citizen registration conducted by agents of the state and processes of integration into communities the research fills a gap in the existing literature on citizenship and social inclusion, highlighting the unique challenges faced by ethnic minorities with long histories of migration.

The study also has important policy implications, offering insights and a deeper understanding of the intersection of migration, identity, and citizenship and locating this within the broader history of regional economy and historical movements of people in West Africa. This can help to inform a more reflective approach to inclusive citizenship laws and biometric identification processes, ensuring that these systems are more accessible to all citizens, regardless of their ethnic background, and grounded in the realities of people's lived experience, fostering social justice and equal access to rights and services.

## **1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The following chapter provides a review of the relevant literature examining the impacts of mobility and migration, constructs of citizenship, marginalization, state registration, modernity and globalization on the politics of belonging, and construction of local and national identities. Chapter Three describes the research methodology, including data sources, research design, study population, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Chapter Four explores

the migration histories and politics of exclusion for the Fulani and Zabarma communities in the North Tongu district. It uses relevant literature and field findings to examine how these factors impact their citizenship status in Ghana. Chapter Five presents the life histories and experiences of work, social integration and marginalization of Fulani and Zabarma residents in the North Tongu district, contrasting the experiences of rural and urban Fulani and of urban Fulani and Zabarma, and of men and women. It examines changing perceptions of integration and belonging over time, and the ways in which concepts of national and local citizenship have evolved and influence each other. Chapter Six investigates the impacts of citizenship registration on these groups, as well as their different experiences with voter registration and the Ghana card. Chapter Seven concludes the study, summarizing key insights from the literature and findings and offering practical recommendations. It argues that citizen registration exercises tend to exclude marginalized groups, often making it difficult to access essential services and civic participation. The findings show that many individuals are denied registration based on appearance or arbitrary criteria, leading to feelings of alienation. Again, it argues that national identity definitions shaped by bureaucrats ignore historical ties, and integration into community which may lead to tension in the communities. A broader view of citizenship is needed that reflects West Africa's longstanding tradition of migration and diversity.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews existing relevant literature that pertains to the phenomena of citizenship, marginalization, state registration, regional economy, and ethnic mobility. The analysis of these theories aims to understand the interplay of these factors on the lived experiences of marginalized migrant communities subject to the politics of exclusion. The chapter also explores the extent to which existing historical patterns of migration within the wider West African economy are reflected in the construction of national identity and citizenship. The literature review focuses on intellectual discourses on citizenship and identity associated with the following themes: mobility and migration in West Africa; ethnic identity and the politics of belonging; biometric identification, state control, and exclusion; and the impact of national identity registration on ethnic minorities and migrant populations.

According to Marshall (1950) concepts of citizenship are based on the idea of membership of a community with equal rights and duties. The concept of citizenship manifests in a sense of national identity of a people and a sense of solidarity. Critics of Marshall have argued that different states have developed distinct definitions of citizenship, and that nationalism arises as a product of distinct historical processes giving rise to different or peculiar conceptions of citizenship in different national settings (Turner, 1990). Therefore, the context in which Marshall examines citizenship within Britain, i.e. the post-war rise of working class solidarity and political influence and the creation of a welfare state, differs substantially from the context of nationalism

in Africa within the same period, which focuses around the rise of independence, and the attempt to transform colonies into modern nation-states. The boundaries of European colonies in Africa were often randomly drawn up, transgressing ethnic groups and pre-colonial nationalities, and dividing many ethnic groups. The colonies drew upon migrant labour and colonial labour reserves established beyond the boundaries of the colonies, leading to complex and diverse identities within these state boundaries (Amin 1974).

This involved processes of inclusion and exclusion that changed through time. For instance, following independence in Ghana, Nkrumah acknowledged the importance that migrants had played in the economy of Ghana and in the independence struggle, welcomed them in Ghana, and identified the importance of Pan-Africanism in building genuine independence in Ghana (Skinner,1963). While West African migrants were welcomed in the early independence period and formed the main labour force in cocoa, by 1969 they were expelled following the Aliens Compliance Act. Similarly, in 1982 the Nigerian government repatriated 2 million Ghanaians that had sought economic security in Nigeria (Skinner,1963). Similarly in Côte D'Ivoire in the 1970s migrants were welcomed and offered land that could be passed on to the heirs. By the 1990s Sahelian migrants were violently expelled in southern Côte d'Ivoire. However, this exclusion of migrants also fuelled a national crisis of identity resulting in a civil war between south and north (Marshall-Fratani, 2006).

Discourses on nationalism and citizenship arise in political processes and historical and economic contexts. They arise in processes of inclusion and exclusion, and the “ethnic identity reconstruction and mobilisation” (Nzongola-Ntalaja (2007: 74) that justifies the exclusion or extension of political control over national minorities. However, these often have unforeseen outcomes and consequences and can result in crises of national identity. Therefore, the

development of particular forms of citizenship and national identity within Africa need to be placed within historical contexts, within the development of the state, economy, trade, towns, and migrations of people. They need to be placed within the context of colonialism, the development of colonial borders and export crop economies, and the transition to independence. They also need to be placed within the context of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts and the politics of belonging. Finally, in recent times, they need to be explored in relationship to globalization and the opening up of African economies to international investment, resulting in concerns about linking citizenship to market inclusion, such as the linking of citizen registration with access to financial services, mobile banking and access to mobile phone networks.

## **2.2 MOBILITY AND MIGRATION IN WEST AFRICA**

West Africa is characterized by a long history of migration, trading, agricultural, and colonial factors. Historically, migration has occurred within the framework of trading activities, initially during the powerful trans-Saharan trade era, and later, according to colonial needs for labour and other related resources. This section reviews literature relating to this section according to the following sub-themes: historical context of migration in West Africa, drivers of migration, patterns of migration, and consequences of migration.

### **2.2.1 Historical Context of Migration in West Africa**

Migration in West Africa is not only characterized by its complexity in patterns and processes but is also laden with a long history of social, economic, political, and environmental factors and implications. This section examines patterns of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial phases in the historical context of the phenomenon of mobility and migration in West Africa.

### 2.2.2 Pre-Colonial Migration Patterns

From the pre-colonial perspective, there existed a lot of intra-regional mobility that was motivated by activities largely involving the economy and trade, especially within the West African sub-region of the African continent. Central to these economic-induced activities were the trans-Saharan trading routes, across which people, goods, and cultural practices moved over a vast distance (Austen, R. A. 2010).

The phenomenon of migration during this period of the history of pre-colonial migration was not controlled; the notion and intricacies of borders were still not clear and defined. There was, therefore, free passage across what would later on be recognised as national borders (Lovejoy, 1980).

### 2.2.3 Colonial Migration Patterns

According to Glosky (2019), information on migration in pre-colonial Africa is often limited, with scant written records, archaeological evidence, and linguistic documentation available about the numerous population movements and shifts both within and beyond the continent. In contrast, migration during the European colonial period, though still not fully documented, is much better recorded. During colonial rule, Africans migrated for various reasons. They crossed borders in search of better opportunities and less oppressive regimes, relocated within colonies to growing urban centres and ports, and became migrant workers in pursuit of cash crop farming opportunities. The introduction of cash taxes by colonial governments provided further incentives for people to move in search of income-generating activities. Migration was both encouraged and feared by colonial authorities, which desired population growth but were wary of urbanization, fearing that African urban life would become unruly and difficult to manage. Nevertheless, colonial urban centres expanded rapidly as Africans sought better opportunities.

As Teye (2015) observes, colonial administrations-imposed policies that spurred on labour migration from the Sahelian countries to plantation economies located on the coast of West Africa, such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Additionally, in Ghana (then the British colony of the Gold Coast), cocoa was introduced by a local metalworker in 1879, leading to the swift development of cocoa plantations in the interior. Ghanaian farmers moved northward within the colony into the forest zone, establishing plantations. By 1914, Ghana had become the world's largest cocoa producer. Migrants from Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta) also moved south to produce cocoa in Ghana and coffee in Côte d'Ivoire. Similarly, southwest Nigeria emerged as another cocoa-producing region, attracting migrants from northern Nigeria and even from southern Niger. West African migration took new shapes that significantly changed traditional types of mobility. This new colonial form of migration was achieved through the enforcement of rigid borders by European colonialists, and the processes associated with the phenomenon of forced labour migration practices. Bassett and Turner (2007) posit that it was also during this period, that infrastructural projects like the laying down of railway lines commenced, with the objective of aiding the mass movement of humans, often under coerced circumstances. However, pre-existing migration routes and practices were not completely disrupted, but rather modified to meet the new economic imperatives of colonialism, redirecting rather than initiating regional migrations West Africa.

### **2.3 COLONIALISM AND THE IMPOSITION OF BORDERS**

The advent of European colonialism in the late 19th century brought about a dramatic reconfiguration of mobility, migration, and citizenship in West Africa. Colonial powers, motivated by the desire to exploit the region's resources, imposed artificial borders that often

disregarded existing ethnic, cultural, and political boundaries. These borders, which became the nation-states of modern West Africa, created new challenges for mobility and belonging (Herbst, J. 2014). Colonial authorities introduced the concept of fixed territorial citizenship, which was alien to the fluid and dynamic identities that had previously characterized the region. Colonial policies often categorized populations into "natives" and "strangers," with citizenship rights granted to those deemed "native" to a particular territory. This distinction laid the groundwork for future marginalization of migrant populations, as those classified as "strangers" were often denied land rights, political representation, and access to social services (Mamdani, 1996). Similarly, colonial authorities exploited existing social hierarchies to maintain control, favouring certain ethnic groups over others. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, the French colonial administration encouraged labour migration from the poorer northern regions and neighbouring countries like Burkina Faso and Mali to work on cocoa and coffee plantations in the south. While this migration was initially encouraged, the settlers were often denied full citizenship rights, leading to tensions that persisted long after independence (Marshall-Fratani, 2006). These tensions have been a significant factor in the civil conflicts that have plagued Côte d'Ivoire, demonstrating the long-lasting impact of colonial policies on contemporary migration and citizenship issues.

#### **2.4 POST-COLONIAL MIGRATION PATTERNS**

The foundations for much of the migration in post-colonial Africa were established during the colonial era. Earlier labour migrations, whether within or across colonial borders or from rural to urban areas, created extensive networks that facilitated and encouraged future migration. These movements were supported by kinship and community ties, which were both strengthened

by and essential to the process of migration (Glovsky, 2019). However, the end of colonial rule did not result in unrestricted movement across the continent; instead, it often led to xenophobia against those perceived as outsiders. For example, in 1968, the Ghanaian government expelled 100,000 "foreigners," primarily from Nigeria and Burkina Faso. In South Africa, economic concerns after apartheid fuelled the expulsion and stigmatization of Mozambicans and others from neighbouring countries. Additionally, some governments sought to limit emigration, as seen in Guinea during much of Sekou Touré's rule (Glovsky, 2019). Migration in this era continued to follow the north-south trajectory that characterised the colonial period, as evidenced by the nature of labour migrations from landlocked Sahelian countries to the more prosperous coastal regions (Glovsky, 2019).

## **2.5 POST-COLONIAL LEGACIES OF MOBILITY AND MARGINALIZATION**

The end of colonial rule in the mid-20th century did not bring an end to the challenges of citizenship and marginalization in West Africa. In many cases, the newly independent states inherited the colonial borders and the socio-political structures that had been established by the colonial powers. These borders often divided ethnic groups and communities, complicating the question of who belonged and who was an "outsider."

In the post-colonial period, migration within and across these borders continued, driven by economic opportunities, environmental challenges, and political instability. However, the question of citizenship became worrisome, as states struggled to define who qualified as a citizen and who did not. Manby (2018) argues that this led to the exclusion of entire communities, particularly those with histories of migration, from full citizenship rights. The issues surrounding

citizenship and marginalization are often compounded by the legacies of colonial rule, where ethnic and religious divisions were manipulated to maintain control. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, the concept of Ivoirité a nationalist ideology that emerged in the 1990s was used to exclude large numbers of people, particularly those of Burkinabe descent, from citizenship (Glovsky,2019). This exclusionary policy contributed to the outbreak of civil conflict in the country, highlighting the ongoing tensions between migration, citizenship, and marginalization in West Africa (Marshall

Fratani, 2006). Similarly, in Ghana, debates over land rights and citizenship have often centred on the distinction between "indigenous" populations and "settlers," with the latter often facing discrimination and exclusion. These issues are particularly pronounced in the northern regions, where historical patterns of labour migration have created complex and contested claims to land and citizenship (Lentz, C.2020). The struggles over land and citizenship in Ghana illustrate the broader regional challenges of integrating diverse populations into the post-colonial state.

Much of the existing literature on West African mobility focuses on the extensive patterns of migration that have characterized the region in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times. Glovsky (2019) has highlighted the historical fluidity of borders and the resistance of ethnic groups, such as the Fulbe of Senegambia, to the rigid state boundaries imposed during the colonial era. This body of work has significantly contributed to our understanding of the region's mobile societies. However, there remains a critical gap in the literature concerning how this historical mobility challenges contemporary state policies on citizenship and ethnic identity. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the historical and contemporary patterns of mobility and migration within West Africa from the experiences of long-term migrant communities and

the extent to which this history is reflected in the attempts of the state to define and redefine Ghanaian identity and citizenship.

## **2.6 ETHNIC IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF BELONGING**

Ethnic identity refers to the feeling of belonging to some ethnic group which is due to similarities in language, culture, ancestry, and religion, among many other characteristics. For Horowitz, ethnicity is an umbrella concept that “easily embraces groups differentiated by colour, language, and religion. It covers ‘tribes,’ ‘races,’ ‘nationalities,’ and castes” (Horowitz, 2000,). Barth (1998) posits that ethnic identity is not cast in stone, but rather continually negotiated and redefined in interactions. Jenkins and Haggerty (1999) similarly argue that ethnic identity is not only personal but also a social phenomenon and that it is stylized both in regard to outside recognition and in self-identification. In situations of conflict, when interests compete and the number of accessible resources are scarce, ethnic identity tends to become more rigid and exclusionary, since it has political utility in drawing exclusionary boundaries for the purpose of in-group and out-group definition (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). This study builds upon this framing of ethnic identities.

Ethnic identity also encompasses symbolic, emotive, and subjective feelings of value, welcome and attachment to a community that forms part of a sense of belonging. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that belonging is a multi-faceted notion characterized by the emotional, social, and political construct of a given society. In contrast, Kymlicka (1995), focuses on the political dimension of the concept and phenomenon of belongingness. Kymlicka argues that belonging is centrally an issue of rights and membership with respect to a political community.

The combination of these views can examine both the emotional, community-based aspects of identity and the political-legal structures that grant or deny membership. In a study on marginalized communities, this dual approach allows us to highlight how belonging requires both social acceptance and formal rights. The political dimension ensures that groups are legally recognized, while the emotional and social dimensions show how policy and bureaucracy impact everyday feelings of inclusion or exclusion. Together, they offer a holistic view of belonging that acknowledges the depth of identity beyond legal frameworks.

## **2.7 HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY ETHNIC DYNAMICS IN WEST AFRICA**

The ethnic dynamics in West Africa are deeply rooted in historical contexts, but they never stop changing vis-à-vis contemporary socio-political changes. This section looks into the historical formation of ethnic identity in the region and critically analyses contemporary issues associated with inter-ethnic relations, conflicts, and the lasting legacies of colonialism.

Accordingly, in West Africa, ethnic identities have become historically defined by the complicated interplay of such processes as trade, migration, and social organization. Ethnic identity was significant in the trans-Saharan trade routes, which encouraged interactions between diverse groups, giving birth to shared cultural practices and the consolidation of ethnic groups.

Lentz (2000) argues that ethnic identities were often crystallized through conflicts over land and political power, especially where groups had to demarcate themselves from others to gain access to these resources. Nugent (2012) similarly contends that ethnic identity was not just the peaceful product of interaction; they were often hammered out in the crucible of struggles for mastery and survival. While there exist divergent views on the role of conflict and cooperation in the

construction of ethnic identities, other commentators point to colonialism as a major factor in influencing ethnic identities, crystallizing previously fluid ethnic differences, and inventing new forms of identity.

One of the major shifts in the academic understanding of ethnicity in Africa occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, when a new generation of scholars challenged the previously dominant notion of primordial ethnic groups. These scholars argued that ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa was largely a construct of European colonial rule, designed to simplify and manage the complexities of African societies. This perspective posited that ethnicity was not an ancient and unchanging identity marker, but rather an artificial category imposed from the outside (Keese, A. 2015). Mamdani (1996) argues that colonial Indirect Rule involved the use of local ethnic leaders to implement colonial policy, which had the effect of entrenching ethnic boundaries for the purpose of maintaining control. This solidified ethnic identities, which up to that point in time were more fluid. And contributed creating political hierarchies based on ethnic affiliations. Not only were ethnic divisions entrenched by colonialism, but they also became politicized because access to resources and political power were attached to ethnic identity (Ake 1981).

In contrast, Young, and Brown (1995) believe that colonialism did not create ethnic identities but rather transformed pre-existing ones by imposing rigid classifications that reduced flexibility from identity negotiation. This perspective challenges the notion that ethnic identities in West Africa were constructed through colonial manipulation and highlights the agency of African actors in reshaping their identities within the limits of colonial rule. However, even among those who subscribe to the notion that national citizenship is based on “traditional notions” of indigenous origins within a specific territory, there is increasing recognition that it is inappropriate to deny citizenship to ‘non-indigenous’ people, who have lived in these localities

for decades as non-citizens on the basis that they were “originally slaves or second-class citizens” (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 78). Similarly, Tonah (2023) highlights the rigidity of notions of nationality that are based on membership of an original settler group (‘first-comer’) indigenous to Ghana, and the relegation of ‘late-comers and more recent immigrant groups as ‘strangers’ and ‘aliens. This fails to define the rights of communities that have been settled in Ghana over a long period. Tonah (2023) advocates for delegating the rights of West African migrant communities to the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) to establish dual citizen rights and responsibilities in each country.

The modern phenomenon of ethnicity, however, has its roots in urban settings, where rural-urban immigrants from different ethnic groups came into contact (Cohen, A. 1968). Urban life, characterized by anonymity, insecurity, and a fierce struggle for survival, prompted individuals to seek security within groups that shared common cultural characteristics, leading to the formation of ethnic groupings. In urban areas, where political and socio-economic activities are concentrated, inter-ethnic relations often involve competition for power and economic opportunities, leading to latent or manifest conflict (Cohen, A. 1968). This competition underscores the tendency for ethnic groups to outdo one another in the struggle for scarce resources, such as power, wealth, status, education, and land for housing and other economic ventures. The dynamics of ethnic relations in modern urban centres are distinct from those of pre-colonial times. Today, discriminatory behaviours against immigrant ethnic groups, as well as against non-native settlers by natives in urban centres, are common. The struggle for survival in urban areas has led not only to the formation of ethnic associations but also to the development of ethnically distinct residential areas.

Ethnicity also plays a significant role in rural areas, where unequal access to resources and opportunities for survival shapes ethnic relations. The conflicts between the Konkomba and the Dagomba/Nanumba illustrate this. The Konkomba, as settlers in the Dagomba/Nanumba areas, owed allegiance to these landowners, which defined their subservient relationship, a situation they resented. Negative ethnic stereotypes further fueled tensions, leading to several open conflicts, including the armed conflict in 1994, which resulted in significant loss of life and properties. This conflict, partly due to the Konkomba's demand for paramountcy and independence from Dagbon, underscores the broader issue of ethnic inequality and stratification in Ghana (Pul, 2003).

The academic deconstruction of ethnicity as a colonial construct arising from long regional historical processes has had little impact on public perception and political discourse. In several parts of sub-Saharan Africa, ethnicity continues to be a powerful and widely accepted basis for group affiliation and social relations. Local populations often view ethnic identity as a natural and self-evident explanation for social cohesion and conflict. This discrepancy between academic interpretations and popular perceptions points to the enduring power of ethnic identity as a mobilizing force. While scholars may deconstruct ethnicity, it remains a potent tool in the hands of political leaders and communities, particularly in times of conflict or regime change. This enduring relevance of ethnicity underscores the need to consider both the historical construction of ethnic identities and their contemporary significance in the politics of belonging.

In contemporary nation-states, citizenship and national belonging have traditionally hinged on the idea of a shared national identity, encompassing a unified polity, nation, and culture. However, in increasingly pluralistic societies, this ideal often clashes with the reality of ethnic diversity and competing claims to national identity. Citizenship has been fundamentally

premised on the inclusion of individuals within the national community based on their alignment with this shared identity. Yet, the pluralistic nature of modern states complicates this notion. Individuals and groups perceived as different whether due to ethnic origins, cultural practices, or other identity markers often face challenges in asserting their claims to national belonging (Dorman, S. R. 2014).

The perception of national identity is significantly influenced by how others view and react to these claims. In a diverse society, the majority's beliefs about what constitutes legitimate national identity can shape how minority groups are perceived and treated. Those seen as different may encounter scepticism or outright exclusion based on their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, manifesting in various forms from subtle biases to systemic discrimination. Moreover, members of minority groups may also self-exclude from the broader national identity. This self-exclusion may arise from a lack of personal connection to the dominant national identity or from the anticipation of negative responses from the majority (Dorman, S. R. 2014).

Even when individuals from minority groups have a strong prima facie claim to national identity, the social construction of this identity may still marginalize them. They might feel that despite their eligibility or historical presence, the dominant national narrative does not fully recognize or include their identity. The complex interplay between ethnic identity and national belonging reveals that inclusion and citizenship are not merely about formal membership but are deeply intertwined with social perceptions and cultural norms. As societies continue to grapple with diversity, understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing issues of exclusion and marginalization and fostering a more inclusive sense of national belonging.

## **2.8 THE ROLE OF GLOBALIZATION AND MODERNITY**

The extent to which globalization and modernity play a role in remaking ethnic identities in contemporary West Africa is a new area of inquiry. Nugent (2012) argues that globalization brought new cultural inputs and economic opportunities, leading to the rise of hybrid identities that transcend the conventional ethnic boundaries. The phenomenon is observed more generally among the youth, the majority of whom can be seen moving within multiple identities that are socially constructed. The new potential forms of exclusion and marginalization present big questions constructed by global media, migration, and urbanization. Some scholars have argued that globalization may exacerbate divisions among ethnic groups by increasing competition over resources in an increasingly unequal world. For example, Bayart and Ellis (2000) holds that because access to global markets and resources is increasing on an ethnic basis, there has been struggles over land and political power over the so-called viability of traditional forms of identity in a fast-changing world. The expansion of globalization also results in the imposition of new forms of governance, the incorporation of economic sectors into commodity chain standardization and branding, global human rights frameworks, such as child labour and labour regulations, health regulations, information technology systems, global security and surveillance and the war on terrorism, and biometric registration systems.

