

WIDENING THE LENS: EMBODIMENTS OF GENDER, WORK AND
MIGRATION WITH MARKET WOMEN IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

Women have legendary roles as traders who financially dominate the sale of various market goods in West Africa. Head porters are young women from Ghana's rural northern region who work as human transporters in the various markets in urban areas throughout the country. *Kayayei* (female head porters) who work at these famed markets are the focus of this dissertation. The north of Ghana is the agricultural breadbasket of the country, with strong Islamic influences that thrive in dispersed, mostly rural ethnic enclaves. This contrasts sharply with the service manufacturing and trade economies that mark Christian influenced southern Ghana. As young women migrants arrive in Accra, this dissertation focuses on narratives of head porters as they confront the multi-ethnic, hierarchical social climates of the city, particularly Accra's largest shopping venue, Makola Market. This dissertation uses theories in phenomenology, informed by feminist anthropology, to consider the political economy of Ghana in order to examine how head porter's lives are grounded with the development history and the spread of capitalism in the nation-state. Throughout this dissertation, attention is given to the widespread informalization of the economy in the nation-state and the role of head porters in these processes. Using a methodology of collaborative photography with *kayayei*, this dissertation examines the politics of visibility and analyzes the kinds of skills these women develop in order to survive and negotiate the socio-economic hierarchies of urban space. By situating the theoretical and methodological concerns of this research within the social realities of rural-urban migrants, this dissertation explores migration as a sensibility that acts upon various social terrains at markets in Accra, Ghana.

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I dedicate this dissertation to the women at Rawlings Park in Accra, Ghana.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	v
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTIONS: ARRIVALS/A RIVAL	1
2. THEORIZING SELF AND NARRATIVES OF BLACK WOMEN	21
3. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE MAKING OF ETHNICITY	44
4. HISTORICIZED LABOR AND THE GENDER OF MAKOLA MARKET	73
5. PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICS OF FIELDWORK	102
6. SNAP WRITING: KAYAYEI REFLECTIONS ON TACTILE KNOWLEDGE	120
7. CONCLUSION.....	170
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY	177

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration	Page
1. Map 3.1: The ten administrative regions of Ghana.....	64
2. Photography 4.1: The arches at Rawlings Park.....	74
3. Photograph 6.1. Shani, a female head porter. Makola Market, Accra, Ghana.....	122
4. Photograph 6.2: Habiba’s son preparing for the evening meal at Agbogbloshie.....	129
5. Photograph 6.3: Habiba’s son after dinner.....	130
6. Photograph 6.4: Portrait of Rahida, a female head porter.....	138
7. Photograph 6.5: Tani, a female head porter.....	142
8. Photograph 6.6: Head Porters at Agbogbloshie.....	147
9. Photograph 6.7 Head Porters at Tema Station.....	149
10. Photograph 6.8 Workers at Tema Station.....	149
11. Photograph 6.9 Mariama’s friend at Rawlings Park.....	150
12. Photography 6.10 Porters working at Rawlings Park.....	151
13. Photograph 6.11: Kisu at work at Rawlings Park.....	156
14. Photograph 6.12 Fatima’s “Truth of Accra”.....	163
15. Photograph 6.13: Shoes for sale at Makola Market.....	164

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: ARRIVAL/ A RIVAL

Accra's Makola Market can be a dangerous and alienating place, especially for a young woman who has just migrated to Ghana's bustling capital city. In December 2007, twenty-year-old migrant Amina Abubakahr arrived at Accra's boisterous Tema Station bus depot. The wondrous stories of successful market women she had heard convinced her to leave the country's northern region and travel 800 kilometers to Makola market. The Northern Region is the largest of Ghana's ten administrative areas but resources are scarce. Agricultural farming seasons dictate much of daily life and wage-earning jobs are few. Drought takes its toll on the land and large numbers of farmers rely on cash crops to earn income.