### **2.8.1 Biometric Identification, State Control and Exclusion**

This section explores the intersection of biometric identification systems and state control, and their impact on social exclusion in West Africa. As West African states increasingly adopt biometric technologies for national identification and voter registration, these systems have profound implications for citizenship and marginalization. This section highlights the literature on how biometric identification can both enhance state governance and perpetuate the

marginalization of vulnerable populations, thereby complicating the relationship between citizenship and identity in the region. To achieve this objective, the review covers several sub-themes, including; the rise of biometric identification as a tool for state governance, its role in enhancing or undermining citizenship rights, and the ways in which these systems can reinforce social exclusion. Additionally, the review examines case studies from West Africa that highlight the implementation of biometric identification and its socio-political impacts, including issues related to surveillance, privacy, and the exclusion of minority populations from national registries.

### **2.8.2 The Role of Biometric Identification in State Control**

Biometric identification now stands at the centre of the modern state's governance, often implemented through verification of citizens' unique physiological or behavioural characteristics that identify an individual as distinct from another. Purposes for the implementation of biometric identification policies vary, whether it is contributing to national security, reducing fraud, or improving service delivery. Notwithstanding these varying purposes for the implementation of biometric identification policies and systems, biometric technologies raise some important concerns, covering issues such as state control, civil liberties, privacy, and surveillance. The most common technologies of biometric identification systems are facial recognition, iris scanning, voice recognition, hand geometry, and fingerprint technologies. These systems are increasingly adopted by states in their management of populations, especially in the areas of voter registration, national identification database compilation, and border control, among other uses.

According to Gelb and Clark (2013), biometric identification is one such magical solution for improving the efficiency of public administration, reducing fraud in elections and social welfare systems, as well as enhancing national security by uniquely identifying individuals. While

biometric systems can be efficient, they are also a potent tool of state control. States apply biometric systems or technologies on their subjects for the purposes of monitoring, regulation, sustained security, and proper distribution of resources. As noted by scholars such as Lyon (2009), biometric systems actually extend the reach of the state's surveillance and control capacity into areas that might erode civil liberties. This is more visible in contexts where governments use biometric data either to monitor political dissent or control marginalized groups, as has been done by different authoritarian regimes (Lyon, D.2009). For instance, the introduction of biometric voter registration in Nigeria was intended to address electoral fraud but has been charged with disenfranchising certain populations, especially in the rural areas where access to biometric registration centres is low (Sani, I. 2015). This exemplifies the double-edged nature of biometric technologies, where on the one hand, they contribute to improve state governance, and on the other, they are deployed as instruments of exclusion and control.

Meanwhile, the application of biometric identification systems raises civil liberties and privacy issues. This is because since information in biometric data is basically about the individual's physical body, it makes the phenomenon of biometric identification sensitive, owing to the fact that any form of misuse can easily lead to serious privacy violations. For this reason, Van der Ploeg (1999) contends that centralizing biometric information using state databases makes information more vulnerable to breaches and unauthorized surveillance, which might turn into atrocities at the hand of abusers of power. However, what makes these concerns worse in West Africa is that this region has weak data protection frameworks, and biometric data is often open to misuse by the state and non-state actors. Moreover, the implementation of such biometric technologies often disproportionately impacts vulnerable groups. The use of biometric identification systems is also at the core of the bigger move to expand state surveillance. It

renders constant surveillance of people's movement and actions, hence tending to make a surveillance society in which there is no way of hiding. According to Zureik and Hindle (2004), this can tilt the balance of power greatly in favour of the state, reducing citizens' capacity for resistance or challenge to governmental authority. In the West African perspective, many believe that the implementation of biometric identification has provided the state with immediate increases in surveillance, especially in areas of political unrest. In Nigeria, for example, biometric technologies had evidenced an appreciation in monitoring the activities of political activists and opposition groups, thereby eliciting concerns regarding the suppression of dissent (Gberevbie et al. 2018). The foregoing essentially underscores the need for a further critical examination of the power dynamics involved in deploying biometric systems, more so in their often-difficult democracies.

While much of the literature criticizes the use of biometric identification on account of its potential to consolidate state control and surveillance, a few scholars point out its benefits in strengthening state institutions for the attainment of good governance practices. For instance, Gelb and Clark (2013) argue that when implemented with proper safeguards, biometric systems help reduce corrupt practices and improve service delivery, thus ensuring all resources reach the intended beneficiaries. However, taking into account the lack of literature regarding the long-term socio-political consequences of biometric identification within developing regions like West Africa, such an argument is worthy, especially when considered within the context of how such technologies have the capabilities to change the welfare of the poor and those marginalized and helping make them even more inclusive. More so, the ethical considerations over the use of biometric data and potential misuse in the context of weak legal framework contexts will be a less explored niche that the study at hand seeks to explore.

### 2.8.3 Biometric Identification and Discrimination

Biometric identification systems are increasingly being operationalized in modern state governance, ranging from voter registration to national identification to border management. While the implementation of these systems promises efficiency and accuracy, they risk being highly exclusionary to already marginalized communities or people without formal documentation. In most cases, these technologies are widely implemented by states to streamline public administration, enhance state security, and reduce fraud (Gelb & Clark, 2013). However, the adoption of these technologies has not been without significant socio-political implications, particularly concerning the exclusion of vulnerable populations. One main concern is the risk of excluding people. Not everyone can provide biometric data, like fingerprints. Some groups, such as infants, the elderly, and manual laborers, often have difficulty with this. These groups are already vulnerable, so relying too much on biometrics without backup options could lead to their exclusion. Using multiple types of biometrics (“multimodal”) can reduce this risk, but all systems should have ways to handle cases where people cannot enroll. It is also important to have a way for people to appeal if the system makes a mistake. If new systems, like voter registration, are rushed, there may not be enough time or resources to address these issues, which could lead to eligible people being left out. Although strong identification systems make fewer mistakes, they often assume the computer is always right, which can make it hard for people to challenge errors. Errors in data entry are not unique to biometrics, though. Regardless of the method, all registration and identification systems need clear guidelines for fixing mistakes and handling disputes, something many systems in developing countries lack (Gelb & Clark, 2013).

Biometric systems have one of the deepest socio-political impacts in the domain of exclusion. Biometric systems cast out from services that are essential, including healthcare and education,

or deny individuals the ability to vote, thus rendering an individual invisible to the state. In the case of West Africa, this is more contentious because of the complexity of the ethnic domain, in which a significant number of ethnic groups are already socially and politically marginalised (McKeon, 2018). Exclusion from biometric systems further entrenches these groups' marginalization, thereby further limiting their ability to participate fully in civic life and exacerbating existing forms of inequalities handed down out to them.

Although many studies are critical of biometric systems for their exclusion effects on minority groups, other studies consider the potential benefits that abound when these systems are implemented with safeguards to ensure inclusivity. For example, in some countries, biometric systems have been used beneficially to extend access to social service provision to more people in need of them, while preventing fraud along the way. In so doing, intended recipients' have benefited from unimpeded access to social services (Gelb & Metz, 2018). However, these beneficiary implementations are often exceptions rather than the rule since the evidence in literature very clearly states that design and implementation of biometric systems are more likely to exclude than include. This is more prevalent in regions of pervasive inequality and poor governance structures.

#### **2.8.4 The National Identity Cards in Ghana**

The National Identity Card system in Ghana has been part of successive Ghanaian governments' efforts in a bid to systematically streamline identification and governance processes that ensure all citizens are accorded access to social services. The introduction of the national identification system in Ghana was done in the early 2000s after cognizance was taken of the challenge that multiple identification systems brought from different institutions and sectors of government. Before the Ghana Card, different services were entitled to different forms of identification be it

voter registration, healthcare, or banking. Such a fragmented system often leads to fraud, duplication, and inadequacy regarding service delivery. The Ghana Card is a biometric identity card supposed to give every Ghanaian, as well as its legal residents, a single universal identification number. This claims to offer ease of access to banking, social security, and voting. It also enhances national security, as the biometric features of the Ghana Card, such as fingerprinting and iris scanning, serve to make it difficult for an individual to disguise themselves under a false identity. The government is also supposed to consolidate various forms of identification, such as the voter register, passport system, and social security records, into a single country database. This seeks to eliminate duplication of state records (Tonah, 2022).

## 2.9 CONCLUSION

Many people face serious barriers to registration. This exclusion is compounded by the fact that rural people generally lack important documents, such as a birth certificate required for registration, further marginalizing these already at-risk populations. Thus, the requirements for registration create the same structural pattern of exclusion that characterize other aspects of the life of the rural poor, and ethnic minorities.

This study focuses on examining the experiences of migrant groups, documenting their histories of incorporation into communities in Ghana, their access to education, employment and livelihoods, their usage of government and civic services, their access to formal documents, their experiences of the processes of citizen registration, and their perceptions of citizenship, nationality, political representation and marginalization, and the socio-political implications of these factors for notions of citizenship. The study focuses on the tensions between the lived

experience of migrant groups, the incorporation of migrant groups into local communities, the national state construction of citizenship and national identity, and the extent to which this reflects historical processes of social integration within Ghana.



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative methodology to conduct a comparative analysis of the Fulani and Zabarma communities of North Tongu in the Volta region of Ghana. Qualitative research, as outlined by Gerring (2017), is particularly valuable in studies that seek to explore complex social phenomena through in-depth, narrative-based analysis. This methodology is well-suited to uncovering the ways in which these two groups experience and interpret citizenship and marginalization, as well as allowing for a detailed exploration of their unique historical and political contexts. This research design is suitable for studying intricate topics such as identity and belonging, which cannot be easily quantified (Gerring, 2017).

The study's comparative technique allows for a full assessment of the distinctions and similarities between the Fulani and Zabarma people, offering insight into how they live in a country where they are mostly ignored in policymaking and legislation.

#### 3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

This study is centred on the Fulani and Zabarma communities, focusing on their experiences with citizenship and marginalization in Ghana. Both groups have deep historical roots in Ghana, and many of the respondents were born in Ghana and have lived their entire lives within the country. The inclusion of both men and women from these ethnic groups ensures a diverse range

of perspectives, capturing the complexities of gender in the context of citizenship. Fulanis and Zabarma are important targets of this research due to their unique socio-political positions in Ghana. While many of them have been long-time residents, even second or third-generation Ghanaians, their ethnic identities often shape their experiences with national citizenship, leading to complex interactions with the state and other groups within the same society. As Sofaer (1999) notes, qualitative research is particularly valuable in giving voice to marginalized or underrepresented groups, whose narratives are essential for understanding the dynamics of citizenship.

### 3.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals from a larger population to participate in a research study. It allows researchers to collect data from a manageable number of participants while ensuring that the selected sample can provide meaningful insights into the broader population being studied. As Snyder (2012) notes, sampling is crucial because it reduces the time and resources needed to study an entire population while allowing researchers to make inferences about the larger group based on the collected data.

In this study, a sample size of 29 participants was selected, comprising 19 Fulanis and 10 Zabarmas. The Fulanis in the rural community were 10 in number while those in the urban setting were 9 in number. The Zabarmas who were only urban based were 10 in number. The respondents were comprised of males and females to ensure gender representation in exploring their perceptions of citizenship and belonging in Ghana. The selection of this sample size was based on the need to capture diverse perspectives within both communities while maintaining a

manageable number of participants for in-depth qualitative analysis. As Gerring (2017) points out, in qualitative research, smaller sample sizes can still yield rich data when the focus is on detailed, contextual exploration rather than statistical generalization.

### **3.3.1 Purposive Sampling**

The primary sampling method used in this research was purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. In purposive sampling, participants are deliberately chosen based on specific characteristics that are relevant to the research questions. In this case, the study focused on Fulani and Zabarma men and women who were born and have lived in Ghana for most of their lives, making them ideal participants for examining issues related to citizenship and belonging. Purposive sampling ensures that the selected participants provide insights directly aligned with the study's objectives (Snyder, 2012). This method was particularly effective for this research as it allowed the study to concentrate on individuals who could provide detailed accounts of their experiences with citizenship in Ghana. As Sofaer (1999) emphasizes, purposive sampling is valuable when the goal is to give voice to underrepresented populations, such as the Fulanis and Zabarmas, whose narratives around citizenship may otherwise go unheard.

### **3.3.2 Snowball Sampling**

In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling was employed to expand the participant pool. Snowball sampling occurs when current participants recommend other individuals who they believe would be suitable for the study. This technique was used when participants felt that they lacked sufficient information to answer certain questions fully or when they believed that someone else had a similar experience and could speak to the issue in more depth. Snowball sampling is particularly useful in studies where participants have close community ties, as it helps identify individuals who may not have been initially considered (Taherdoost, 2016). This

approach allowed the research to capture a broader range of perspectives, ensuring that the study included individuals who had valuable experiences with citizenship, identity, and belonging.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Data collection methods refer to the methods researchers use to gather information or evidence that will later be analyzed to answer research questions or test hypotheses. These techniques vary depending on the research goals and the type of data needed. This research employed in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and visual anthropology in collecting data.

#### **3.4.1 In-depth Interviews**

In this study, I conducted in-depth interviews to gather life histories and lived experiences of Fulani and Zabarma participants. These interviews were aimed at understanding their experiences with citizenship, how they perceive their sense of belonging, and their life histories. In-depth interviews are an ideal method for exploring complex topics like citizenship because they allow individuals to express their personal views, feelings, and lived experiences in their own words. This approach offered the participants the space to share their unique perspectives, which is especially important for understanding marginalized or under-represented groups like the Fulani and Zabarma. The interviews I conducted were semi-structured, which means that while I had a clear set of themes to explore such as citizenship, identity, and belonging, it also allowed for flexibility. This structure gave participants the freedom to share their stories in a natural flow, covering the issues most important to them. The flexibility of in-depth interviews was essential because each participant had their own unique experiences and perspectives on citizenship.

Throughout the interviews, I used follow-up questions and probing techniques to dive deeper into the participants' thoughts and emotions. This was particularly useful for uncovering not only what they experienced but also how they interpreted those experiences. By asking participants to reflect on their life events and their sense of belonging, I could understand the emotional and psychological dimensions of their experiences with citizenship. These probing questions helped participants open up and think critically about their stories, often leading to insights they may not have considered before. In-depth interviews allowed for a more personal and interactive form of data collection. Rather than simply collecting factual information, I was able to engage participants in a dialogue that encouraged them to explore and reflect on their own understanding of citizenship. This interactive process made it a collaborative method of research, where the meaning of citizenship and belonging is co-created through the conversation between the interviewer and the participant. Again, the interviews helped to generate new knowledge and insights. As participants shared their stories, they often came to new realizations or expressed ideas they had not thought about before.

### **3.4.2 Focus Group Discussion**

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were employed as a core qualitative data collection technique to explore the diverse perspectives of key informants on citizenship experiences and registration processes within both Fulani and Zabarma communities. A total of four distinct FGDs were conducted, each focusing on a specific set of key informants who were selected based on their roles and expertise within their communities and the bureaucratic structures that oversee citizenship registration. The participants included traditional chiefs from both Fulani and Zabarma communities, as well as bureaucrats who manage citizenship documentation and registration processes. Chiefs were selected due to their deep-rooted understanding of

community dynamics, cultural practices, and local experiences related to citizenship. They provided invaluable insights into how citizenship is understood and negotiated at the community level. Bureaucrats, on the other hand, contributed detailed knowledge of the formal procedures and challenges involved in citizenship registration, offering a broader institutional perspective.

The focus group discussions were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in addressing specific topics related to the research objectives while also creating space for participants to elaborate on their lived experiences. This approach facilitated rich discussions that revealed both individual and collective narratives around citizenship, identity, and state recognition. Additionally, it enabled the triangulation of data from different perspectives including traditional leaders and government officials thus providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

Each session was recorded and transcribed, and key themes were identified through thematic analysis. The data obtained from these FGDs was crucial in understanding the complexity of citizenship, particularly about community perceptions, legal frameworks, and the interplay between formal and informal processes of identity registration.

### **3.4.3 Visual anthropology**

I employed visual anthropology as a key data collection method. By taking photographs and recording both interviews and focus group discussion sessions, I was able to capture not only verbal responses but also the non-verbal cues, body language, and the physical context in which participants shared their experiences. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of how the Fulani and Zabarma participants expressed their sense of citizenship and belonging. The visual data added depth to the research by preserving important cultural and

environmental details that might not have been captured through words alone. This method enabled me to view data from different perspectives which otherwise would have been impossible if I just listened and wrote while on the field.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

The data analysis process for this study employed thematic analysis and constant comparative analysis to systematically interpret the qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews with Fulanis and Zabarmas. These methods were chosen to explore patterns within the data while allowing for continuous comparison across respondents' experiences.

#### **3.5.1 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was the primary method used to identify and report recurring patterns and themes related to citizenship experiences. This approach allowed for a flexible and systematic way of analyzing qualitative data, making it suitable for understanding the complex and varied perspectives of the respondents.

**Familiarization with Data:** The first step involved reviewing the data through repeated readings of interview transcripts and field notes. This process helped gain a deep understanding of the overall narratives shared by the respondents.

**Searching for Themes:** The next step involved grouping the codes into broader themes. For instance, issues like "lack of access to documentation" and "discrimination in government offices" were combined under the theme "navigating identity: the registration challenges."

Reviewing Themes: The generated themes were then reviewed to ensure they accurately represented the data. Themes that overlapped were refined, and those that did not have enough supporting data were reconsidered.

Defining and Naming Themes: Once the themes were finalized, each was clearly defined and named to reflect the core essence of the data. Themes such as "Impact of Citizenship on Daily Life" and "Perceptions of Social Exclusion" were used to encapsulate the respondents' views.

### **3.5.2 Constant Comparative Analysis**

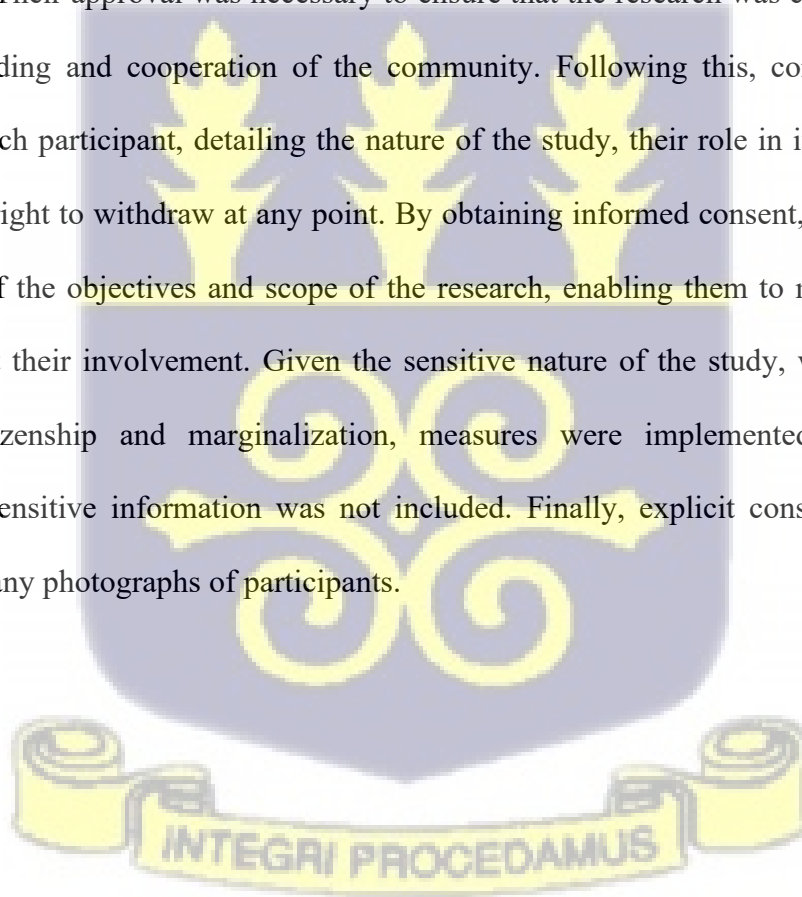
In addition to thematic analysis, constant comparative analysis was employed to explore differences and similarities between the experiences of Fulanis and Zabarmas. According to Thorne (2000) this method, originally associated with grounded theory, involves the continuous comparison of pieces of data, such as interviews, to detect patterns and relationships.

Comparison Across Cases: Data from individual respondents were compared to identify recurring patterns and differences. For example, the citizenship challenges of nomadic Fulani individuals were compared with those of settled Fulani communities to highlight how mobility influences access to citizenship.

Synthesizing Themes Constant comparative analysis facilitated the synthesis of the thematic data into a coherent narrative. For example, both groups faced barriers to citizenship, but the reasons and experiences differed based on historical, social, and geographical factors. This method also helped uncover deeper insights into how these communities perceive and respond to legal and bureaucratic challenges related to citizenship.

### 3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are fundamental to conducting research, especially when working with vulnerable or marginalized communities. In this study, adherence to ethical principles was paramount. The research involved sensitive topics, such as identity, citizenship, and exclusion, making it critical to ensure that the rights and welfare of the participants were safeguarded throughout the process. One of the most significant ethical concerns in the research was obtaining informed consent. Before commencing the study, permission was sought from the Fulani and Zabarma chiefs, who serve as cultural gatekeepers and leaders within their respective communities. Their approval was necessary to ensure that the research was conducted with the full understanding and cooperation of the community. Following this, consent forms were provided to each participant, detailing the nature of the study, their role in it, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any point. By obtaining informed consent, participants were made aware of the objectives and scope of the research, enabling them to make an informed decision about their involvement. Given the sensitive nature of the study, which delved into issues of citizenship and marginalization, measures were implemented to ensure that participants' sensitive information was not included. Finally, explicit consent was obtained before taking any photographs of participants.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **MIGRATION HISTORIES AND THE POLITICS OF EXCLUSION: INVESTIGATING THE FORCES SHAPING THE SETTLEMENT AND MARGINALIZATION OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN GHANA**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Migration has been a significant feature of African life, with people moving from one place to another since prehistoric times. In West Africa, long-distance, cross-border migrations have occurred throughout history. People moved and settled wherever opportunities seemed promising. As a result, many West African countries have large numbers of immigrants who either settled down permanently or came periodically, staying temporarily before returning to their home countries. This movement became more pronounced during the colonial period, when political boundaries were drawn and arbitrarily imposed on the continent, separating 'nation-states' without a deeper sense of unity. This chapter sets the background for the migration of Fulani and Zabarma people in the Volta region of Ghana, by examining the long history of migration of these groups in Ghana, the history of relations between migrants and the nation-state, and the push factors in their countries of origin that encouraged migration into Ghana.

According to Skinner (1963), West Africa is characterized by a long history of migration, trading, agricultural, and colonial factors. Historically, migration has occurred within the framework of trading activities, initially during the powerful trans-Saharan trade era, and later, according to colonial needs for labour and other related resources. The phenomenon of migration during this period of the history of pre-colonial migration was not controlled; the notion and intricacies of

borders were still not clear and defined. There was, therefore, free passage across what would later on be recognised as national borders (Lovejoy, 1980). During colonial rule, Africans migrated for various reasons. They crossed borders in search of better opportunities and less oppressive regimes, relocated within colonies to growing urban centres and ports, and became migrant workers in pursuit of cash crop farming opportunities (Skinner, 1963).

According to Glovsky (2019), information on migration in pre-colonial Africa is often limited, with scant written records, archaeological evidence, and linguistic documentation available about the numerous population movements and shifts both within and beyond the continent. In contrast, migration during the European colonial period, though still not fully documented, is much better recorded.

The advent of European colonialism in the late 19th century brought about a dramatic reconfiguration of mobility, migration, and citizenship in West Africa. Colonial powers, motivated by the desire to exploit the region's resources, imposed artificial borders that often disregarded existing ethnic, cultural, and political boundaries. These borders, which have defined the modern nation-states of West Africa, created new challenges for mobility and belonging (Herbst, 2000). Colonial authorities introduced the concept of fixed territorial citizenship, which was alien to the fluid and dynamic identities that had previously characterized the region.

Cross-border migration continued even after African countries gained independence. In the 1960s, countries like Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Gambia became major destinations for migrants in West Africa (Skinner, 1963). As more immigrants entered Ghana, they came to dominate certain sectors of the economy, mainly in secondary or low-paid jobs. Initially, they worked as labourers or in trade, but eventually, some specific immigrant groups took control of key industries. For example, Nigerians gained a strong position in diamond digging and petty

trading, men from Gao in Mali monopolized yam selling at the Kumasi Central Market, and most of Ghana's butchers mainly from the Hausa community.

The foundations for much of the migration in post-colonial Africa were established during the colonial era. Earlier labour migrations, whether within or across colonial borders or from rural to urban areas, created extensive networks that facilitated and encouraged future migration.

#### **4.2 MIGRATION HISTORY OF THE ZABARMAS IN GHANA**

A small group of Muslim Zabarma horsemen arrived in the Dagomba kingdom in the early 1860s, initially as traders, mercenaries, or malams (religious scholars). Over the next few decades, they expanded their influence through military campaigns, eventually controlling territory from Ouagadougou to Wa by the late 1880s (Holden, 1965).

Alfa Hano, along with his followers, including future leaders like Alfa Gazare and Babatu, arrived in Dagomba in the early 1860s, where they initially participated in local conflicts, acting as mercenaries and slave-raiders. Their involvement in Dagomba slave-raising expeditions was a crucial step toward their consolidation of power. Despite their origins as religious leaders, it was their military prowess, rather than proselytizing efforts, which allowed them to rise to power (Holden, 1965).

Alfa Gazare's leadership marked a period of intense military expansion for the Zabarimas. He established control over key areas in the northwest, such as Dolbizan, Navrongo, and parts of Sisala. His campaigns were characterized by strategic alliances and fierce battles against local chiefs and their forces. Notably, the Zabarma army, though relatively small in numbers, was

highly effective due to their expertise in mounted warfare and their cohesion, often outmatching larger, less organized local forces (Holden, 1965).

One of Gazare's key conquests was in the Sisala region, where they were invited by the local chief Dolbizan to "keep open the roads" and maintain order in the area. After defeating several towns on behalf of Dolbizan, they soon expanded their operations, bringing the entire region under their control. They also managed to conquer towns like Parata and Kasana, with much of the population either subjugated or sold into slavery (Holden, 1965).

After Alfa Gazare's death in the early 1880s, leadership of the Zabarma forces passed to Babatu, a military commander known for his ambition and ruthlessness. Babatu's leadership was marked by further territorial expansion and an even more aggressive approach to conquest. Under his command, the Zabarma power reached its peak, controlling vast stretches of northwestern Ghana and parts of present-day Burkina Faso.

Babatu's campaigns were characterized by their brutality, as he subdued numerous towns and villages, often selling captives into slavery and imposing tribute on the conquered populations. One of his notable early campaigns was against the Sisala chiefs who had previously supported the Zabarma but began to revolt following a major Zabarma defeat. Babatu swiftly crushed the rebellion, subduing key Sisala towns such as Challo and Nabolo, ensuring the continued dominance of the Zabarma in the region (Holden, 1965).

The Zabarma were primarily motivated by a combination of economic opportunities and religious fervour. As Muslims, they were part of a broader Islamic revival movement that sought to spread the faith and establish Islamic governance in new territories. Their initial arrival in Dagomba (now part of northern Ghana) was marked by their roles as traders, mercenaries, and

religious leaders. They were drawn to the region due to its strategic position along trade routes and the potential for establishing a foothold in a politically fragmented area (Holden, 1965).

Upon their arrival, the Zabarma encountered a region in a state of disarray, characterized by short-lived invasions and local conflicts. This environment provided an opportunity for the Zabarma to assert their influence. They initially engaged in trade and military activities, often accompanying local leaders on expeditions. Their military prowess, combined with their religious zeal, allowed them to gain a foothold in the region (Holden, 1965).

The Zabarma's activities were not solely focused on trade; they also aimed to propagate Islam. They established themselves as religious leaders and sought to convert local populations. However, their approach was often intertwined with military action, as they were perceived more as conquerors than mere missionaries. This dual role facilitated their rapid expansion and control over various territories in north-west Ghana (Holden, 1965).

By the late 1880s, the Zabarma had extended their influence significantly, controlling a vast area that included parts of modern-day Ghana and Burkina Faso. Their governance was marked by a blend of Islamic law and local customs, which allowed them to integrate into the existing social fabric while imposing their authority.

The Zabarma established a more diversified trade network, enhancing commerce in the region. They brought a degree of security to trade routes that had previously been disrupted by local conflicts. However, their rule was not without resistance, as local populations sometimes opposed their military tactics and religious imposition (Holden, 1965).

The decline of Zabarma's power began in the late 1890s, primarily due to British colonial intervention. The British sought to establish control over the region and viewed the Zabarma as

a challenge to their authority. This led to military confrontations and the eventual dismantling of Zabarma control in the area. While Zabarma military prowess declined under colonialism, the Zabarmanas played an important role in the colonial economy as labourers, in timber processing, and small-scale trading (Rouch 1954).

#### **4.3 FULANI MIGRATION TO GHANA**

The Fulani are one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa, living across a wide area from the Atlantic Coast to the Red Sea, mainly in the Sahel region. While they are native to many countries in this area, they usually make up a small part of the population. However, in some places, like Northern Nigeria, they are the majority.

Fulani migration to Ghana has a long history, dating back to the nineteenth century. According to Ntewusu (2012), Fulani were well established in the Gold Coast in the 1860s. He provides a case study of Braimah, an important kola trader of mixed Yoruba and Fulani descent who left Nigeria in the 1860s to reside in Salaga in the Northern Region of Ghana, which was an important trading centre for kola nuts from the forest area of Ghana. After the disruption of the Salaga kola trade by the British Ashanti war of 1874, Braimah moved to Accra where he began sending kola overland to Lagos (Ntewusu 2012). Braimah added cattle and butchery to his business and brought Fulani to rear cattle in the environs of Accra and at Tudu in central Accra. The surrounding area at Zongo Lane became the major meat centre in Accra. Braimah was renowned for his economic ventures, generosity, and his support for the central Accra community, and in recognition the Ga Mantse appointed him chief of the Muslims in Accra. Using his social connections, Braimah played an important role in establishing a Fulani community in the Tudu

area of central Accra in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Ntewusu 2012). It is not clear from where the Fulani Braimah assembled in Tudu originated. However, given the rapid emergence of the area as the major meat market in Accra, it is likely that Fulani cattle herders were already established in the Accra Plains, rather than brought from Nigeria. Therefore, by the mid to late nineteenth century Fulani migrants had become well established in Accra and other trading towns in Ghana. The movement of Fulani as cattle herders into the Accra plains is likely to have originated from this period, if not earlier.

The 1948 Population Census of the Gold Coast estimated that there were 20,000 Fulani in Ghana. By the 1968 Census this had risen to 25,000. The 2000 Census estimates a total of 300,000 Fulani in Ghana (Sentrana 2021). The Fulani community in Ghana is diverse. They come from different parts of the broader Fulani world, reflecting a wide diaspora. In Ghana, Fulani speak different dialects of Ffulde and often use other West African languages too. They also have distinct ways of dressing, which are often tied to their specific regions of origin.

Fulani migration routes have traditionally been rotational and cyclical, moving in patterns from north to south and east to west, and back again. According to Bassett & Turner (2007), early Fulani migrations into northern Nigeria and Cameroon were largely motivated by the spread of Islam, the establishment of political and administrative systems (empires), and the expansion of cattle trade. Most of the Fulani people in Ghana originate from the Sahelian region. This region is characterised by unpredictable and erratic climate, droughts, but also the recent expansion of agriculture and agro pastoralism. It is the home to both pastoralists and farmers. In recent years transhumant pastoralists have increasingly found it difficult to secure pastureland and their herds have been decimated by droughts, particularly from 1974 onwards. This has resulted in increasing migration of pastoralists southwards both to secure pasture for their cattle

and also to search for alternative sources of livelihood when their herds are decimated by drought (Tonah, 2005).

Burkina Faso has a long history of migrations of peoples to Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in search of work, dating from the early colonial period. However, these were largely of Mossi people. Significant, large-scale migrations of Fulani only emerged following the 1974 drought (Hampshire 2002). Climate change and resource scarcity have increasingly driven Fulani herders from Burkina Faso and Northern Nigeria to migrate in search of water and grazing lands in Ghana. Tensions arising from this migration are intensified by Ghana's commitment to international agreements, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) protocol, which mandates the protection of Fulani herdsmen regardless of their country of origin or the areas they travel through in Ghana (Alhassan and Asante, 2022).

While some Fulani have settled permanently, others continue to migrate seasonally or remain nomadic, moving across borders in search of grazing land. The relationships between the pastoral Fulani and the autochthones are mixed. In some areas, they have developed cordial economic relations, while in others, they face suspicion and conflict, often being blamed for issues such as cattle rustling, environmental degradation, and damage to the crops of farmers.

The Fulani are often identified with pastoralism, but this can be misleading. While they are known as expert cattle herders, not all Fulani are herders; some are sedentary and have taken up alternative livelihoods including cattle trading, other forms of trade and waged and salaried labour and military service. Many Fulani leave herding for other work, and usually do not return.

However, there are also significant groups of Fulani who move into urban work or trading when they have lost their cattle, to save money for the repurchase of livestock (Hampshire 2002).

Second and subsequent generations of Fulani in Ghana, although still considered "strangers" by some, often identify as Ghanaians, having integrated into local communities and adopted local languages and customs. However, recent migrants may hold dual nationality, maintaining identity cards from their countries of origin while also identifying as Ghanaians, reflecting their complex relationship with citizenship and belonging in Ghana.

#### **4.4 POLITICS OF EXCLUSION**

Past governments have been concerned with the growing immigrant population and its economic effects. Colonial authorities implemented various immigration policies to control the influx of migrants. Some laws defined who could be considered a Gold Coast citizen, while others outlined the conditions under which people could enter, stay, and work in Ghana, as well as the circumstances that could lead to deportation (Skinner, 1963).

Immigration was not strictly controlled during the colonial period. The expulsion of foreigners was far less frequent than it has become after independence. The colonial authorities were more concerned with maintaining a cheap labour force and ensuring a steady stream of migrant labour from Sahelian countries. Within the Sahelian region taxation was used to force rural populations to migrate to work in the main agricultural export growing economies in the coastal countries (Amin 1972).

These migrations continued after independence. Nkrumah welcomed migrations from neighbouring West African countries and acknowledged their contributions to the economy of

Ghana (Skinner, 1963). During the early 1960s migrant Sahelian labour continued to form the backbone of the cocoa economy. Although there were some expulsions of migrants, these were largely politically motivated, focused on political figures involved in opposition politics in Ghana, rather than with concerns to control economic migrants (Skinner, 1963). Attempts to expel economic migrants arose during the administration of Kofi Busia. According to Amanor (2007) during the economic recession of the late 1960s, the Progress Party sought to blame the woes of the Ghanaian economy on migrants and introduced an Aliens Compliance Act, which gave migrants two weeks to register or face deportation. In an interview with Cameron Duodu in 1970 President Kofi Busia stated:

...of the people who have registered for work, one in every four is unemployed. Rising prices and pressures: what were we to do? Then as you know our estimated population was about eight million. The aliens also numbered one million and a half. We know that many of them are in the country without resident permits, because of the policies of the Nkrumah government which seemed to invite everybody at all who like to come and stay in Ghana. ... Also, a number of people have noticed aliens who were unemployed and engaged in stealing. And some were engaged in petty trading in foodstuffs and the rest. So, people began to ask why there were so many aliens here. This is a question that no popularly elected government can ignore. So, we let our laws be fulfilled. We have regulations and those aliens who have come without residence papers must obtain them (Cameron Duodu Interview with President Kofi Busia, *Daily Graphic*, 19 January 1970, cited in Amanor (2007: 48)).

While the expulsion focused mainly on traders and the informal sector, many of whom lost their assets, it rapidly moved into the rural farm labourer sector, where many landless Ghanaian youth working as farm labourers were forced to compete against the low wages accepted by Sahelian migrants. Hence, the Aliens Compliance Act was met by consternation by many cocoa farmers, who were faced with losing their main sources of farm labour (Amanor 2007).

Côte d'Ivoire benefitted from this exodus of farm labour from Ghana. It introduced favourable policies to encourage migration to provide labour for the development of the cocoa industry. It rapidly overtook Ghana as the leading cocoa producer in the world. This continued until the late 1980s and early 1990s when a severe economic crisis was blamed on the large number of migrants in Côte d'Ivoire and resulted in a nationalistic backlash of *Ivoirite* (Côte d'Ivoire for Ivoirians) and forceful repatriation of migrants, which ultimately escalated into ethno-regionalism and civil war between the north and south of the country (Marshall-Fratani, 2006).

Fulani pastoralists in Ghana were affected by the expulsions of West African migrants during the Aliens Compliance Act, many people who had been fully integrated into the Ghanaian economy and social fabric were expelled. Hostility towards Fulani cattle herders continued during the 1970s, when in a bid to control the livestock trade and impose artificially low 'official' prices on meat, the Ghanaian government prevented movement of cattle herders across the borders. Following this Ghana has largely been dependent upon exports of beef from South America and the EU (Josserand and Sullivan 1979; Amanor 1984,).

In contrast in the Côte d'Ivoire, the government encouraged the settlement of Fulani herders during the 1970s, in an attempt to reduce its dependence on erratic beef supplies from Mali and Burkina Faso, and costly imports of beef from South America and Europe (Bassette, 1988). During this period, one-third of Ivoirian beef production originated from Fulani herds. However, this policy resulted in increasing tensions between herders and farmers, which Basset (1988) argues was a product of two main factors. Firstly, government policies of extracting high levels of surplus.

production from farmers, while encouraging Fulani pastoralists to settle resulted in discontent and grievances against pastoralists among the farming population. Secondly, the settlement of

pastoralist in farming areas resulted in conflicts between farmers and pastoralists over destruction of crops by cattle herders. This erupted into violent conflicts in 1986, in which eighty Fulani herders were killed (Basset 1988). In response the Fulani herded moved out of Côte d'Ivoire into neighbouring countries, including, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

In Ghana, the response of government and farmers to the migration of Fulani pastoralists from the 1980s has been equally hostile, resulting in expulsions in 1988/89, 1999/200 and in 2012. During these expulsions, the military was ordered by the government to seize the cattle of Fulani herders (Sentrana 2021).

#### **4.5 FULANI MOVEMENTS AND MIGRATIONS: THE SAHELIAN CONTEXT**

Within the Sahel, the Fulani are widely considered to be strangers by the agricultural population, although they know no other homeland. This designation as strangers arises from their lack of attachment to the land as a fixed entity, and their constant movement with their cattle. Hagberg (2000: 174) describes the Fulani culture of movement:

Many Fulbe from Barani moved from their 'country' generations ago and such movements continue today. Their perception of space is a question of moving; there is a movement of people and cattle. In villages many people, especially young men, appear to be moving continuously. They move with herds as part of 'the pastoral way of life', go to the Ivory Coast to sell bulls or just leave for Banfora and Bobo-Dioulasso to see friends or to frequent bars. Fulbe women remain more settled than their husbands, but they still move between their family and their husband's family... Barani stands for origin and identity of these Fulbe agro-pasotalists. Although 'all Sidibe come from Barani', many have never been there.

Fulani herders negotiated rights to grazing land with settled farmers. They often establish close relations with them but are regarded as strangers with a unique culture and livelihood. Despite receiving permission to settle, rear cattle and farm within these agricultural communities, the Fulani herders rarely settle in the villages, but reside on the periphery, to minimise the damage their cattle can cause to crops (Hagberg 2000). Hagberg (2000:167) comments that disparaging stereotypes are commonly used in daily exchanges between Fulani and other groups in Burkina Faso, but that the herders are “integrated - often by means of strangerhood - into local settings and traditions of the farming people.”

During the colonial period, these differences between Fulani herders and farmers were reinforced by policies that established forms of ethnic belonging based on the conception of membership to a village with a defined territory under a village chief (Hagberg 2000, Mamdani 1996). In Burkina Faso under colonial rule farmers and pastoralists were grouped into distinct administrative units, and the Fulani formed specific administrative groups, including groups scattered over large areas. This continues into present day administration, to the extent that livestock groups (*groupement d'éleveurs*) only consist of Fulani herders and farmers with large cattle herds are organised separately (Hagberg 2000).

When Fulani herders move into Côte d'Ivoire these people are strangers to the local farming population, but also foreigners from another nation-state (Hagberg 2000). However, in the past many Fulani could easily gain Ivoirian citizenship but were still considered as strangers by the local farming population. Hagberg (2000:170) comments:

This is not necessarily a problem for these Fulbe agro pastoralists, because to be a citizen of a particular nation-state is likely to be of minor importance. I have on several occasions met people who possess more than one identity card, e.g. Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Mali.

In recent times many Fulani pastoralists that migrated to Côte d'Ivoire have returned to Burkina Faso due to lack of grazing land and conflicts with farmers. Here, in their original settlement areas, they are now experiencing difficulty in gaining land to settle and are viewed by local farmers as not only strangers but Ivoirians (Hagberg 2000). However, many Fulani in Burkina Faso are now claiming rights to land (such as in state recognised agro-pastoral managements schemes), to political representation as Burkinabe citizens, and access to development resources (Hagberg 2000). They are organising in trade unions for herders and cultural associations to defend their rights.

Fulani herders frequently move as a result of disease among their cattle, conflicts with farmers over grazing rights and damage to crops, and drought (Bassett 1988, Hagberg 2000, Hampshire 2002). *Trypanosomiasis* has been the most important disease influencing movements of Fulani. Since *Trypanosomiasis* is often least prevalent in farming areas, Fulani herders frequently move towards farming populations, developing close relations with them. The expansion of farming in the savannah and guinea savannah woodlands of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire has also led to the reduction of *Trypanosomiasis* in these areas. This has encouraged southward migrations into these countries (Bassett 1988, Hagbeg 2000). The build-up of Fulani herds in proximity to farming communities and the encroachment of farmers on pastureland rich in manure and the attraction of cattle to crops often leads to increasing conflicts between farmers and herders over crop damages. This may result in the relocation of Fulani herders to new areas as the conflicts become more serious. Fulani herders may also migrate to wetter areas as a result of drought and loss of livestock, or in search of alternative livelihoods to gain capital for the purchase of new livestock (Bassett 1988).

Since 1974 migrations of Fulani into neighbouring countries have been responses to droughts. According to Hampshire (2002) these migrations are not mainly characterised by movements of Fulani and their cattle. Most of the Fulani migrants are men between the age of 28 and 40 who migrate to raise capital to return home to repurchase cattle and reconstitute their herds. They raise capital to travel and to engage in livestock trading within Côte d'Ivoire or secure employment as waged labour. Those who are less fortunate end up working as butchers in the urban areas (an occupation looked down by Fulani) or end up as contract herders in rural areas, managing cattle for cattle owners who are usually not Fulani (Hampshire 2002). While most Fulani struggle with identity issues related to concepts of belonging and nationhood, there are significant differences in the experiences of Fulani migrants.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

Today, migrant groups like the Fulani and Zabarma still grapple with citizenship rights. Their rights as citizens are often not upheld by the Ghanaian state, which treats them as an alien population. This can be attributed to the migration history of these groups and the problems West African states face in defining nationhood and boundaries. All participants in this study trace their ancestry to Sahelian countries like Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. They have attributed the exclusion they face to their ancestry and not being regarded as "Indigenous" Ghanaians. As one of the participants stated:

Although my ancestors are not originally from Ghana, I believe that migration is a common experience for many groups who have settled here. My grandfather came from Burkina Faso to Ghana as a cattle herder for a wealthy family in the Volta Region. At some point, everyone has migrated from elsewhere. However, certain groups consider themselves superior to others. For instance, people often claim that the Fulanis do

not belong to any single country, yet the Akans are present in both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, and the Ewes are found in both Ghana and Togo. All ethnic groups have experienced migration at some point in their history. I was born in Ghana, as was my father, and my children are all Ghanaians. Therefore, I do not concern myself with what others may think. (Saibu, 48, Interview on 7th July 2024)

Another interviewee commented:

I have never hidden or lied about my ancestry. I always tell people that my father came to Ghana in the 1930s to join the military. He was part of the struggle for independence and served the country despite not being born here. He voluntarily joined the military and retired when I.K. Acheampong took over. Even though he has passed away, my mother still receives his pension from the government. I have shared this story with anyone who questions my citizenship and always ask them what they themselves have sacrificed for the nation. My father was granted citizenship by the Ghanaian state, despite not being born here, because of his service to the country. While I appreciate my roots in Burkina Faso where I have family with whom I stay in touch, I still strongly hold on to my Ghanaian identity, regardless of who questions it. (Tigire, 67, Interview on 27th June 2024)

Migration in the present era still follows the north-south trajectory that characterised the colonial period, as evidenced by the nature of labour migrations from landlocked Sahelian countries to the more prosperous coastal regions. However, the end of colonial rule has not result in unrestricted movement across the continent; instead, it has led to xenophobia against those perceived as outsiders, particularly in times of economic crises, such as the 1968 Aliens Compliance Act in Ghana. Ghana has in recent times sought to limit the participation of migrant groups with long histories of migration, and this constitutes the environment in which citizen registration is currently implemented in Ghana. The next chapter documents the experiences of Fulani and Zabarma communities in the Volta Region of Ghana in relation to national registration and integration into local communities.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FULANI AND ZABARMA INTEGRATION IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the integration of ethnic minorities into local communities, with a particular focus on how this is reflected in the framework of citizenship registration. It will examine the experiences of ethnic minorities in obtaining official citizenship documentation, such as the Ghana Card, voter identification, birth certificates, and passports. Additionally, the chapter will analyze their perceptions of citizenship, their lived experiences, and the impact of exclusion from registration on their livelihoods and social interactions. The study focuses on the Fulani and Zabarma minorities in the North Tongu District. Among the Fulani, two distinct groups are identified: those based in town and those in rural areas. While both groups share some similar experiences regarding citizenship acquisition, they also encounter significant differences. The Zabarma, in contrast, are exclusively town-based. Furthermore, the chapter will provide an overview of the background of the study area, offering context to the social and political environment in which these citizenship processes unfold.

#### 5.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

The North Tongu District is in the Volta Region of Ghana and was established as an independent administrative authority by Legislative Instrument 2081 in 2012. The district is geographically situated along the Volta River, covering a total land area of 1,131.64 square kilometers,

representing approximately 6% of the total landmass of the Volta Region. The district shares boundaries with Central Tongu to the east, Asuogyaman and Lower Manya Krobo to the west, Shai Osudoku and Ningo Prampram to the south, and Ho Municipal to the north.

The district has a 2020 projected population of 109,321 people, with a male population of 52,966 (47.3%) and a female population of 59,012 (52.7%). The population density stands at 109.5 persons per square kilometer, reflecting a more densely populated area compared to the regional average. The sex ratio of the district is 89.9, indicating that there are approximately 90 males for every 100 females.

North Tongu's economy is predominantly agrarian, with a focus on small-scale farming. Key agricultural products include cassava, maize, rice, groundnuts, and vegetables. Central to this economy are the weekly market days, which occur on Wednesdays and Saturdays. These market days serve as pivotal moments for economic exchange, where farmers gather to sell their agricultural produce. Beyond their economic importance, market days also function as key social events, fostering interactions among various groups within the community. The district also has significant potential for aquaculture, given its proximity to the Volta River.

The district is also home to several educational institutions, including 101 pre-schools, 100 primary schools, 61 junior high schools, 6 senior high schools, and a special school for children with disabilities. Despite these resources, the district faces challenges in providing adequate infrastructure and services, particularly in the rural areas.

These factors make the North Tongu District a significant area of focus for research on citizenship, marginalization, and the role of biometric identification, as it offers a diverse socio-economic landscape affected by rural development issues, population dynamics, and

administrative challenges. The district's location along the Volta River and its agrarian-based economy further highlight the relevance of exploring how marginalized communities, such as the Fulanis and Zabarmas, navigate issues of belonging, identity, and access to resources in a post-colonial Ghanaian context.

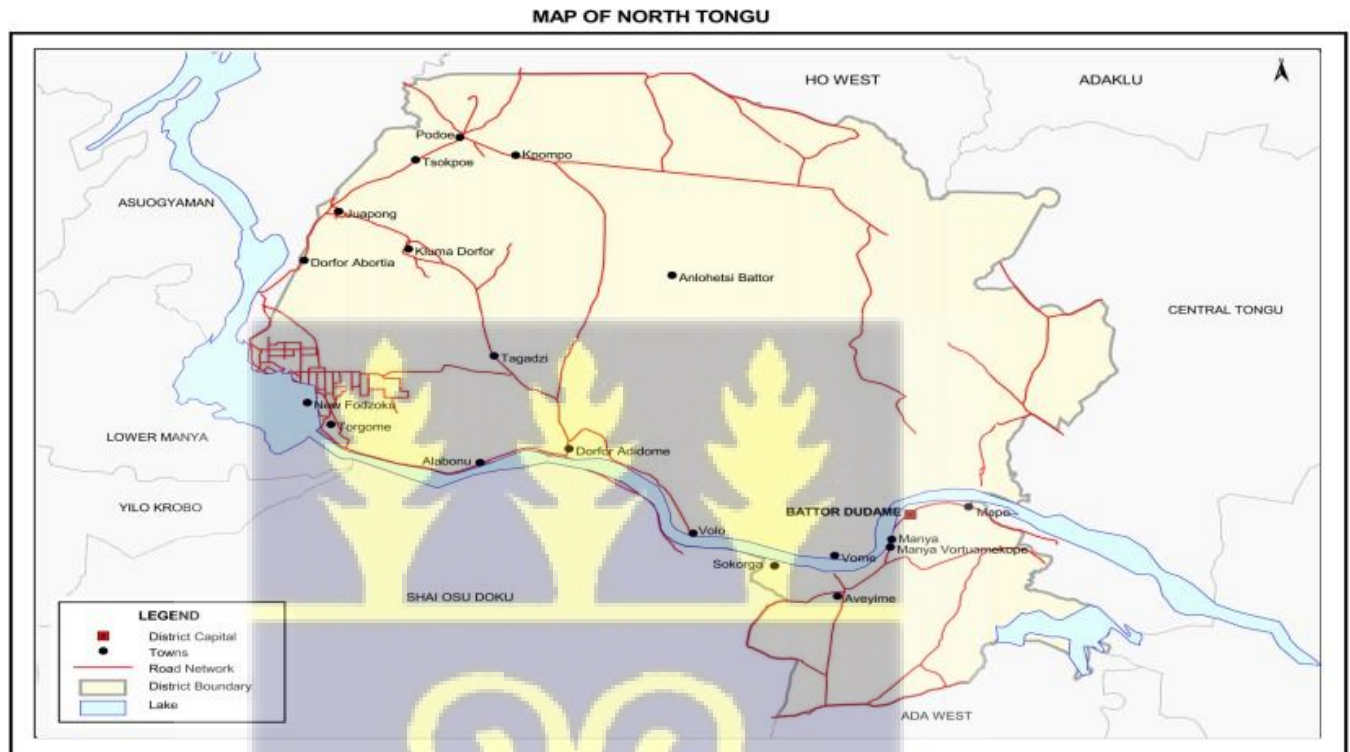


Figure 1: Map of North Tongu District, the Study Area (Source: GSS, 2014)

### 5.3 RURAL BASED FULANIS (ODOE)

The Fulani population in the North Tongu District is widely dispersed, with a significant number residing in Juapong. However, the majority are found in the district's rural areas, such as Podoe, Keseve, and Sekpe. This study specifically focused on respondents from Podoe. The Podoe community is made up of Fulanis and Ewes. The Ewes are concentrated in the town center, while

the Fulanis live on the outskirts with their cattle. They reside in separate quarters and large family compounds, typically led by a male head of the family. Organized into clans, the Fulanis have clan chiefs who report to the Fulani chief based in the nearby village of Keseve. Podoe hosts a cattle market near the Fulani settlement, which operates mainly on Tuesdays and Saturdays each week. Ewes also participate in the cattle market, selling food, and other items. The district assembly collects taxes from the market, and the veterinary association takes monthly contributions from herders on market days.

### 5.3.1 Fulani Women in Podoe

#### *Pendo*

Pendo is a 32-year-old Fulani woman with deep ancestral ties to Burkina Faso, although her family has been rooted in Ghana for generations. Born and raised in the town of Podoe, near Juapong, Ama has lived her entire life in Ghana and speaks fluent Ewe, reflecting her long-standing integration into the local community. She works as a *maasa* (a traditional type of food made from fermented rice or maize flour which are fried into smaller balls. It is mostly common in Northern Ghana and Northern Nigeria) seller in the town market and has actively participated in Ghana's electoral process since 2016, proudly holding a valid voter ID card. However, despite meeting all the legal requirements for citizenship, Pendo has repeatedly faced rejection when trying to obtain the Ghana with officials questioning her identity because she "does not look Ghanaian."

Pendo family history traces back to her great-grandfather, a nomadic Fulani herder who migrated from Burkina Faso and settled in northern Ghana before the country's independence. Her father, born in Bawku in the Upper East Region of Ghana, and relocated to Podoe during the rule of

former president Jerry John Rawlings, seeking better opportunities for his family. It was in Podoe that Pendo was born and raised. Although her family has deep roots in the country, their Fulani heritage continues to cast doubt on their citizenship in the eyes of many Ghanaians.

Pendo siblings have had different experiences when it comes to integration. Some of her brothers and sisters have married into the local Ewe community, and their close ties with Ghanaian families have made their path to recognition smoother. Through marriage and social connections, these siblings have faced fewer challenges when applying for official documents like the Ghana card, as their relationships with locals often help validate their Ghanaian identity. This reality has been a source of frustration for Pendo, as she feels left behind and overlooked, despite her own deep connection to the community and her fluency in the local language. Pendo is married to a Fulani herdsman in Podoe.

The lack of a Ghana Card has had significant repercussions for Pendo, particularly in her business. Without the card, she cannot register her SIM card, and as a result, her phone number has been blocked. This has severely affected her ability to communicate with customers, many of whom rely on her for regular supplies of *maasa*. The inability to stay in touch with her clients has resulted in a loss of business, which has made it increasingly difficult for Pendo to save money and sustain her livelihood.

Beyond the personal and economic hardships, Pendo is deeply troubled by the broader treatment of Fulanis in Ghana. She attributes much of the hostility to the historical tensions between Fulani herders and local farmers, conflicts that have perpetuated negative stereotypes about her community. In her view, these tensions have fostered an atmosphere of suspicion and exclusion, where Fulanis are marginalized and viewed as outsiders, even after generations of living in

Ghana. This sense of alienation weighs heavily on Pendo, as Ghana is the only home she has ever known, yet she continually feels like a stranger in her own country.

### *Koumba*

Koumba was born in 1950 in Bimbila, a town in the Northern Region of Ghana. Her father, Baba Jallo, was a Fulani herdsman, responsible for tending to their cattle, while her mother, Kajatu Jallo, sold cow milk in the local market. The family's livelihood revolved around cattle rearing and the sale of dairy products, a common trade among the Fulani community.

During the tenure of Prime Minister Kofi Abrefa Busia in the late 1960s, the family decided to migrate to the Greater Accra Region, specifically to Ashley Botwe, in search of better economic opportunities. This move was part of a larger pattern of internal migration within Ghana, as people from the north sought to escape the harsh conditions, including periodic droughts, which made life in the northern regions increasingly difficult.

For Koumba, the decision to move to the south was filled with excitement and anticipation. She had grown up hearing stories about “*Ankara*,” the northern colloquial name for Greater Accra, a place where life seemed prosperous, and opportunities abounded. In Bimbila, many spoke of the region's economic vibrancy, particularly the thriving markets, bustling with trade and new ventures. To Koumba, the move represented a chance to improve their family's standard of living and perhaps find new paths outside of the herding and dairy business that had defined their life in the north. She was nineteen years old when the family moved to Ghana.

However, upon arriving in Ashaley Botwe, the reality was more complex than the stories Koumba had heard. While there were indeed opportunities, the family faced challenges in adjusting to the faster pace of life and the cultural differences between the north and the south.

Her father found a job as a cattle herder in Ashaley Botwe. It was not all rosy at the beginning, however, was determined to make the best of the situation. Baba Jallo, with his knowledge of livestock. Kajatu continued selling dairy products, though in a much larger and more competitive market. Over time, the family adapted to their new life in Ashaley Botwe, though Koumba always retained a deep connection to her roots in Bimbila. Despite the initial struggles, the move to Accra provided new educational opportunities for Adwoa and her siblings, something that had been scarce in the rural north. Koumba was nineteen years old when the family moved to Ashaley Botwe, so she was not enrolled in any school. However, two of her younger siblings who were all of 8 and 6 had the opportunity to be enrolled in a government school by their father's boss. Her siblings had some basic education so they can read and write but did not further after they relocated to Podoe. However, the little education they got while in Ashaley Botwe has benefitted them since they get to work with rural based NGOs sometimes. One of them is currently in North working with a European NGO that champions women empowerment.

The move to Greater Accra offered the chance to escape economic struggles in the north, but it also introduced new challenges of integration and survival in a rapidly urbanizing environment. She realized that not everyone saw them as Ghanaians. She remembers a time when her parents were stopped by people, she believed were government officials. They were told they were not Ghanaians and were almost deported back to Burkina Faso. It was only through the intervention of a Fulani military man that they were released. Later, her family moved to Podoe during Rawlings's rule.

Koumba and her family moved to Podoe because Botwe was urbanizing, and it was extremely difficult to deal with cattle in the town. The community people were constantly complaining about the noise and flies that the cattle ranch poses. His boss decided to secure land in Podoe

where there was vast grassland, so it was ideal for them to move there. Koumba met her husband in Podoe shortly after they moved there. He was born there and was a cattle herder himself. Koumba's husband is now late and so are her parents.

Koumba has three children who are all educated and working in Juapong. They visit her once a while. She sells cow milk seasonally, but her main source of income are her three children who are working in Juapong. The eldest son is a mechanic while the two daughters teach in private schools in Juapong.

The experiences of her children and hers differ when it comes to integration into the community and citizenship registration. Her children are well integrated and more accepted by the Ghanaian state than her. A situation she attributes to their education and financial standing in the community. For a long time, she thought people questioning her nationality was just a joke. However, she felt the full impact of these doubts when she tried to get a birth certificate to apply for a passport to travel for Hajj. She faced a lot of scrutiny but was lucky because she could speak Twi, Ewe, and Dagbani. One officer even questioned her Ghanaian identity based on her curly hair, saying, "Ghanaians do not have curly hair." Eventually, she managed to get the passport after paying a bribe. This passport has been crucial in helping her get other important documents like the Ghana card and voter ID. Koumba believes many other ethnic minorities in Ghana migrated before independence, like the Fulanis, who do not face such discrimination because they have integrated more easily into the system. She thinks the Fulanis' pastoralist lifestyle is the main reason they face issues with citizenship and marginalization.

*Laadi*

Laadi was born in 1983 in Bolgatanga in the Upper East region. She speaks fluent Frafra and Twi. Her grandfather moved to Ghana as a migrant worker in 1959 after the country gained independence and settled in the Northern Region. After her grandfather's death, her father moved the family to Podoe, where they have lived for the past 30 years. Her Family moved to Podoe in search of greener pastures. Her father was told by friends who were in the South that herders were getting better wages here and the cattle did not have to move seasonally in search of grass and water in the South like they did in the North. This meant cattle herding in the South was less tedious than in the North.

Laadi's was married off to one of her father's assistants in the house. The man had come from Burkina Faso in search of a job and was taken in by Laadi's family. Her father admired his work ethics and gave him Laadi to marry in order to keep him in their family. Laadi sells soaps during market days at Podoe and butter she makes herself. The community people patronize her business a lot. She has seven children who are all into cattle business. Three of them are still in Juapong while the remaining four are living in Aflao. Growing up in the Upper East region, Laadi faced significant discrimination from her peers and neighbours. She recalls being called "Fulani" instead of her name, which made her feel like an outsider. This nickname isolated her and made her feel unwelcome in her community. When she moved to Podoe, she continued to be treated as a foreigner, a situation that did not surprise her but still saddened her.

Despite these experiences, Laadi has always identified as a Ghanaian. She has tried to acquire all the necessary documents to validate her citizenship. She has a voter ID card, which was relatively easy to obtain. However, she does not have other important documents like a birth certificate or a Ghana card. She has not attempted to get these documents because of the many

stories she has heard from others about being refused. These stories, shared by fellow Fulanis, spoke of people being denied documents despite having all the necessary paperwork and facing additional hurdles that others did not.

### *Zunogo*

*Zunogo* is a 26-year-old Fulani woman who was born and raised in Podoe, where she has lived all her life. Her grandparents and parents were also born there. She speaks fluent Fulani, Ewe, and Twi. *Zunogo* owns a shop where she sells sweet. She sells it mostly to school children in Podoe. She was given a space around the school's entrance by the headmaster to put up a shop. This was easy because her husband takes care of the headmaster's cattle. Her interaction with the school children and teachers have made it easy for her to be able to communicate in most languages. She is married with two children and has never travelled outside of Ghana. Her children attend the government school where her sweet shop is. She has no idea where her family migrated from into Ghana. She has always told anyone who asked about her hometown that she was a Northerner. According to her, most Fulanis who have moved to the south were once in the North. Therefore, despite not knowing her hometown, she has always told people she was from the North, particularly Bawku.

*Zunogo* owns a voter's card but not a Ghana card. She has made several attempts to register for the Ghana card but has not been successful. The last incident that discouraged her from returning to the registration center was when a fight broke out, leading the police to disperse everyone there. She remembers how easy it was to obtain her voter's card but found the process for the Ghana card much more difficult. An official once told her that "the Ghana card is only for Ghanaians."

Zunogo used to save money on her mobile SIM card until it was blocked because she did not have a Ghana card. Her husband has registered another card for her, but she is no longer interested in saving money on it. She says, "I had my old SIM card from 2016. I have lost several contacts because of this new exercise." Although no one has explicitly told her she is not Ghanaian, the actions and utterances of some officials and her neighbours suggest they do not believe she is Ghanaian. She is frequently asked, "Where are you from?" and has become accustomed to these doubts.

### *Mamle*

*Mamle*, a 60-year-old woman, has lived a life shaped by loss, displacement, and a struggle for identity. Born to Krobo and Ewe parents in Ho, she was a child when tragedy struck. At the age of five, both of her parents passed away, leaving her orphaned and vulnerable. With no close relatives willing to take her in, Mamle found herself rejected by her extended family. Fortunately, her neighbours, a Fulani family who had been close friends with her parents, stepped in to care for her.

Taken in by the Fulani family, Mamle was raised in Podoe, a small village where the family eventually moved when she was six. The Fulani family lived a pastoral lifestyle, herding cattle in the rural areas around Podoe. This way of life kept Mamle isolated from other communities, and she quickly lost her ability to speak Krobo and Ewe, the languages of her birth. Instead, she adopted Fulfulde, the language spoken by her new family, and it became the only language she knew. Over time, her connection to her biological heritage faded as she became fully immersed in the Fulani way of life.

Mamle is married to a Fulani man and has adopted the way of life of her new family (i.e. from culture to religion). Her husband is a cattle herder while she sells cow milk and wagashi to the community people. She has five children with her husbands and are all living in Podoe. The youngest amongst them is educated while the remaining four have no formal education.

Though Mamle grew up as part of the Fulani community in Podoe, her lack of connection to any native Ghanaian language has now placed her in a precarious position. As an adult, she has found herself struggling to prove her Ghanaian citizenship. Despite having lived in Ghana her entire life, she is being denied recognition by bureaucrats, simply because she cannot speak a language like Twi, Ewe, or Krobo. Her fluency in Fulfulde, seen as foreign and unfamiliar to many officials, has only deepened their suspicion. Her children are all facing experiences similar discrimination except the last one who is educated and doing well for himself financially.

For Mamle, these challenges are heartbreaking. She remembers little of her early childhood before the deaths of her parents, and the only family she has ever known are the Fulanis who raised her with love and care. Yet, the very family that took her in now complicates her claim to citizenship. In the eyes of the state, her lack of linguistic ties to any Indigenous Ghanaian group casts doubt on her identity.

Her life as a pastoralist has also contributed to this disconnection. The Fulani family led a nomadic existence, herding cattle in remote areas, which limited Mamle's exposure to the languages and cultures of the larger Ghanaian population. Her isolation became a barrier, one that now threatens her place in the country she has always called home.

Mamle's encounters with bureaucrats have been filled with frustration. Every time she presents herself for identification, her story is met with skepticism. Officials accuse her of fabricating her

background, suspecting that she is attempting to manipulate the system to gain citizenship. Despite her efforts to explain her upbringing and the circumstances that led her to lose her mother tongues, she is consistently turned away, her Fulani identity casting a shadow over her Ghanaian roots. Mamle feels the weight of being caught between two worlds one where she was born and another where she was raised. The denial of her citizenship only amplifies her sense of alienation, as she struggles to prove what she knows in her heart: that Ghana is her home.

### **5.3.2 Common themes in the experiences of rural women**

The stories of Pendo, Koumba, Zunogo, Laadi, and Mamle from Podoe in the North Tongu District, reveal important themes about migration, community interaction, status, identity, belonging, and the challenges they face in Ghana. Despite their deep roots in the country, they often encounter skepticism about their nationality. Most of them despite having immigrant grandparents were born in Ghana and have lived here all their lives.

Also, their families are all involved in the cattle business and have had to move from urban centres to Podoe because of scarcity of resources for their cattle. The interactions with the community people is mostly okay and despite the fact that they have experienced some discrimination with the community people, they mostly live in harmony. The Fulanis have always had this foreigner/indigene relation with the people of Podoe, however, these relations are being threatened by bureaucrats and the citizen registration process in recent years. Being labelled as "Fulani" instead of by their names makes them feel like outsiders. This kind of stigmatization creates isolation and reinforces the idea that they do not fully belong in the country. Also, for a special case like Mamle who Fulani was not but raised by a Fulani family and has now has to pay the price of not being raised by her original family.

Finally, their stories also show how systemic barriers limit their access to important documents like the Ghana card, which deepens their feelings of exclusion. Navigating the bureaucratic processes to obtain identification has proven difficult for each of them. While getting a voter ID was relatively easy, securing a Ghana card has been with obstacles and unfair scrutiny. These experiences illustrate how the system can perpetuate their marginalization and make daily life more challenging. The lack of proper identification has real-life consequences.

### 5.3.3 Fulani Men in Podoe

#### *Saadu*

Saadu is a 38-year-old Fulani clan chief who lives in Podoe. The Fulanis are made up of several clans. They have a single chief who serves as an intermediary between them and the community chief or outsiders. The clan chief is given to leaders of the various Fulani clans in the North Tongu District. Saadu was born and raised in the town and has lived there all his life. Unlike many in his community, Saadu's grandfather, originally from Burkina Faso, made the voluntary decision to join the Ghanaian military during the British colonial era. At the time, the military offered a stable income and a path to upward mobility, especially for those from neighbouring countries seeking better opportunities. His decision to enlist marked the beginning of the family's permanent settlement in Ghana. After joining the military, Saadu's grandfather was stationed in Tamale, in the northern part of the country. Saadu's father moved in the military barracks with his dad. He was not interested in working as a military man.

The military life provided security and resources for the family, but when Saadu's grandfather passed away, the family's connection to the military faded. With no reason to remain in the barracks and a desire to start a new chapter, Saadu's father decided to leave Tamale and move

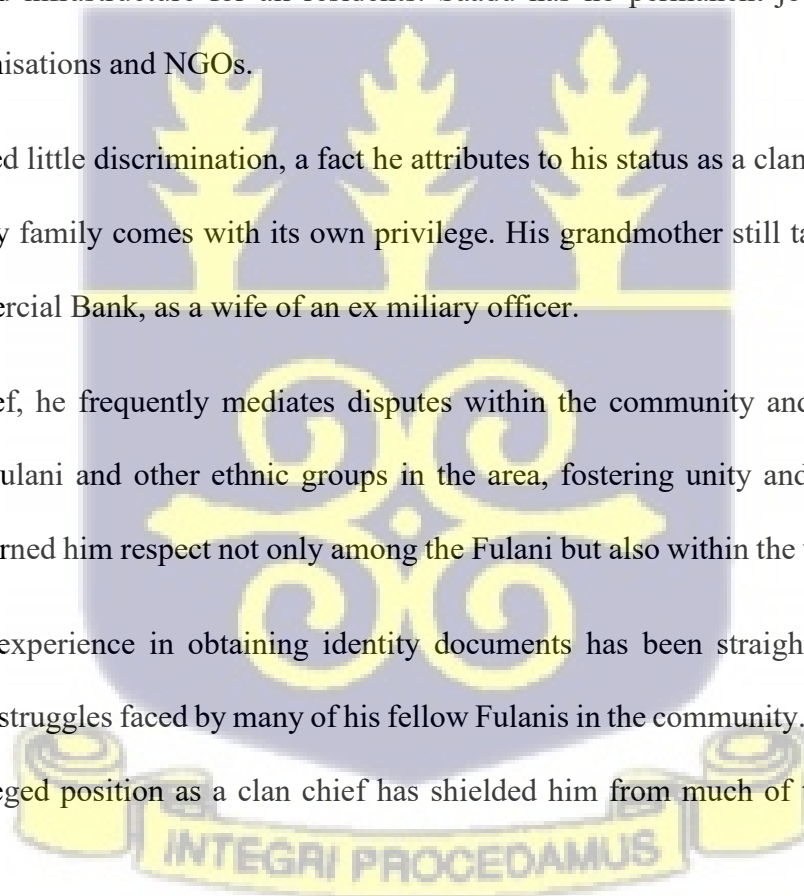
further south, seeking better opportunities for the family. The Volta Region, with its fertile lands and economic potential, drew them in, and they eventually settled in Podoe, where Saadu was born. They came to Podoe with some money that the family had saved and went into cattle rearing.

Saadu is educated, having completed his secondary education in Juapong and earning a diploma in community development. His education has equipped him with the knowledge and skills to effectively lead his clan and contribute to the overall development of the community. He is actively involved in various community initiatives, working to improve access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure for all residents. Saadu has no permanent job and works with different organisations and NGOs.

Saadu has faced little discrimination, a fact he attributes to his status as a clan chief and coming from a military family comes with its own privilege. His grandmother still takes pension from Ghana Commercial Bank, as a wife of an ex military officer.

As a clan chief, he frequently mediates disputes within the community and acts as a liaison between the Fulani and other ethnic groups in the area, fostering unity and cooperation. His efforts have earned him respect not only among the Fulani but also within the wider community.

Saadu's own experience in obtaining identity documents has been straightforward, in stark contrast to the struggles faced by many of his fellow Fulanis in the community. He acknowledges that his privileged position as a clan chief has shielded him from much of the discrimination others face.



### *Jooro*

Jooro is a 60-year-old Fulani herdsman living in Podoe. Born in Adidome, he moved to Podoe in 2006 when it was still a small village. His family's journey began with his great-grandfather, who originally lived in Burkina Faso. Every year, his great-grandfather would bring cattle from Burkina Faso to the Ghana-Burkina Faso border, selling livestock to traders and local markets. These seasonal trips allowed the family to sustain their herding business, but as the years passed, the fertile lands and stable political environment in Ghana became more attractive.

Eventually, Jooro's great-grandfather decided to relocate to Ghana permanently, recognizing the potential for a better life for his family and their herds. They initially settled in Bunkurugu, in the northern part of Ghana, where they established a strong presence as herders and integrated into the local economy. The northern region offered the family good grazing land and a peaceful community, allowing them to grow their livestock business.

However, during the severe famine that hit Ghana in the 1980s, Jooro's father took the decision to move further south in search of better economic opportunities and more reliable access to food and water for their cattle. The famine had devastated many communities in the north, and it became increasingly challenging to maintain their herds. The locals were devastated and were not as welcoming as they were in the past because the resources available were scarce and could not meet the needs of humans and animals.

The south, particularly the Volta Region, promised more fertile land, better rainfall, and an emerging market for livestock products. The family moved to the Volta region and continued with cattle herding. This time around, it was the chief's cattle. He was not taking salary from the chief, rather, he was given a cow after every three years. After getting around five cows, he

stopped herding the chief's cattle and started his own ranch. Jooro has three children. Two of them are educated while the eldest is not educated. He used to help him take care of the chief's cattle and is now taking care of the family cattle. The educated ones live in Juapong and are working as mobile money agents and the other works at a petrol station as a fuel attendant. The two are more integrated into the community than the eldest son.

Jooro has faced a lot of discrimination because he is an uneducated Fulani herder. Immigration officers often stop him, especially on market days. They frequently question his Ghanaian identity because of his traditional attire. Jooro usually wears long sleeves, long trousers, and a hat or turban, a common style in northern Nigeria. Because of this, officers often suspect him of not being Ghanaian. He has been forced off moving vehicles and stopped on his motorbike multiple times, often having to pay fines for being a foreigner. Despite being told by one of his sons to abandon the Northern attire, Jooro refuses to change his attire to jeans and a top just to fit in.

One notable incident occurred when he reported the shooting of his cattle by some land guards who were wandering in the bushes. He identified one of the shooters, who was from the community, and reported the incident to the police. Instead of receiving justice, he was extorted by the police, who did nothing about his complaint.

Jooro has no intention of getting identity documents, even though he is entitled to them. He thinks these documents are only necessary for the educated and feels he does not need them since he spends most of his time with his cattle away from town. When SIM cards were blocked for those without proper identification, he used his son's card to register a new one. He is not bothered by people questioning his Ghanaian identity and is content with his life as it is.

*Saajor*

Saajor, a 40-year-old Fulani herder, lives in Podoe with his family. His ancestors migrated from Burkina Faso several decades ago, during a time when Fulani pastoralists were seeking more fertile land and stable environments for cattle herding. Originally, Sajoor's great-grandfather moved from Burkina Faso to northern Ghana, drawn by the promise of better grazing lands and a more reliable source of water for their livestock. The northern regions of Ghana offered the family a relatively peaceful place to settle, and they became part of the long-standing Fulani herding tradition in the area.

Sajoor's father was born in northern Ghana and continued the family's cattle-herding legacy, but the family eventually moved further south in search of better economic opportunities. The push factor from the north was the increasing competition for grazing lands and occasional clashes with farming communities, making it more difficult to maintain large herds. The pull factor that drew them to the Volta Region, specifically to the town of Podoe, was the potential for more stable and fertile lands, as well as the relatively peaceful relations between herders and farmers.

Despite his deep roots in the community, Sajoor has faced significant discrimination. Recently, his son was falsely accused of theft by some indigenes. His son works as a motorbike rider who transports passengers from Podoe to other neighbouring counties. He had transported a passenger from Podoe to Juapong one afternoon and the person had returned to the station complaining that he had stolen her money. She claimed after going to the market, she could not find her money in her purse and suspects that she gave it to the rider who in turn did not give her any change. Without any evidence, they stormed Sajoor's house, setting it ablaze. All his documents, including his land documents, hospital cards and voter ID card, were destroyed in the fire. The accusers did not care about the lack of evidence rather, they acted on the belief that Kwame and

his family were foreigners. Sajoor sought justice, reporting the incident to the police. However, the authorities have done nothing to address the crime. Sajoor believes the inaction of the police shows the systemic discrimination faced by Fulanis in Ghana. Even when seeking protection and justice, they are often ignored and marginalized.

He has no identity card except the voters' card which is now also burnt, and he does not feel the need to get one anymore. He recounted an incident where he was told "he was too Fulani" therefore he cannot get the Ghana card, and since then has not returned there for any card registration.

Despite being born and raised in Podoe, they were treated as outsiders. Sajoor recognizes that, the relations between them and the community people used to be one filled with peace, and trust. However, with the way the police, bureaucrats and immigration officers treat Fulanis, it has raised some suspicions about Fulanis amongst the community people. Sajoor also acknowledges that some of the Fulanis especially the herders are quite troublesome and end up destroying the farms of the community people. This he believes has also called some strains in their relationship with the community people. He claims these group of Fulanis are mostly nomads who just come to Podoe for a few months.

### *Labbo*

Labbo is a 45-year-old Fulani man who works as a caretaker for a chief in Juapong. His responsibilities include tending to the chief's cattle, goats, and sheep. In return, the chief has granted his family a large expanse of land for farming. Labbo is not the first in his family to take on this role; his father was also the chief's caretaker. Following his father's passing, Labbo took over the duties. His family originally hails from Burkina Faso, with his grandfather having

migrated to Salaga as a farmer during Acheampong's regime. After his grandfather's death, Labbo's father moved to the Volta Region, settling in Juapong, and continuing the family tradition of caring for the chief's cattle.

Labbo is married with four children, none of whom have received formal education. Two of his children are involved in cattle farming, while the other two work at a car wash in Juapong. Labbo also owns a farm in Podoe, which generates enough income to support his family. He enjoys a positive relationship with the local community and has a voter ID card, having participated in elections for many years.

However, Labbo has faced significant challenges in obtaining a Ghana card. He has been trying to acquire the card since 2018, but despite his efforts, including losing money in the process, he has been repeatedly denied. Bureaucrats have refused to issue him the card, claiming he is not considered a Ghanaian. Frustrated and devastated by the treatment he has received, Labbo has decided to stop pursuing the card, recounting the long hours spent in queues only to be told he is ineligible. He has now given up on the process altogether.

### *Saibu*

Saibu is a 30-year-old Fulani man who was born in Ho but moved to Podoe when he was just five years old. His family had a job as a herdsman for a chief in Adidome whose cattle was in Podoe. For the last 25 years, Podoe has been his home, and he works as a motorbike mechanic there. His father still herds cattle and his mom sells cow milk which she gets from their ranch. Saibu has three siblings who are all living outside Podoe. One is a driver while the other two are construction workers in Accra. Saibu learnt the mechanic job in Accra but returned to the village to work because it is easier to get his own shop and there is just one motor mechanic in Podoe.

This has made it easier for him to get jobs. Also, he is younger than the other mechanic hence the motor riders get to have big discounts with him.

He has integrated well into the town, speaking both Ewe and Twi fluently, and is well-known for his skills as a mechanic. Saibu's family has a long history in Ghana. His grandfather came to the country as a herder in the 1930s in Busunu and since then, the family has made Ghana their home. Both Saibu and his father were born in Ghana and have integrated into the community.

Despite living in Podoe for so long and having deep connections to the area, Saibu has faced some tough challenges regarding his identity. In 2019, he had an opportunity to travel to Dubai to work. He needed to get a passport in order to initiate the travel process. He was able to work out and get his biometrics taken. When it was ready and he had gone to Ho to collect it, one he was almost arrested because some officials accused him of faking his identity. They claimed he was not Ghanaian and tried to detain him. Luckily, Saibu was able to answer all their questions accurately, proving that he belonged.

This incident made Saibu realize just how much prejudice exists, even for someone like him who has lived in Ghana his whole life. Although he managed to prove his identity that day, it left a mark on him, reminding him how easily his status could be challenged.

Saibu also encounters skepticism from some customers who doubt his abilities as a mechanic because of his background. This mostly comes from when he charges them high fees. Some suggest that he is profiting from work in a land that does not belong to him. While he tries to laugh these comments off, they still hurt him.

#### 5.3.4 Common themes in the experiences of rural men

The experiences of Saadu, Labbo, Jooro, Sajoor, and Saibu show the complex interplay of identity, belonging, and discrimination faced by members of the Fulani community in Ghana. Despite their deep roots in the country and significant contributions to their local communities, each man encounters challenges that reveal the persistent prejudices against the Fulani people.

A recurring theme in their narratives is the tension between belonging and exclusion which has exacerbated over the years. Their conflicts with the community people in the past were easily solved by the chiefs. This was because it mostly had to do with farmers and cattle herders. However, citizen registration process which has sidelined most of them and pronounced them non-Ghanaians have intensified the exclusion they face. The behaviours of government officials like bureaucrats, police and immigration officers towards these groups have further deepened these tensions. The use of language, dressing, and complexion to exclude Fulanis from the community shows an abuse of discretion by those in charge. Again, self-exclusion due to lack of acceptance on the part of bureaucrats as in the case of Labbo is worth noting.

Despite these, some of the interactions with the community members have been fair given that some of them work with the community people directly while the others also offer services like herding cattle of the chiefs for them.

#### 5.4 URBAN-BASED FULANIS (JUAPONG)

Juapong, located in the North Tongu District of the Volta Region, is an agrarian town where agriculture dominates the local economy. Over half (57.2%) of the employed population works in skilled agriculture, forestry, and fishing, while 15.3% are engaged in service and sales

(Population and Housing Census Report, 2010). The town's economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, with common crops including cassava, maize, and melon. Animal husbandry, particularly cattle rearing and poultry farming, is also widespread.

The Fulanis and Zabarmas occupy distinct quarters within the town, with each group generally residing in their own designated areas. However, there are also instances where both ethnic communities coexist within a shared neighborhood commonly referred to as the "Zongo." This area primarily consists of migrant populations who are predominantly Muslim. Upon entering the town from Atimpoku, one first encounters a mosque owned by the Zabarma community, while the Fulani Mosque is situated centrally, near the market. Members of both ethnic groups attend their respective mosques for prayer.

The favourable climate has drawn many Fulani settlers to the community over the years. Additionally, Juapong's commercial activity, especially on market days held on Wednesdays and Saturdays attracts numerous Zabarma traders to the community.

For this study, eight respondents from the Fulani community in Juapong were interviewed, comprising three men and five women. In the Zabarma community, 12 participants were interviewed, including eight men and four women. Two of the men were bureaucrats who worked with the national identification authority.

#### **5.4.1 Fulani Women in Juapong**

*Amnata*

Amnata is a 44-year-old Fulani woman who works as a food vendor at the community market in Juapong. Her family's history in Ghana dates back to before the country's independence. Her grandfather migrated from Burkina Faso, bringing cattle to sell at the border. He eventually

settled in Ghana and married a Mamprusi woman in Bawku, who is Fati's grandmother. Despite her Mamprusi heritage, Sena's grandmother grew up in a Fulani household and spoke Fulani more fluently than Mampruli.

Annata's father was born in Bawku and moved to Juapong after securing a job as a herder. She was born and raised in Juapong and has never left the town. Growing up in isolated villages where their cattle could graze, she only learned to speak Fulani. This linguistic isolation has been a source of identity challenges for her.

At the community market where she sells food, she frequently faces questions about her identity from her customers. Many of them are surprised that she does not speak any of the local Ghanaian languages such as Ewe or Twi. These questions and doubts about her identity deeply disturb her because Ghana is the only country she has known all her life.

She feels a strong sense of belonging to Ghana, but the constant questioning makes her feel like an outsider. She recalls many instances where customers have asked, "Where are you really from?" These interactions often leave her feeling frustrated and disheartened. This has been one of the motivations for sending them to school. Annata has three children. They were all born in Juapong. Despite not having enough and her husband being a herdsman, they decided to sponsor their children to school. They do the regular jobs but earn more than their parents and are well integrated into the community. Her eldest daughter is married to an Ewe in Ho. He was her classmate at Mawuli school. She has a shop at Ho and is well to do. The second born is a commercial driver who transports passengers from Juapong to Accra daily. The last born is currently an apprentice in Juapong. She is working with an Ewe woman who owns a fashion house close to where Annata lives. She hopes that her children will not face the same struggles

and that they will be able to fully integrate into Ghanaian society without the burden of questioning their roots.

### *Tigire*

Tigire is a 67-year-old shopkeeper who lives in Juapong. She sells minerals like coke, fanta, sprite and malt. She also sells sachet and bottled water. The shop is located in front of the Fulani Mosque. Most of her customers are the community people and the Zabarmas. The Fulanis also patronize her but not so much. She attributes that to most of them not drinking minerals or bottled water. Prior to owning the shop, she used to buy milk from ranches in Podoe and Keseve and sell to yogurt companies mostly owned by Indians. As she got older, she did not have the strength to be carrying the milk around and decided to open a shop with the money she had saved from the milk business.

She was born a month before Ghana gained independence. Tigire explains that her father was in the military until I.K. Acheampong's time when he retired. She does not recall where her family might have migrated from to Ghana. She acknowledges her privilege as an educated Fulani woman who is not married to a herdsman. She believes that being from a military family has shielded her and her family from much of the prejudice other Fulanis face in the community. Tigire speaks four Ghanaian languages: Ga, Twi, English, and Ewe. Her family where in Accra during her father's time in the military. They lived around Pig farm. This made it possible for her to learn the Ga Language. They moved to Juapong after her father retired from the military. She possesses all the legal documents that affirm her Ghanaian citizenship. She recalls an incident at the passport office in Ho where officials tried to extort money from her, claiming she was not Ghanaian and needed to pay "something for the boys" to get a passport. Fortunately, she

had her father's military documents with her, which made it easier for her to get the passport. She acknowledges that if it had been someone without her privileges, they might have had to pay a lot of money and still not get the passport.

Tigire believes the government should establish clear measures regarding who can and cannot acquire an identity card. She thinks the current chaos stems from the fact that the decision of who is Ghanaian is left to the discretion of bureaucrats. She recounts a troubling incident where local bureaucrats brought in residents to help them "identify" who was Ghanaian during a registration process. This made a lot of Fulanis, and other minority groups do not get the Ghana card.

### *Sumai*

Sumai is a 55-year-old Fulani woman born in Ho in the Volta Region. Her family's journey to Ghana can be traced back several generations to Niger, where her ancestors were part of a nomadic Fulani community that migrated southward in search of better grazing lands for their cattle. Like many Fulani families, hers moved through the Sahel region, passing through Burkina Faso before eventually settling in Ghana.

Sumai's great-grandfather was a well-known cattle herder in the Sahel. He moved from Mali to Burkina Faso with his family, including her grandfather, seeking fertile lands and reliable water sources for the cattle. By the time her grandfather grew up, the family had migrated south to Ghana, drawn by the promise of greener pastures in the Volta Region. They settled in Ho, where her father was born. While they lived in Ghana, her family maintained their Fulani traditions, which set them apart from the local populations in terms of language, customs, and livelihood.

Sumai was born in Ho and grew up deeply connected to her Fulani heritage, even as her family lived in isolation from

the local Ewe-speaking communities. Her father, continuing the family tradition, was a cattle herder, and her mother sold cow milk to support the household.

She, along with her five children, followed in her parents' footsteps, building a livelihood around the cattle business. When husband died, she relocated her family to Juapong. When they first relocated to Juapong, their cattle ranch was in the town around the same place they lived. However, she had to relocate them to Keseve now. A rural community next to Podoe in the North Tongu district. Her second born occasionally visits the ranch to check on them. The caretaker is a Fulani man too.

Growing up, she only learned to speak Fulfulde, the Fulani language, and had little exposure to Ewe, Twi, or any of the other Ghanaian languages spoken around her. This linguistic isolation has been one of the key factors contributing to her struggles with citizenship and identity in Ghana.

Despite being born and raised in Ghana, she has always been acutely aware that many people do not see her as truly Ghanaian. The inability to speak local languages has compounded this sense of alienation, making it difficult for her to interact with local authorities or navigate the bureaucracy.

This exclusion became particularly apparent when she sought to obtain official identity documents. Although she has lived in Ghana her entire life, she faced significant hurdles when trying to register for a passport or identity card. One of the most discouraging incidents she recalls was when she attempted to register for an identity document and was turned away simply

because she could not speak Ewe or Twi. The officials questioned her Ghanaian identity based solely on her inability to communicate in the local languages.

This experience left her feeling disillusioned with the process of gaining formal recognition as a Ghanaian citizen. While she would like to possess identity documents, she no longer bothers trying to acquire them because of the way she was treated during her previous attempts. The frustration of being rejected, not for her lack of documentation but because of a language barrier, has deeply affected her. As a result, she now lives without any official identity papers, resigned to the fact that, in the eyes of some, she will always be considered an outsider.

*Amenyeter Etornam*

Etornam is a 30-year-old seamstress living in Juapong. She owns her own shop in Juapong. She was born to an Ewe mother and a Fulani father. Her parents, who are now separated, had two children before their separation. Etornam has lived her entire life in Juapong, residing with her father. She speaks English, Twi, Ewe and Fulfulde. She schooled in Benkum Senior High School in the Eastern region of Ghana. She is a Muslim but has attended some Pentecost at some point while living with her mom. Etornam is married to an Akan who is Asante nkramo (i.e. an Akan Muslim). They have a child together. His name is Denis Danquah. Her son is 5 years old and speaks Twi and English.

To make gaining citizenship easier, Etornam decided to use her mother's last name. She originally used her father's surname, Diallo, until a high school teacher advised her to change it when she was preparing for her West African examinations. The teacher explained that using an Ewe surname would make it easier for her to obtain Ghanaian documents. Trusting his advice, she changed her name from Aisha Diallo to Etornam Amenyeter.

Etonam was struck by how much power a name held in Ghanaian society. Changing from Diallo to an Akan surname seemed to erase the layers of suspicion and doubt that had followed her for years. "It amazed me," she reflects, "how much just a name could change how people see you." The ease with which she was now able to navigate society was almost surreal. The constant questioning and the obstacles she had faced when trying to prove her Ghanaian citizenship vanished. Suddenly, she felt fully accepted by a society that had previously kept her at arm's length, simply because of her Fulani name.

Despite the advantages her new surname brought, Etonam admits that the decision to change her name was not without emotional cost. She feels a sense of loss, knowing that her new identity is tied more closely to her mother's Akan heritage than to her father's Fulani roots. "I feel sad sometimes," she confesses. "It's like I gave up a part of who I am." But, in her mind, the benefits far outweighed the cost. She now moves through life with fewer obstacles, and she no longer feels the need to explain or justify her place in the country she has known all her life.

Her relationship with her father remains strong, and she deeply appreciates the sacrifices he made in raising her. Etonam knows that carrying the surname Diallo would have continued to create challenges for her, just as it has for other Fulanis in Ghana. She hopes that by taking on an Akan surname, she has paved the way for a smoother future for herself and, eventually, her children.

With her new identity documents in hand, Etonam is optimistic about the future. She has obtained a birth certificate, a voter ID, and a Ghana Card, all with ease. She is now planning to apply for a passport. Her husband will be traveling in December to Germany, and she hopes to join him after he has left.

*Fatmata*

*Fatmata* is a 28-year-old woman from Juapong. She comes from a family of nomadic herders, tracing her ancestry back several generations to Mali. Like many Fulani families, hers migrated southward in search of better grazing lands, eventually settling in Ghana. Her grandparents, born in Niger, lived the nomadic lifestyle typical of Fulani herders, constantly moving with their cattle in search of greener pastures. By the time they arrived in Ghana, they had travelled extensively, living in multiple regions along the way. This constant movement meant that documentation, such as birth certificates, was not a priority for the family. This is because they were living in deep rural areas isolated from people. Her parents, too, followed this lifestyle, making it difficult for them to maintain records like birth certificates or other legal documents. *Fatmata* sells “*brukina*” (a local drink made from steamed millet and fermented cow milk) in Juapong now. She is married to a Fulani man who sells dates and cigarettes close to the Fulani Mosque in Juapong. She left Keseve seven years ago after getting married to settle in Juapong. She has a son. *Fatmata* has no formal education. She attributes that to the distance between the school and her house in Keseve. Also, her parents never really bothered to enrol her as they were of the view that girls did not need to go to school after all they will be married off someday. Her junior brother on the other hand will complete junior high school this year and hopes to further to a high school in the Volta region. *Fatmata* despite not having any formal education is committed to enrolling all her children to school. Her son is currently in kindergarten two and is doing so well in school. She recognized the benefits of schooling after going to registration with her neighbour who was educated. Despite both of them being Fulanis, her neighbour got the card because she could engage the officers while she could not. Her neighbour also had her weighing card and some of her father’s documents to prove that indeed she was Ghanaian.

Fatmata was born at home, delivered by a local midwife in the small village of Keseve just outside Juapong. Her birth, like many in her community, went unregistered, as her parents saw little need for official documentation. Growing up in a household where tradition and oral history were more important than paperwork, she never considered her lack of a birth certificate to be a problem until she grew older and realized how much it impacted her ability to navigate modern Ghanaian life. She ensured that her son was born at the local hospital in Juapong, where his births was registered right away. At the time, there was a man at the hospital who handled the registration process, and although there were whispers that he charged extra for issuing birth certificates, she managed to get her son registered without major issues.

Fatmata has a voter ID card and has been voting since 2016; however, she faced a significant challenge when trying to obtain her birth certificate as an adult. When she went to the local office to begin the registration process, she was met with demands for documents she simply did not have. The official asked for her parents' birth certificates, which had long been lost to the shifting nature of their nomadic life. She explained that her parents had lived on the move, herding cattle across borders and through various regions, and that they had never been concerned with securing or keeping such papers. Despite her explanation, the official insisted on extra payment, claiming that without the necessary documents, her registration would require "special processing."

Discouraged by the experience, she decided to abandon the process entirely. The difficulties of trying to prove her Ghanaian identity despite living her whole life in Juapong left her doubtful with the system. Her lack of a birth certificate became a symbolic barrier, representing not just the challenges of navigating Ghana's bureaucracy, but also the broader issue of how people like her, with nomadic roots, are treated as outsiders in the only country they have ever known.

Her experiences have made her skeptical of the importance of legal identification. While she recognizes that having documents like a birth certificate or Ghana Card could make life easier, she has also seen how difficult it is to obtain them without paying bribes or having the "right" background. For now, she has resigned herself to life without these documents. She continues to sell "*brukina*" at the market. She now uses her husband's sim card following the blocking of her sim.

#### **5.4.2 Common themes in the narratives of urban-based Fulani Women**

The experiences of Amnata, Tigire, Sumai, Etornam, and Fatmata highlight the challenges Fulani women face in asserting their identity and citizenship in Ghana. A common theme among them is the difficulty of obtaining legal documents like birth certificates and identity cards. Language barriers and what accounts for why some people can speak local dialects and others cannot?, ethnic bias, and the nomadic history of their families complicate their ability to navigate the bureaucratic systems that determine who qualifies as a citizen.

Another key theme is the role of education, privilege, and adaptation in overcoming these barriers. Fatmata's lack of education and her inability to speak any local dialect has been a major hindrance in accessing identity documents. Meanwhile, Tigire's military family was what enabled her to get her passport with ease. In the unique case of Etornam, she had to change her name from Aisha Diallo a Fulani name to adopt an Ewe name which made it easier for her to get an identity document. This makes one wonder whose citizenship is real citizenship in Ghana. Again, the relationship with the community people is also worth mentioning. As in the case of Tigire, despite being Fulani, majority of her customers are the community people and Zabarmas.

### 5.4.3 Fulani Men in Juapong

#### *Sumaila*

Sumaila is a 33-year-old teacher based in Juapong, a small town in Ghana's Volta Region. He was born in Somanya, a town in the Eastern Region, but moved to Juapong at a young age with his family. Growing up in Juapong, he has spent the majority of his life there, integrating fully into the community. He currently teaches at the Juapong Community School, where he has earned a reputation for his dedication and skill in educating students. His commitment to his students and his role in the community are widely appreciated by both colleagues and parents alike. His roots trace back to Mali, where his ancestors were part of the Fulani migration driven by both push and pull factors. The push factors included the harsh economic conditions and erratic rainfall in Mali, which made traditional pastoral life challenging. His great-grandfather, like many Fulani, sought greener pastures and opportunities beyond Mali's borders. His great-grandfather initially travelled to Ghana seasonally, bringing cattle and other goods to trade, before deciding to settle permanently in the Eastern Region. The fertile land, political stability, and vibrant trading opportunities convinced the family to make Ghana their new home. His grandfather was engaged in cattle trading full time when he moved to Ghana.

Sumaila's family background has had a significant influence on his life. His father, a retired carpenter who contributed to the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), was instrumental in shaping values, work ethic, and career aspirations. His father had no formal education but had some vocational training and has worked with the government.

Although he holds both a voter ID card and a Ghana Card, which are essential documents for citizenship in Ghana, Sumaila has encountered significant obstacles in obtaining a passport.

During the application process, officials required him to present identity documents of his parents, which he was unable to provide. His parents' documents were lost during their relocation from Somanya to Juapong many years ago. Despite explaining this to the authorities, his application was rejected. The officials showed little understanding or flexibility, and this experience left Sumaila feeling frustrated despite his long-standing citizenship status.

Beyond these bureaucratic challenges, Sumaila also faces social challenges in his daily life due to his Fulani heritage. At his workplace, He has been subjected to teasing and subtle exclusion by some of his colleagues, who frequently make jokes about his ethnic background. Over time, he has grown accustomed to this behaviour, though it still affects him.

Interestingly, his Fulani identity has resulted in mixed treatment from local authorities. While many Fulanis in Juapong and other parts of Ghana are frequently subjected to scrutiny and questioning by police and immigration officers, his experience has been different. Perhaps due to his position as a teacher or his familiarity with the community, he is seldom stopped or harassed by law enforcement. However, he has also adopted strategies to avoid unnecessary attention, such as dressing in Western-style clothing jeans and a t-shirt rather than traditional Fulani attire, which helps him blend in and avoid being singled out by immigration officers.

Ahmed Mohammed Hugo

Ahmed Mohammed Hugo is a 32-year-old cattle farmer, trader, and businessman, born and raised in Juapong in the Volta Region. He comes from a prominent Fulani family, with his grandfather, Alhaji Hugo, being a well-known figure in the community for his generosity and contribution to the community. He was rich. his wealth was attributed to the number of herds he had. He opened shops all over the town where he employed locals to work. He also helped the community people

pay their debts or gave their monies for their ceremonies. This was not restricted to only Fulanis but every other person in Juapong. Alhaji Hugo migrated to Juapong several decades ago, driven by the search for better grazing lands and opportunities.

Upon his arrival, Alhaji Hugo quickly established himself as a significant player in the local agricultural sector, acquiring substantial tracts of land that allowed him to expand his cattle farming operations. His dedication to both his trade and the community was evident as he initiated various developmental projects aimed at improving the living conditions of the residents. Alhaji Hugo's contributions played a crucial role in shaping Juapong's development. Today, some of the provisions shops are owned by his children and grandchildren in Juapong. While some of them sell in these shops, others have rented them out to the locals.

Ahmed and his family members are more privileged compared to other Fulanis in the community, but they have also faced their own challenges and difficulties with identity issues. Ahmed recounts how heated conversations with his peers from the Ewe community often lead to claims that he is not Ghanaian. He attributes the negativity surrounding Fulanis in Juapong to the fact that Fulanis are young and flourishing, which he believes causes envy, among others.

He points out that three different market centers in the district were established by Fulani cattle traders, benefiting many locals who sell at these markets. The district assembly and veterinarian services heavily tax these cattle markets, generating significant revenue. Ahmed acknowledges that educated Fulanis face less marginalization compared to those who are uneducated. For example, the ones who are educated are able to express themselves and respond to questions of their identity. Meanwhile, the ones who are not educated are mostly intimidated and extorted by the bureaucrats.

Despite their share of discrimination, Ahmed's family also has faced adequate support from the community. For example, His sister has the biggest shop at the market and most of her customers are the community people who are largely Ewes. Again, some of the locals have rented shops of some of his relatives. They make a good amount of money from these rented shops. He also acknowledges that the discrimination faced by the community are mostly insignificant banter. However, the worst discrimination is mostly from bureaucrats, police officers and immigration. Despite coming from an affluent family and having all the documents to prove his citizenship, Ahmed has had to pay bribes to get some of his relatives registered for the Ghana card. He finds the voter ID card easier to obtain, as it is not required for as many purposes as the Ghana card.

Ahmed recounts how, during his attempt to obtain a Ghana card, officials even scrutinized people's attire to disqualify them. He emphasizes the contributions of Fulanis to the community and acknowledges that while there are a few foreigners from neighbouring countries among them, the majority are first, second, and third generation Ghanaians.

#### *Abu Belko*

Abu Belko, a 32-year-old Fulani, is an assemblyman in Juapong. Born and raised in the town, he is the first Fulani to be elected to a political position in the North Tongu District and is currently serving his second term. Educated and successful, Abu is married to an Ada woman. Despite his position, he faces discrimination due to his Fulani heritage.

Abu's role as an assemblyman is often questioned by critics because he is Fulani. But then how did he get elected to Assemblyman? And why do people continue to elect him as assemblyman in the community? Surely this means that despite being a Fulani many people chose to elect him because they recognized his qualities, and that being a Fulani was irrelevant to him being

assemblyman. He believes that many Fulanis lack identity documents because they do not speak the local language. The voter ID card is the most common identity card Fulanis have. Abu is frustrated with Immigration's practice of seizing cards from Fulanis and denies them identity based on language. He argues, "Some Ewes speak only Ewe and some Akans speak only Akan. Why should Fulanis have to learn their language?"

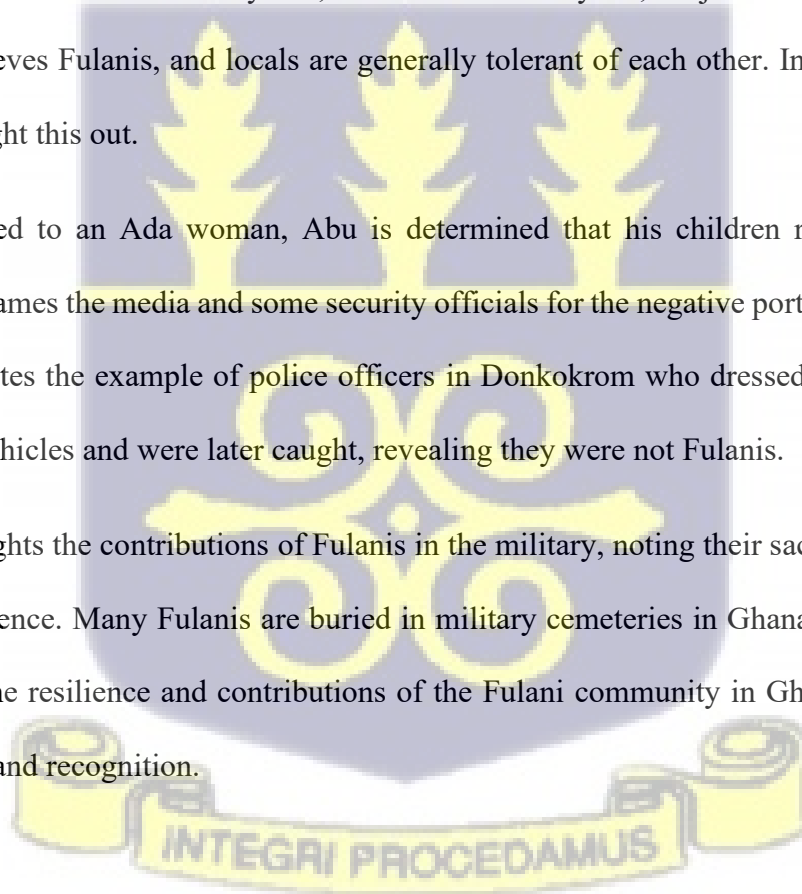
Abu also criticizes the notion that the spread of Fulanis across West Africa discredits their citizenship, calling it unfair and biased. He notes that there are Ivorians who are Akans and Togolese and Beninois who are Ewes. Fulanis, he argues, are not the only ethnic group spread across West Africa. As an assemblyman, Abu works for everyone, not just Fulanis. Despite some issues, he believes Fulanis, and locals are generally tolerant of each other. In what way? \_You have not brought this out.

Though married to an Ada woman, Abu is determined that his children retain their Fulani identity. He blames the media and some security officials for the negative portrayal of Fulanis in Ghana. Abu cites the example of police officers in Donkokrom who dressed as Fulanis to rob commercial vehicles and were later caught, revealing they were not Fulanis.

He also highlights the contributions of Fulanis in the military, noting their sacrifices before and after independence. Many Fulanis are buried in military cemeteries in Ghana. Abu's story is a testament to the resilience and contributions of the Fulani community in Ghana and a call for fair treatment and recognition.

### *Ardu*

Ardu is a 30-year-old Fulani man living in Juapong. Originally from Ho, he moved to Juapong three years ago in search of better opportunities. While he has not been able to secure steady



work, he occasionally finds jobs working on local farms to make some money. He lives with an Ewe friend, whose family has been incredibly supportive of him. Ardu met his friend back in Ho before the family relocated to Juapong, and it was his friend who encouraged him to look for work.

When farm jobs are scarce, Ardu borrows his friend's motorbike and drives passengers around to earn some extra income. Though he lacks a driver's license, he admits that the police frequently target him, charging him more than local drivers in similar situations. Despite this, he feels accepted within the Juapong community. Fluent in Ewe, he blends in well, and most people assume he is Ewe rather than Fulani, which he believes protects him from some of the discrimination other Fulani people face. He has a voter's card and plans to participate in the upcoming election.

Two years ago, his friend took him to apply for a Ghana card, but the process stalled because they lacked a house address. The bureaucrats require the guarantor (i.e. his friend) to provide his residential address. As a result, he could not complete his registration, and when his SIM card was blocked, he asked his friend to register a new one on his behalf.

Ardu feels he has been treated fairly in the community, though he recognizes his appearance dark complexion and straight hair may help him avoid some of the biases that others experience.

#### **5.4.4 Common themes in the experiences of urban-based Fulani Men**

A recurring theme is how status and education can make the acquisition of identity documents less hectic compared to those who have none. For instance, Abu Belko despite facing some criticisms has no issues with securing and identity card. However, Ardu who does petty jobs has no Ghana card because his friend could not provide his residential address.

Another theme is the interactions between the community people and Fulanis in Juapong. Despite the existence of some differences, they are generally nice to each other, intermarriages are common and there is peaceful coexistence. In the case of Ardu, he lives with an Ewe family, and they have been genuinely nice to him. However, same cannot be said for the relationship between the Fulanis and some government officials. Most of them despite being educated and rich have had their own share of discrimination when it comes to their dealings with government officials.

### **5.5 ZABARMA COMMUNITY IN JUAPONG**

The Zabarma people in Juapong primarily live in urban areas and work as textile traders, scrap dealers, butchers, and fruit sellers. They are concentrated in distinct quarters within the town, although some also reside alongside locals or in the Zongo area, where various migrant groups coexist. Zabarma families tend to live in extended family compounds, with multiple generations parents, children, and grandparents living together. However, there are also some nuclear family arrangements.

The Zabarma community in Juapong is led by a chief who also practices as an herbalist. While there is no formal Zabarma association, women form susu groups to collectively save money. The community has a mosque where members gather for prayers, serving as a central meeting point for all. Socialization among men mainly occurs at the mosque and the butcher's shop, while women are generally not encouraged to engage in public interactions with men or to work outside the home. Most Zabarma women are housewives, dedicating their time to household and family responsibilities.

### 5.5.1 Zabarma Men in Juapong

*Dr. Adam (Zabarma Chief)*

Dr. Adam, the Zabarma chief in Juapong, is a respected figure in the community. At 55, he runs a successful herbal shop where he sells traditional medicines, blending his deep knowledge of local herbs with modern-day healing techniques. Born to an Akan mother and a Zabarma father, Dr. Adam is proud of his dual heritage and has always felt at ease navigating both sides of his identity. While he identifies strongly as Zabarma, he often leans on his Akan lineage when dealing with citizenship registration and bureaucratic processes, using his maternal grandparents' documents for ease. His profession as a doctor and herbalist, along with his status as a chief, has afforded him privileges that many in his Zabarma community do not have.

Dr. Adam's elevated position in society has shielded him from the types of discrimination many Zabarma people in Juapong face. He acknowledges that being a professional and a community leader, combined with his Akan matrilineal lineage, has allowed him to bypass the challenges that others of his ethnic group encounter. He admits that he has never been questioned about his citizenship, nor has he had trouble acquiring legal documents like the Ghana card. "I know my privileges," Dr. Adam says. "Many in my community don't have that same luxury."

However, Dr. Adam is deeply aware of the difficulties faced by the Zabarma people, many of whom, despite being Ghanaians by birth, face persistent obstacles in proving their citizenship. He recounts how during the last registration exercise for the Ghana card, bureaucrats brought in native Ghanaians to function as witnesses, identifying who was and was not Ghanaian. This process, in Dr. Adam's view, was highly flawed. "How many people do those natives know in a

big town like Juapong?" he asks frustrated. "These are young people who were not even born when some of these people they claim are 'non-Ghanaians' were born and raised in Juapong."

Dr. Adam finds the citizenship registration process problematic, especially for ethnic minorities like the Zabarma community, who often do not have the same historical records or family documents that the bureaucratic system requires. He believes that the lack of representation for minority groups in the process is part of the problem. He recalls that in a past registration year, there was less discrimination when a Zabarma person was part of the team handling the citizenship registration process. "When there was one of our own in the office, things went smoother," Dr. Adam recounts. "There was less questioning, less suspicion. People could come forward without fear."

Unfortunately, those positive changes have not lasted. Mr. Mamudu who was working with the National Identification Authority (NIA) is now working with the ambulance committee. Dr. Adam now finds himself approached by frustrated members of his community, coming to him with complaints about discrimination and unfair treatment during the citizenship process. While his role as chief gives him some authority, Dr. Adam admits that there is only so much he can do to address these issues. "As a chief, I listen to their concerns, but my hands are tied when it comes to these formal processes," he says, with a hint of frustration in his voice.

Dr. Adam remains hopeful for the future, however, believes that there is room for change and improvement in how the system recognizes and includes ethnic minorities like the Zabarma. He hopes that in the years to come, there will be greater representation for these groups in the decision-making processes and that the issues surrounding citizenship and documentation will be resolved in a fair and inclusive manner. "We cannot continue to allow this discrimination to

persist," he says. "There has to be a way for everyone, no matter their background, to feel like a true Ghanaian."

While he enjoys the respect and recognition he has earned, he knows that his community is still fighting for the same level of acceptance, and he remains committed to advocating for change.

### *Mallam Jibril*

Mallam Jibril, a 46-year-old Zabarma cloth trader, was born and raised in Juapong, where he has spent his entire life. Deeply rooted in the community, he also serves as the head imam at the Zabarma mosque, a position that not only reflects his religious leadership but also his commitment to the spiritual and social welfare of his people. Mallam Jibril is bilingual, speaking both fluent Zabarma, his mother tongue, and Twi, one of the major local languages in Ghana. His ability to navigate between these linguistic and cultural spaces has helped him build strong relationships within the wider Juapong community.

Mallam Jibril traces his ancestry to Niger, like many other members of the Zabarma community. His family's history in Ghana dates to the pre-independence era, when his grandparents migrated from Niger to the Gold Coast in search of better economic opportunities. During British colonial rule, the Zabarma people were often recruited as labourers, and Jibril's family was no exception. His grandfather worked on farms and in construction projects, helping to lay the foundations of some of the infrastructure that would later contribute to the country's development. Over time, his family settled permanently in Ghana, choosing Juapong as their home, where they became an integral part of the community's fabric.

Although the Zabarma people have a long history in Ghana, Mallam Jibril understands their identity is often questioned, and their citizenship status scrutinized. However, unlike many others

in his community, he has not faced significant challenges with the identity document registration process. Mallam Jibril attributes this smooth experience to a combination of factors, including his language proficiency, his respected position as a religious leader, and the personal assistance of a local bureaucratic official who frequents the mosque. This official, who often attends prayers at the Zabarma mosque, provided Mallam Jibril with invaluable support during the registration process for his birth certificate, passport, and Ghana card. As a result, Mallam Jibril was able to navigate the often complicated and lengthy bureaucratic procedures with relative ease.

Despite his personal success in obtaining the necessary identity documents, Mallam Jibril recognizes that his experience is not typical of others in the Zabarma community. He is aware of the numerous complaints from his fellow community members, many of whom have struggled with the process. Some have been subjected to extortion, while others have faced delays or outright denials based on arbitrary judgments by officials. Mallam Jibril empathizes with these frustrations, acknowledging that his own status as the head imam and his close ties to an influential bureaucrat may have shielded him from the struggles that others endure.

One story that has stuck with him is that of a younger Zabarma man who, despite being born and raised in Ghana, faced immense difficulties in registering for a birth certificate. The man was repeatedly asked for additional documents to "prove" his Ghanaian citizenship, even though he provided all the necessary paperwork. His case was delayed for months, causing him to lose out on job opportunities that required a valid ID. Mallam Jibril has also heard of cases where individuals were forced to pay bribes just to move their applications forward. These experiences have left a deep sense of frustration and disillusionment within the Zabarma community.

Mallam Jibril believes that the registration system, while theoretically designed to serve all citizens equally, often works against those who are seen as "foreign" or "other." He knows that

the challenges his community faces are rooted in a broader issue of societal prejudice and bureaucratic inefficiency. For many Zabarma people, the registration process is not just a matter of paperwork but a painful reminder of their marginalization and the persistent questioning of their identity and legitimacy as Ghanaians.

As a religious leader, Mallam Jibril has taken it upon himself to advocate for his community. He extensively uses his platform at the mosque to raise awareness about the importance of obtaining identity documents and offers guidance to those who are struggling with the process. He has also worked to build stronger connections with local authorities, hoping to ease the bureaucratic hurdles that his community members face. While he understands that not everyone has the same advantages he does, Mallam Jibril remains hopeful that through collective efforts, the Zabarma people will be able to assert their rightful place in Ghanaian society and overcome the barriers that have historically held them back. He believes this can be achieved primarily through education. He has encouraged members of his community to enrol their children in schools. He acknowledges that it also helps them socialise and integrate into the community. Mallam Jibril remains grateful for the support he received, but he is acutely aware of the systemic issues that still need to be addressed.

### *Bube*

Bube, a 45-year-old textile trader, was born and raised in Juapong. He traces his ancestry to Niger, where his family originated before migrating to Ghana during British colonial rule. His great-grandparents were among the many Zabarmanas who came to the Gold Coast to work as labourers in the colonial economy. His grandfather worked in the western region as a labourer on a cocoa plantation for twenty years. Bube's father and uncles were born in the western region. Bube's father moved his family down south after getting married. Some of his uncles are still in

Sefwi and have cocoa farms there now. His father stayed in Ho while Bube and his three brothers moved to Juapong in search of greener pastures. They are all married. Bube is married to a Fulani woman while his brothers are all single.

Bube's experience differs from that of his three younger brothers, all of whom are currently pursuing tertiary education. His brothers have integrated seamlessly into the community and have not faced the same level of discrimination as Bube. One key difference is that his brothers, who grew up speaking local languages more fluently, are seen as more "Ghanaian." Bube, on the other hand, speaks the local languages with a distinct accent, a marker of his Zabarma heritage, which has led to him being treated as an outsider. Bube has no formal education and despite being a mobile textile trader, he has not managed to learn any of the local languages. Although he admits to being able to understand when communicated to in Twi.

The difficulties Bube faces extend beyond social discrimination to bureaucratic challenges. He has frequently been subjected to extortion in various official processes. One notable instance occurred when he tried to register for a birth certificate in order to apply for a passport. He needed it in order to travel for hajj. He claims that the official in charge of his case demanded extra money, and that without the additional payment, his application would face unnecessary delays and hurdles. Left with no choice, he ended up paying three times the standard fee, yet he is still waiting for his birth certificate to be issued. The official continues to postpone its delivery, offering excuses each time. He believes that his predicament is directly tied to his ethnicity and his perceived vulnerability as an uneducated Zabarma, which makes him an easy target for corrupt officials.

Bube's experiences have left him feeling disappointed. The combination of social prejudice and bureaucratic extortion has made it difficult for him to access the same opportunities and rights

as others in the community, a stark contrast to his brothers' more seamless integration. He attributes his brothers' integration to their education and has made sure all his children are in school too. For Bube, the challenge of navigating his identity as a Zabarma in Ghana is a daily struggle, and one that continues to affect his sense of belonging.

### *Dauda*

Dauda, a Zabarma man in his early thirties, makes his living as an "okada" (motorcycle taxi) rider in Juapong, where he has lived most of his life. He resides with his aunt while his parents live in the northern region of Ghana. His family's migration story dates back to his great-grandfather, who was a textile trader. His great-grandfather used to travel between Niger and Ghana during the dry season to sell traditional Zabarma cloths. During the rainy season, he would return to Niger to farm. However, as business opportunities flourished in Ghana, he eventually decided to settle permanently, building a life in Juapong and raising Dauda's grandfather, who also later had Dauda's father in Juapong.

Juapong is the only place Dauda truly knows as home. However, the constant challenges he faces due to his Zabarma identity have made him feel like an outsider in the town where he grew up. His daily routine consists of shuttling passengers between the town and nearby villages, a job that has its fair share of challenges. While okada riding has provided him with a steady income, he has faced constant harassment and difficulties with both the police largely because of his Zabarma identity.

On market days, when business is at its peak, he often finds himself targeted by the police. They frequently stop him at roadblocks, demanding that he pay high fees for no clear reason. These "fines" seem arbitrary, and he believes he is being wrongly taxed simply because his name and

appearance do not match the local perception of a "Ghanaian." He recalls a police officer once telling him, "Your name does not sound Ghanaian," implying that his Zabarma identity makes him a foreigner. These encounters have not only been humiliating but have also taken a financial toll on Dauda's business, as he often has to hand over a significant portion of his earnings just to avoid further trouble with the authorities. Although the police stop other riders too and tax them, they mostly pay around twenty cedis while he and other riders who are perceived non-Ghanaians mostly pay hundred cedis and above.

The bureaucratic challenges Dauda faces are no better. Recently, with the rise in mobile money (MoMo) transactions, many of his clients prefer to pay him through this method, especially when he transports passengers to remote villages where carrying cash can make one vulnerable to theft. He himself prefers MoMo for these reasons, as it offers a sense of security. However, despite his need for this service, he has been unable to register his own SIM card due to issues with his identity documentation. When he attempted to register for a Ghana card, the official in charge questioned his name and his background, refusing to proceed with the registration. Without a Ghana card, he could not get his SIM card registered for MoMo, a setback that has caused him to lose customers who prefer cashless payments.

Desperate to continue accepting MoMo payments, he was forced to plead with a colleague to let him use their SIM card for mobile transactions. At first, the colleague was reluctant, fearing the legal implications of giving away their identity, but after he pleaded several times, they finally agreed. Dauda has been using his colleague's card ever since, but this arrangement has made him feel uneasy. He knows that this is not a sustainable solution, but he has no other choice given the bureaucratic hurdles he has faced in securing his own registration.

Dauda's struggles with the police and bureaucratic systems have deeply affected his ability to grow his business. He now avoids certain parts of town on market days, fearing that he will once again be singled out by the authorities. The constant stress of being extorted has made him cautious about taking on longer rides, even though these trips often pay better.

Despite the difficulties, Dauda remains determined to continue working as an "okada" rider. He is hopeful that one day the system will change, and people like him will no longer be treated differently because of their ethnic background.

### *Mamudu*

Mamudu, a Zabarma man in his early 40s, once served as a bureaucrat with the National Identification Authority (NIA), where he played a significant role in registering Fulanis and Zabarmas during his time with the organization. Leveraging his position, Mamudu assisted many of his people in navigating the often cumbersome and discriminatory identity registration process. Now working in a different sector, Mamudu has continued to wield his influence, particularly as an active member of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP). His proximity to political power has afforded him a level of privilege that he uses to advocate for his community.

Mamudu's involvement with the NIA gave him firsthand insight into the challenges faced by marginalized groups like the Fulanis and Zabarmas. Recognizing that native Zabarma and Fulani names were often viewed with suspicion by other bureaucrats, he began advising people in his community to adopt Arabic names. In his view, these names were more neutral and familiar within Ghanaian officialdom, allowing them to bypass some of the scrutiny that might otherwise delay or complicate their registration process. This strategic shift was one of the many ways

Mamudu sought to ensure that more members of his community could secure identity documentation without undue hardship.

Beyond the issue of names, Mamudu also addressed the appearance of his fellow Zabarmas and Fulanis. He noticed that their traditional attire sometimes created additional barriers during the registration process. According to him, some bureaucrats tended to make assumptions about people's citizenship status based on how they dressed, especially when the clothing signalled a heritage from the Sahelian regions. To counter this, Mamudu encouraged his people to adopt casual, modern clothing when dealing with officials, which he believed would help them be perceived as "more Ghanaian" and reduce the likelihood of discriminatory treatment.

Mamudu's counsel has had a considerable impact on the community. Many of his people, particularly those struggling with identity verification, have followed his advice, and found smoother access to the identity documentation they needed.

Despite his success in helping many of his people, Mamudu remains aware of the underlying systemic issues that continue to plague marginalized communities like the Zabarmas and Fulanis. He has often expressed frustration with the deep-rooted biases within the system, where identity is often judged on superficial factors like names and appearance. While his interventions have helped individuals, Mamudu acknowledges that broader reforms are necessary to create a more inclusive and fair registration process.

Through his work, both with the NIA and in his current role, Mamudu continues to advocate for his community. His influence within the NPP and his understanding of the bureaucratic process make him a powerful ally for those seeking to overcome the challenges of proving their Ghanaian identity.

*Sofa*

Sofa, a 26-year-old Zabarma man, operates a successful forex bureau and a mobile money joint in Juapong. He is educated and holds a business degree from the University of Ghana, Legon, and attributes much of his success to his deep integration into the local community. His father is a retired teacher who was also born in Juapong. His grandparents were textile traders, and it was their business that brought them to Juapong, drawn by the once-thriving textile company that operated there, though it is no longer functional today. Despite his Zabarma heritage, Amartey has never faced any issues regarding his citizenship or origins. Unlike many in his community who struggle with questions about their identity, Amartey has seamlessly navigated life in Juapong.

He believes that part of the reason for this smooth experience is his physical appearance, which many assume aligns with the Ewe ethnic group. Moreover, his daily interactions with locals due to his business have made him a well-known figure in the town. He speaks Twi and Ewe fluently and is often seen as “one of them.” Sofa dresses in jeans and t shirts except for Fridays when he has to go to the mosque. He has quite a friendly relationship with the police officers in the town as most of them send and receive money through his mobile money joint. As a result, Sofa has avoided the challenges many Zabarma people face, including being questioned about their origins or denied essential documents like the Ghana card.

However, while his personal experience has been mostly positive, he is deeply concerned about how ethnic minorities, especially the Zabarma community, are treated in Ghana. He often laments how the prejudice and discrimination that others face are rooted in longstanding biases that continue to affect the livelihoods of many. One issue that particularly troubles him is the

Ghana card, which has recently become a requirement for customers exchanging money at his forex bureau.

The introduction of this requirement has created significant challenges for his business. Most of his clients are Zabarma traders who regularly move between Ghana, Togo, and Burkina Faso for trade. These cross-border traders, many of whom lack the necessary documentation to obtain a Ghana card, are now unable to use his services. Without the Ghana card, they have been forced to turn to the black market, where unregulated operators, known as the “goro boys”, carry out currency exchanges with no regard for official procedures.

Sofa is frustrated by the effect this has had on his business. "Most of my regular customers, who are Zabarmas, now go to the “goro boys” because they do not have the Ghana card," he explains. "These traders do not want to deal with the lengthy bureaucratic processes involved in getting the card, so they prefer the informal market." The situation has not only caused a dip in his profits but has also exposed a deeper issue of exclusion, where people from ethnic minorities or with less access to formal documentation are being pushed into illegal or unofficial channels.

Although he has not personally experienced discrimination, he recognizes that his position is unique. His success, he feels, is largely due to factors outside of his control such as his appearance and his frequent engagement with the local community. This privilege is something many others in his community do not share. He is particularly sympathetic to Zabarma traders who contribute significantly to the economy through cross-border trade yet find themselves marginalized and forced into unofficial means of business due to systemic barriers like the Ghana card requirement. He hopes that one day there will be a more inclusive system, where identity documentation is not a barrier for people to conduct business and fully participate in the economy.

### 5.5.2 Common themes in the experience of Zabarma men

The stories of Doctor Adam, Mallam Jibril, Bube, Dauda, and Sofo paint a vivid picture of the complexities surrounding identity and citizenship in Ghana. While some of them have struggles getting an identity card, others have it quite easy. Also, unlike in the case of the Fulanis where appearances have caused others not to secure identity documents, the Zabarmas have no similar encounters. The problem has got to do mainly with their names and accent. Another theme is privilege. For people like Dr. Adam, Mallam Jibril, and Sofo, there is privilege at play. While there is the issue of educational privilege, status, and power also play a role in their acquisition of identity documents. Finally, the Zabarmas have little to no issues with the local community compared to the Fulanis. They are well integrated in the fabric of the community. All of them are urban-based and are not into cattle business hence no issues with farmers.

### 5.5.3 Zabarma Women in Juapong

*Tana*

Tana is a 70-year-old woman from Niger, part of the Zabarma ethnic group. At the age of 17, she married her late husband, a Ghanaian-born scrap dealer, and moved to Ghana. Her husband was a Zabarma man from Niger. She was introduced to her husband by her husband's uncle in Niger. This move marked the beginning of a life spent mostly in a country that was not her birthplace, but one where she built her family and created a home.

After settling in Tamale, a city in Northern Ghana, Tana and her husband started their family. They had all their children in Tamale, and for many years, their lives revolved around their home and work in the north. However, during the rule of Jerry John Rawlings, a former president of

Ghana, the family decided to relocate to Juapong, a town in the Volta Region. Her husband was a scrap dealer and learned from his friends that the job paid better in Accra. Tana's husband continued working, and she remained a housewife, raising their children. Tana has no job and relies on the money she receives from her children for her sustenance.

Despite being born in Niger, she speaks several Ghanaian languages. This ability to communicate in the local languages helped her connect with people in her community and navigate different regions of the country. She has done *lele* designs (powdered leaves of a tropical shrub, mainly used for hair and body beautification designs) on many brides for free. These brides are mostly of Zabarma, Fulani, Dagomba, Hausa and Gonja origins. Sometimes they are also Ewes or Akans. During the *lele* application ceremony for brides, she gets to interact with people and that is mainly her point of socialisation with other groups. Her linguistic skills are largely thanks to her husband, and these social interactions with brides.

Even though Tana has lived in Ghana for over 50 years, she still identifies strongly with her Nigerien roots. She has chosen to keep her Nigerien citizenship and makes regular visits to Niger, traveling back every five years. This shows how important her homeland is to her, even after living most of her life in another country.

Tana's children, who are all women on the other hand, have fully embraced their Ghanaian identity. Born in Ghana, they consider themselves Ghanaians and hold Ghanaian identity cards. They have never visited Niger, and their lives are rooted in Ghana, where they work in their own businesses and are married. They are all educated and have textile shops in Accra. None of them live in Juapong but they occasionally visit her. Unlike their mother, they do not feel a strong connection to Niger and have never experienced problems with their identity as Ghanaians. Their situation reflects the common experience of migrant families, where the older generation often

holds on to their original culture and identity, while the younger generation blends more easily into the local society.

### *Teni*

Teni, a 30-year-old Zabarma woman, comes from a family with deep roots in both Niger and Ghana. Her great-grandfather was a date farmer in Niger, exporting dates across West Africa. Seeking education, her grandfather moved to Ghana, where he settled with his wife. Teni's father and his siblings were born in Ghana, making the family part of the Ghanaian landscape for generations. Teni is a teacher, married to a Kusasi man from Upper East Region, who is also a teacher. Teni's grandfather was a farmer, and he had a dates farm in Niger. However, her father, unlike his father, did not see his future in farming. He wanted to learn English and gain an education, so he left Niger and migrated to Ghana in the early 1900s. He settled there with his wife starting a family. He first settled in Bawku before moving to Juapong. Even though he visited Niger occasionally, Ghana became his permanent home. Teni's father and his siblings were all born in Ghana, growing up between the languages and cultures of both nations. However, the family always held onto their Zabarma heritage, passing down stories of their ancestors and their Nigerien roots.

Growing up in Juapong, Teni was well aware of her family's history. But it was her surname that became the center of attention, and not always in a positive way. Her surname, one that carried the legacy of her Nigerien ancestors, often drew questions from teachers, classmates, and even strangers. "Where are you from?" they would ask, as though the name alone suggested she did belong in Ghana. Some teachers even made it a point to question the origin of her surname in class, making her feel singled out.

At first, it did not bother Teni. She had always known her family's story and was proud of her heritage. But as she grew older, the issue of her surname became a bigger challenge. When she applied for identity documents, she was often questioned or delayed in the process because her name "didn't sound Ghanaian." The constant scrutiny over something as personal as her name made her feel like an outsider, despite being born and raised in Ghana, just like her parents.

Things came to a head when she took her WASSCE exams. After the results came out, Teni faced yet another hurdle: she struggled to get her certificates and other important documents processed because of her surname. The complications led her to make a difficult decision. In 2020, Teni swore an affidavit to officially change her surname to something more "Ghanaian." She chose "Ibrahim," her husband's name that blended in better and would no longer raise suspicions or delay her paperwork.

### *Nassi*

Nassi, a 25-year-old Zabarma woman, lives in Juapong with her husband, a butcher. She is a housewife and does not work outside the home at her husband's request. Her family has deep roots in Ghana. Her grandfather was born in Yendi, and none of her living family members have ties outside the country. Despite living in Yendi, they do not speak Dagbani because it was discouraged to speak any language at home except Zabarma. Her father has a dates and cola nuts business he has been running for decades in Yendi. Nassi has no formal education and is married to her paternal cousin who is a butcher in Juapong. She moved from Yendi to Juapong after marriage, she was married at age 17 hence has been living in Juapong for 8 years now. She has three children and all of them are receiving formal education at the methodist community in Juapong township. Despite this, her family has persistently been treated as foreigners and outsiders throughout their lives in Ghana.

Her parents, both Ghanaian by birth, hold old birth certificates as proof of their citizenship. However, in their community, they have often been asked, when they would "return to Niger," a question that made them feel like outsiders. At one point, her father faced threats after supporting a political party that was unpopular in the community. He was told he could be expelled for not being a "native," despite his birth in Yendi.

Nassi is a housewife, and she claims it is what makes husband happy, so she does not want to work outside her home. She is content with being a housewife. She speaks only Zabarma. Although she has a birth certificate and has not yet faced bureaucratic challenges herself, she has been aware of her family's perceived outsider status since childhood. As a teenager in Yendi, she experienced community discrimination firsthand, including an altercation with a Dagomba girl who sang derogatory songs about the Zabarma people.

After relocating to Juapong, it has become even more difficult to attain identity documents. The bureaucrats do not speak Zabarma and neither does she speak any language they understand. This has made it difficult for her to communicate with them and discouraged her from getting the Ghana card.

### *Hama*

Hama is a 20-year-old housewife residing in Juapong, where her family has deep roots. Her grandfather settled in Juapong in 1970 after moving from Ho, where he was born. He established a tie-and-dye business, which contributed to the family's livelihood but is no longer operational. Hama's father was born in Juapong. He is currently a mobile textile trader. He sells his textile across cities. Hama has no formal education; however, her two younger siblings have all been

enrolled in the methodist school in Juapong. She was never really enthused about going to school as she knew she will get married quite early.

Recently married, Hama speaks Ewe fluently, allowing her to connect with the local culture. However, she faces challenges related to her identity as a Zabarma woman living in a predominantly Ewe area. Often, people remark that she looks "more Voltarian than Zabarma," leaving her confused and questioning her identity. She wonders why she cannot be both, feeling that such comments attempt to position her as an outsider. Hama's best friend is an Ewe, and she lives in harmony with the community wife.

In addition to these challenges, Tunteiya's Zabarma name has also caused her difficulties. Despite holding her name dear, it has led to misunderstandings and feelings of exclusion within her community.

Hama is married to a Zabarma man who is a construction worker. Her husband currently works in Dubai and wishes for her to visit him. To prepare for this, Hama has begun the process of obtaining identity documents. A middleman assisting her with her birth certificate suggested she use a different name to ensure a smoother process. As a result, she decided to change her Zabarma name.

While Hama feels no regret about the name change for practical reasons, she recognizes that her name is a significant part of her identity. She understands that her Zabarma heritage, alongside her experiences and community ties, defines who she is.

### *Douma*

Douma is a 50-year-old Zabarma woman who has spent her entire life in Juapong. She was born in Juapong, while her father was born in Adidome. Despite her family's historical ties to Niger,

she identifies strongly with her Ghanaian roots and culture. Her great-grandfather migrated from Niger to Ghana, seeking better opportunities and a stable life for his family. Upon arriving in Ghana, her great-grandfather settled in the Volta Region, he worked as a blacksmith for few years before his death. Douma's father did not continue with the family business but went into onion and tomato trading. He used to import onions and tomatoes from the Sahelian regions into Ghana. He died 10 years ago. Douma's husband used to work in her father's business as a retailer but after her father's demise, her husband has also gone into the onions and tomatoes import business. She speaks only Zabarma language. She attributes this to often being at home all the time.

As a housewife, she dedicates her time to caring for her family and actively engaging in her community. Many of her female neighbours often come to her for onions since she has sacks of onions in her house always. She does not sell it to them. She gives it out for free. This has made her one of the most liked in her neighbourhood. However, she faces significant challenges in obtaining an identity card, an essential document for confirming her citizenship. Recently, she was asked to provide witnesses who could verify her identity and their residential addresses.

Unfortunately, many of the individuals she considered potential witnesses either lacked stable housing or could not provide the required documentation. This situation made it difficult for her to meet the requirements for her identity card. Bambiabo's struggle highlights the socio-economic challenges that many members of her community face, as access to stable housing and proper documentation is often limited.

#### **5.5.4. Common themes in the experiences of Zabarma women**

A recurring theme in the stories of Tana, Teni, Hama, Nassi and Douma is the important role of education and status in the acquisition of identity documents. Further, most of the socialisation is limited to their Zabarma groups. Despite having few interactions with the community people, majority of them especially those who are not educated are encouraged to stay at home therefore limiting their interactions with the community people. This has prevented some of them from learning other languages. As in the case of Nassi, they were discouraged from speaking any language except Zabarma in her home. This means the only way one could speak any local dialect apart from Zabarma was either through social interactions, school or running a business in the town. With bureaucrats requiring Ghanaians to know some key Ghanaian languages like Ewe and Twi before getting identity documents, this has made it difficult for some Zabarma women to secure these documents. In the case of Teni, she has had to adopt her husband's name despite being a teacher in order to escape the bureaucratic challenges. This was equally adopted by the Fulani lady Aisha Diallo who changed her name in order to get identity documents.

#### **5.6 CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MIGRANT GROUPS AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

In North Tongu, the Ewes form the largest indigenous population, alongside other ethnic groups such as the Asantes, Fantis, Krobos, and Ga-Adangbes. Migrant communities, including the Fulanis, Zabarmas, Kotokolis, Gaos, and Wangaras, also have a notable presence. Over time, the relationship between the indigenous population and migrant groups has shifted. While they previously coexisted harmoniously, recent tensions have emerged. Some attribute this change to

the scarcity of resources, while others believe it stems from governmental policies that deliberately marginalize and alienate migrant communities.

Participants in the study noted these changing dynamics. For instance, Saadu (a Fulani clan chief in Podoe) opined:

In this community, people are generally welcoming to "strangers," but this has changed drastically during the citizen registration exercises. The worst experience I have witnessed was during the recent Ghana card registration. The so-called "indigenous" residents treated Fulanis like outcasts and even worked with the bureaucrats to deny us access to identity cards. There was a man in town who sat at the registration centre, pointing out to the officials who he believed was Ghanaian and who was not. It was incredibly unfair. Bureaucrats should have their ways of verifying citizenship, instead of relying on community members, as this approach creates tensions that persist long after they leave. I recently raised this concern when clan chiefs met Alhaji Bube at Keseve for a meeting on issues bothering Fulanis in the community. (Interview on 11th June 2024)

Some of the indigenes hold ambivalent views about the Fulani groups admiring those that are town based while disapproving of the rural cattle herders that are increasingly coming into conflict with farmers, conflicts that are often dramatized in the national media and on local radio stations. For instance, Mawunyo an Ewe man who lives in Juapong but has a farm in Podoe opined:

I have great admiration for the Fulanis, especially those in Juapong. They are hardworking and calm. However, I struggle to tolerate the ones in the villages, particularly the nomadic Fulanis who come and stay for a few months or years. They often destroy farmers' crops and seem to be a constant source of trouble. It is these actions that make it difficult for other ethnic groups to fully accept the Fulani community. (Interview on 8th June 2024).

Other locals attribute growing tensions to political factors. Dzordzi, a cassava farmer who owns shops where raw cassava is milled into cassava dough narrated:

North Tongu has always been welcoming to strangers. In fact, our assemblyman is a Fulani, and we love him dearly. However, politicians often try to divide us along ethnic lines. Sometimes they succeed, but other times they do not. Growing up in Juapong, I never thought about who was indigenous or not. I could eat at a Fulani man's house and sleep over at a Zabarma man's home without a second thought. But in recent years, tribal politics, along with actions from immigration and police officers, have started to create divisions by labelling some of us as foreigners. When I was younger, *Eid* was a festival I looked forward to, even as a Christian, because it meant sharing in the celebration with Fulani and Zabarma families, who would give us plenty of meat. Sadly, those traditions are fading away. (Interview on 20th July 2024)

The once harmonious relationships between communities in Juapong and surrounding areas have been strained by increasing ethnic divisions and bureaucratic challenges associated with citizen registration and regulation. While many still admire the hardworking nature of the Fulani and Zabarma communities, particularly in Juapong, negative perceptions fuelled by growing tensions between herders and farmers in the context of land scarcity and tribal politics have contributed to tensions. Identity verification processes, such as the Ghana Card registration, have further deepened divisions by relying on local biases, creating lasting discord. Despite the fading traditions of unity and celebration, the shared history of coexistence offers hope for rebuilding these bonds in the future.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

The life histories of Fulani and Zabarma people living in Juapong reveal: A long history of migration in which many of the present generation are second and third generation descendants of the original migrants. There is also a diversity of experience among these migrants' reflecting occupations, education, and status. Within the rural areas the main descendants of migrants who largely work in the cattle sector, lack education. Since cattle herding demands long hours

following tending cattle in the bush, they also have limited interaction with community. In contrast in the town members of the Fulani and Zabarma communities are well integrated and occupy prominent social and political position, and form part of the educated elite, part of the professions, such as teachers, bureaucrats, and traders. The Fulani the traders tend to be involved in cattle trade, whereas the Zabarma are involved in a variety of trading and business ventures. Integration into the town is reflected in involvement in political activities and political parties, proactive contribution to community development initiatives, widespread intermarriage with locals, fluency in the Ewe and Akan languages, education of children. In small towns such as Juapong, there are probably higher percentages of wealthy Fulani and Zabarma than in the large cities, since within small towns there are limited opportunities for work as labourers. Thus, poorer Fulani and Zabarma will tend to migrate towards the large cities where there are more opportunities for labour or towards the rural agricultural sector, while the trading classes will find more opportunities in rural based towns. Women tend to be less well integrated among both Fulani and Zabarma communities, since as wives they are expected to remain within the family, and not encouraged to seek work outside or trade. However, this changing with the women now working and educated daughters who are now working as teachers, seamstresses, shop keepers etc. Despite integration into the community and representation among the elites of the community, most of the Fulani and Zabarma residents in Juapong feel a profound sense of discrimination and marginalization, and a lack of security about their national identity. Despite being settled for generations most refer to accusations of not being Ghanaian, experiencing discrimination in relation to their appearance, names, and dress code. Part of this awareness arises from personal experiences, but also from the treatment of the recent migrations of Fulani in the 1990s, their inhuman expulsion from Ghana in recent years, and the recent negative

depiction of Fulanis as armed robbers in the Ghanaian media, often without factual evidence. Within the rural areas increasing land scarcity has led to growing conflicts between farmers and herders, who usually herd the cattle of the wealthy rather than their own cattle. This is also likely to have results in a souring of relations, from the initial more welcoming attitude to herders extended in earlier times. In the urban areas the success of Fulani and Zabarma may have also contributes to some forms of resentment by locals experiencing increasingly hard times and difficulties in making ends meet. As the narratives against migrants increase Fulani and Zabarma political elites feel obliged to defend the rights of the less wealthy members of the community, which results in accusations that they are taking stands based on their ethnic connections rather than the interests of the community. While the Fulani and Zabarma are subject to the politics of exclusion, this also extends to the host Ewe communities, who also complain about discrimination against their own ethnic groups and exclusion of some members as Togolese and “not Ghanaians.”



## CHAPTER SIX

### NAVIGATING IDENTITY: THE REGISTRATION CHALLENGES AND IMPACTS ON ACCESS TO SERVICE FOR MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN GHANA

According to Gelb and Clark (2013), biometric identification has been touted as magical solution for improving the efficiency of public administration, reducing fraud in elections and social welfare systems, enabling more inclusive development, as well as enhancing national security by uniquely identifying individuals. While biometric systems can be efficient, they are also a potential tool for state control. States apply biometric systems or technologies on their subjects for the purposes of monitoring, regulation, sustained security, and proper distribution of resources. As noted by scholars such as Lyon (2007), biometric systems extend the reach of the state's surveillance and control capacity into areas that might erode civil liberties. This is more visible in contexts where governments use biometric data either to monitor political dissent or control marginalized groups, as has been done by different authoritarian regimes (Lyon, 2007). Citizenship registration is increasingly being operationalized in modern state governance, ranging from voter registration to national identification to border management. While the implementation of these systems promises efficiency and accuracy, they risk being highly exclusionary to already marginalized communities or people without formal documentation. In most cases, these registration processes are widely implemented by states to streamline public administration, enhance state security, and reduce fraud (Gelb & Clark, 2013). However, the

adoption of these has not been without significant socio-political implications, particularly concerning the exclusion of vulnerable populations. This chapter focuses on the perceptions and experiences of Fulanis and Zabarmas in gaining national identity documents in Ghana. It examines their perceptions of the registration process of acquiring citizenship documents. This includes rigid definitions of citizenship that do not reflect the history and lived experiences of migrants as revealed in chapter five. It also includes the abuse of discretion granted to registration officials by the state. It focuses on the experiences of registering for a Ghana card and a voter's identification card. In contrast to Chapter five, which shows how migrants are deeply integrated into the socio-political and civic fabric of the North Tongu District, Chapter 6 demonstrates that, these migrants the find processes of registration deeply alienating and, those who successfully gain national identities often have to mask their identities.

Migrant groups, such as the Fulanis and Zabarmas, face significant challenges in accessing national identity documents like birth certificates, Ghana Cards, voter ID cards, and passports. Despite being born in Ghana and belonging to second and third generations, many individuals are denied these documents due to their ethnic background, inability to speak local languages, or physical appearance. These criteria are often conjured up at the discretion of bureaucrats, who play a significant role in determining what criteria are used in determining the status of migrant groups, without much transparency or monitoring. Many participants alleged instances of discrimination, bribery, or arbitrary decisions that hindered their registration. Without proper identity documentation, many individuals from these migrant groups are excluded from essential state services. In one of the Focus Group Discussions, the participants expressed dissatisfaction with how they have been treated with regards to the identity registration exercise specifically for the Ghana card. One participant, Bube aged forty-five, narrated:

I had to close my shop and proceed to the registration center immediately following Fajr prayer. I was among the few individuals who had arrived early to queue for the Ghana card. After waiting from 4:30 a.m. until approximately 11:00 a.m., it was finally my turn. When I took my seat, the officer inquired about my name, and I responded, “Bube Soumane Hamza.” He immediately looked up and remarked, "That name is not Ghanaian." Although I felt considerable frustration, I maintained my composure. (Interview on 1st July 2024)

Similarly, Sajoor a 40-year-old Fulani man, recounted:

The officer subsequently asked about my ethnicity, I informed him that I am Fulani. His response was, "But you are not Ghanaian; Fulanis are not Ghanaians." I replied, "I have been Ghanaian longer than you have. I am 40 years old and was born here. Even my parents were born here." The officer, who appeared to be in his 20s, became visibly agitated by my remarks and refused to proceed with the registration process. Despite



my attempts to persuade him, he remained unyielding, and I left the center without the card. (Interview on 1st July 2024)

Jooro, a 60-year-old Fulani man candidly noted:

As a cattle farmer and trader whose family maintains an account with Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), I urgently required the Ghana card to ensure continued access to our bank account. I was denied a Ghana card because my attire did not conform to the officer's perception of what constitutes Ghanaian clothing. Not only did I leave the venue without the card, but I also felt deeply embarrassed due to the remarks made. The officer said, "Alhaji, your dressing is not Ghanaian. These are clothes worn by Burkinabes and Nigeriens. Also, look at your hair; have you seen any Ghanaian here with this hair type?" She added, "These are not my rules. I do not make them, and I am sorry, but you do not qualify for a Ghana card. My eldest son and I are those in charge of the family business since the other two are educated and living in the city. After several attempts and paying around 1,700 cedis for the card, my son did not get the Ghana card. We now save with my other son's account. It is not the best, but we had no alternative. (Interview on 1st July 2024)

In addition, some of the Fulani and Zabarmas reported that they were excluded from registration based on questioning the credibility of their guarantor or their access to a fixed address.

According to Koumba, a 74-year-old milk seller from Podoe opined:

My daughter possesses a Ghana card and accompanies me to the registration center along with one of my neighbours, both serving as my guarantors. However, the officer stated that my daughter was too young to act as my guarantor. My neighbour, who is Ewe, mentioned that his daughter had successfully guaranteed for him, so he believed this should not be an issue. The officer then inquired about the addresses of my guarantors. I explained that we are from Podoe, a rural community where no one has a digital address. The officer insisted that having an address was part of the requirements, leaving her unable to assist me further. I pleaded for her understanding, as I needed the Ghana card to maintain my SIM card and keep my customers' contacts intact. Unfortunately, she refused to assist me, and during this period, my SIM card was blocked due to the government's initiative to disconnect SIM cards that were not linked to the Ghana card. As a seller of cow milk, I distribute products to several yogurt companies, and I lost contact with most of them, resulting in significant financial losses. (Interview on 15th July 2024)

Similarly, Ardu, a 30-year-old okada rider recounted:

When I went to register for the Ghana Card, I noticed that there were local individuals seated alongside the bureaucrats, instructing them on who qualifies as Ghanaian and who does not. As I sat there, I overheard one of

them say, "Oh, this man is a doctor and a chief. Process his application quickly." Meanwhile, I witnessed some Fulanis and Zabarmas being refused service without any explanation. It was disheartening to see such disparities in treatment, and I felt powerless to intervene. (Interview on 30th July 2024)

However, there are also significant differences in the responses of the descendants of migrants, which also reflect social status. On the one hand among the downtrodden this can result in weariness and self-exclusion. For instance, one Fulani man commented:

They frequently claim that I am not Ghanaian because of my appearance, particularly my hair, and assert that Fulanis are not originally from Ghana. I have grown weary of hearing this, and as a result, I have decided not to pursue any claim to Ghanaian citizenship. My father has been caring for the chief's cattle for many years, and our family has long served this community, yet we are treated with disregard when it is convenient for them. Last year, my colleague's house was set on fire, merely based on suspicion that his son was a thief, despite there being no evidence. The police took no action in response to this. I am tired of the endless struggles with bureaucratic processes and, consequently, have no further interest in seeking recognition of my citizenship. (Labbo 45, Interview on 21st July 2024)

However, among individuals with higher social status and social recognition within the community this may also lead to defiance. As Tigire, 67-year-old shop keeper narrated:

I am not concerned by comments like 'You are not a Ghanaian.' I have always had documentation to prove my identity. I often respond by asking, 'What sacrifices has your family made for Ghana?' My father served in the military and played an active role in the fight for independence. Although he was not born in Ghana, he was granted citizenship due to his military service. I silence critics with the history of my family's contributions. (Interview on 4th July 2024)

## 6.1 DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES WITH GHANA CARD AND VOTER'S IDENTITY CARD

In Ghana, it is notably easier for Fulanis and Zabarmas to obtain voter ID cards compared to other identity documents, particularly the Ghana card. This disparity shows a complex dynamic where these marginalized groups are welcomed during election periods but excluded from full participation in other aspects of civil life.

While the Ghana card is often seen as a comprehensive identification document, its acquisition process is difficult for ethnic minorities like Fulanis and Zabarmas. They are frequently subjected to bureaucratic skepticism, with officials often questioning their citizenship and, in some cases, explicitly stating that the Ghana card is "reserved for Ghanaians."

In stark contrast, during election periods, the situation shifts. Politicians and their representatives actively seek out Fulanis and Zabarmas, urging them to register for voter ID cards to bolster their parties' chances at the polls. The political mobilization around elections creates a temporary inclusion where ethnic and national identity concerns are pushed aside in favor of securing votes. This selective inclusion reflects the politicization of identity, where these groups are recognized as valid citizens when it serves political interests, yet denied similar recognition when seeking access to other essential identity documents, like the Ghana card.

This dual treatment exposes the inconsistent approach to citizenship for marginalized groups in Ghana. While the voter ID card grants them a voice in the democratic process, the lack of access to more permanent forms of identification, such as the Ghana card, hinders their ability to fully participate in society, limiting their access to essential services, legal protections, and social mobility. Abu Belko 32, narrated:

Many of the Fulanis and Zabarmas in this community all have voter cards. During those periods, you will see them going from house to house to beg people to register for a voter's card. However, that is not the case with other identity documents. I do not understand why we can vote and elect presidents and parliamentarians but cannot secure a Ghana card to use for our business transactions.

## 6.2 CONCLUSION

To enforce citizen registration in Ghana, the state has made the use of basic services including access to mobile networks, mobile banking, bank accounts and health insurance conditional upon successful registration and possession of a Ghana Card. Unfortunately, the registration of citizens has not been without problems, long queues, long distances to registration centres, problems with equipment, and difficulties for citizens, particularly among the rural poor and informal sector to negotiate the requirements of documentation and other proof of identity. These hurdles have presented opportunities for bureaucrats to extract rents from citizens overwhelmed by the process, particularly since registration is critical to some basic services, which are essential to economic activities and wellbeing. Thus, many people report greater difficulty in registering for citizenship than in gaining voter registration cards. The difficulties of registration allow non-transparent procedures to be introduced that reinforce prejudices against marginalized groups. Migrant groups are particularly susceptible to being denied citizen registration, on the flimsiest of excuses, such as appearance, name, linguistic proficiency on a particular language, or dressing code against some notion of an authentic and dominant Ghanaian culture, which belies the diversities of cultures within Ghana and the long history of movements of peoples and migrations in West Africa that have occurred before colonial times. These criteria also fail to reflect the long histories of integration of migrants into communities, in which third generation migrants may be denied citizenship. Although there is a diversity of experience of registration, in which the

wealthy, well-connected and educated migrants are more likely to gain Ghana Cards, the widespread articulation of discriminatory codes and stereotyping among bureaucrats is increasingly resulting in growing ethnic tensions in communities and increasing alienation among the descendants of migrants. Yet the nature of existence of these migrants and their roles in the communities point to a long history of integration and peaceful coexistence.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Citizen registration through biometric identification systems around the world has resulted in notable cases of exclusion. In India, the Aadhaar system, which is considered as one of the largest biometric identity programs has been criticized for excluding millions, either for not having the needed documents to enrol themselves into the program or because there were technical errors in the system itself. Similarly in Kenya, the Huduma Namba system also came under heavy criticism because it omitted minority groups who either could not register due to documentation issues or were deliberately left out due to political reasons (Mukundi, 2020). These examples indicate that globally, exclusion risks with citizen registration systems are likely to be high in contexts where a small percentage of the population has access to formal documentation. Biometric systems therefore have one of the deepest socio-political impacts in the domain of exclusion. These cast out from services that are essential, including healthcare and education, or deny individuals the ability to vote, thus rendering an individual invisible to the state. In the case of West Africa, this is even more contentious because of the complexity of the ethnic domain, in which a significant number of ethnic groups are already socially and politically marginalised (McKeon, 2018).

The narratives from the participants highlight the profound impact of societal perceptions and the arbitrary nature of registration processes on the lives of individuals from marginalized communities. From being denied access based on attire and ethnicity to facing obstacles due to lack of documentation and local addresses, these respondents navigate a landscape that often

leaves them feeling excluded and devalued. Furthermore, the repercussions of not obtaining a Ghana Card extend beyond identity verification; they affect access to essential services, economic opportunities, and social integration, significantly impacting their livelihoods.

In a diverse society, dominant beliefs among elites about what constitutes legitimate national identity can shape how minority groups are perceived and treated. Those seen as different may encounter scepticism or outright exclusion based on their ethnic or cultural backgrounds, manifesting in various forms from subtle biases to systemic discrimination. Even when individuals from minority groups have a strong *prima facie* claim to national identity, the social construction of this identity may still marginalize them. They might feel that despite their eligibility or historical presence, the dominant national narrative does not fully recognize or include their identity. The complex interplay between ethnic identity and national belonging reveals that inclusion and citizenship are not merely about formal membership but are deeply intertwined with social perceptions and cultural norms. As societies continue to grapple with diversity, understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing issues of exclusion and marginalization and fostering a more inclusive sense of national belonging.

Processes of national registration also impact on community relations, particularly when community members are co-opted by bureaucrats to determine who is a national and a 'stranger', outside the complex historical process of movements of people over a long time and social and economic integration. Superficial constructs of appearances and stereotypical ethnic labels are used to determine who can and cannot registration. This works to promote tensions within the community in which the descendants of migrants are made to feel alienated, marginalized and a sense of injustice, and the local community to adopt crude stereotypes of nationality that do not reflect the complexity of historical relations and social integration within the locality. These

crude stereotypes are promoted by the bureaucracy in the processes of registration and used to mask a lack of professionalism, transparency, and empathy. Whereas what is required is a necessary reflection on how to better implement an inclusive programme of registration given the perils of lack of access to documents and other forms of proof among the populace, and a deeper consideration of the implications of statelessness and lack of citizen rights. While the registration process makes appeal to cultural criteria, the cultural criteria that become widely promoted do not reflect on the prevailing conditions under which people live, but may be used to promote exclusion, create obstacles for popular registration, and further political control (Nugent, 2012).

Migrations have been central to West African life since pre-colonial towns. The nature of uneven development in West Africa promotes migrations, in which rising economies benefit from the movements of labour, and declining economies from the remittances of migrants. The ebb and flow of economies often results in periods when migrants are welcomed to be followed by expulsions and tensions. However, this results in a large footprint of migrant settlements in West Africa, in which migrant populations make significant contribution to the economic and social life of cities, town and rural agrarian settlements. This is evident in the North Tongu district in which migrants play a large role in towns and villages and are central to the economic activities. This role has developed through generations of migrants. Yet although the role of these migrants and their reception by the host communities is evident in their involvement in civic life and in politics within the community, this role fails to be translated into recognition as national citizens. In recent years, within the framework of democratisation and rolling back the state has resulted in an emphasis on community participation and a role for traditional authorities in governance. This has resulted in a strengthening of the rights of local communities to land, resources and

administration of territories and a privileging of local rights over the rights of migrants. Bayart and Ellis (2000) hold that the integration of Africa into a global economy is resulting in increasing struggles over land and resources and on claims to transact these resources, which are often expressed in terms of ethnic exclusivity and traditional rights. In contrast with this image of African cultural roots based on the politics of belonging based on claims of origins in a village territory, the history of West Africa presents another vision of a large regional economy, characterised by trading towns integrated into a wider economy, built upon migrations and ethnic diversity. Glovsky (2019) present an alternative image of a regional economy whose history and peoples are rooted in mobility, the rights to travel, and recognition in new localities. This is clearly evident in Juapong, where the social and economic life of the town has incorporated many migrant peoples, who have contributed to its identity. However, this is not comprehensively recognised in the articulation of citizenship rights, belonging and nationality by the Ghanaian state. Thus, a more comprehensive notion of citizenship needs to develop based on the historical integration of West Africa into a regional economy with large trading towns with multi-ethnic towns and rural settings. This is the reality that exists in rural and urban areas all over West Africa, as found in Juapong and its surroundings.

There are significant tensions between pastoralists and farmers over grazing rights and crop damage. However, interethnic disputes in rural areas are not only between herders and farmers but often the commercialization of Agriculture and growing scarcity of lands as for instance in the conflict between the Konkomba and the Nanumba in northern Ghana (Pul, 2003). Promoting better relationships between groups, rather than exclusively emphasizing the rights of indigenous populations, is essential to address these issues. It is also crucial for governments to play a role, given that population mobility in West Africa is central to ECOWAS protocols (Alhassan and

Asante, 2022). States should incorporate these dynamics within the framework of citizenship, aligning with the global trend toward greater regional economic integration.



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