She had few contacts in the city but Amina estimated she would earn about 500,000 cedis a day as a porter¹. Porters are the women who transport goods through the narrow labyrinth of passageways at the vibrant market. Women like Amina, who migrate from rural northern regions of Ghana, enter Accra's informal work sector as migrants who sell services known as *kaya* (Opare 2003). *Kayayei* transport customer's market purchases in large pans on their heads for a fee. *Kaya* is a common word in West African languages such as Hausa, Songhay and Ga. This means "load, goods or luggage" and "to carry or transport" (Opare 2003). In Ga, *Yoo* means female. The terms *kayayoo* and *kayayei* mean female head porter(s) (Apt 1996, Opare 2003, CAS 1999, Payne 2004). This dissertation focuses on the experiences and narratives of *kayayei* at the urban market in Ghana.

¹ In 2007, Ghana's currency (cedi) was redenominated. In effect, four zeros were dropped from the larger bills. Even with the redenomination, most Ghanaians continue to describe monetary values in the old currency denominations. The 500,000 cedi mentioned is equivalent to 50 GHC (\$51). In February 2007, the exchange rate was .97 US to one GHC.

Accra is a seductive place for young women who hope head portorage will bolster their obligatory financial support efforts to their parents as well as prepare for the families they have once they marry. Months earlier, Amina's relative came to Accra to work as a kayayoo. She was Amina's only contact when she arrived. The team of market people deplete Amina's efforts to find her cousin. Because women from the north cover their hair at Makola Market, Amina used these visual cues to begin conversations about where to sleep for the night. After a talk with a few strolling porters, Amina found a group of porters squatting in an empty kiosk at Okaishie Market, a market adjacent to Makola. At Kashia, Amina met Hamida, another recent migrant from the north. Hamida offered Amina a few coins to call her relatives at home. During her call home, Amina's mother thanked Allah for her safe arrival. Her mother also hoped for Amina's return for assistance during the peanut harvest.

Before her call, Hamida warned Amina not to "over trust" the generosity of the women in the kiosk. There were seven women who agreed to let Amina squat with them for the night. After her conversation at the Call Mama Communication Centre, Amina walked to the back of kiosk. Through the thin wooden frame, Amina overheard the conversation of two women. The women's words oscillated between two streams of thought. One of them discussed her strategy to steal Amina's shoes while she slept. The other woman argued that Amina was the "real" thief. Amina pretended not to hear the exchange and entered the worn shack. Hamida gave Amina a bowl of gari (cassava root) in sugared water. They shared a cup of milky tea.

As she thinks back to her arrival in Accra, Amina said, "Hospitality and accommodation are fleeting". Being a "Northerner" secured a temporary place to sleep and rest. Amina slept with her basket of clothes uncomfortably tucked under her head. Her flip-

flops cushioned her back from the splintered wood floor. Amina knew there were no guarantees for her sleeping arrangements beyond that one night. As she drifted into a fitful sleep beside Hamida, Amina thought about the 500,000 cedis she wanted to earn. The next morning, Amina's slippers were gone. She thinks Hamida stole them. Hamida was the only person who saw Amina tuck the orange flip-flops under her skirt as she lay down.

In January of 2008, I conducted an informal interview with Dr. Adjei, the director of Change for Northern Ghana, an NGO that offers vocational training and agricultural support to farmers in Ghana's Northern Region. Dr. Adjei believes migrant head porters earn, "very lucrative income, as much as 500,000 cedis per day". When I asked Amina and other porters about the truth of this, Amina recounted her arrival experience. Many head porters "heard about" women who earn 500,000 cedis a day. These porters have never met this woman or earned this amount. Similarly, Dr. Adjei "heard talk" about a 500,000 cedis daily wage. Despite his regular interactions with return porters in Northern Ghana, Dr. Adjei never met a porter who actually earned 500,000 cedis in a day.

Amina's subsequent disappointments about her wages, as well as Dr. Adjei's comments are important. When head porters arrive in the city, their sharp realities eclipse their adventure narratives. Ekua, a 17-year-old bead maker who is friendly with a few head porters emphatically denies the possibility of the 500,000 cedis daily wage. Ekua suggests how "this lie" is for those, "On top [like the NGO director]. They think this is good work and no one is suffering. And the ones who do the work [the head porters] have to believe to hope something good can come". Ekua adds, "I make beads. I sell beads. I don't rent anything [like head porters do] to work in Accra. I just walk around selling and I can't make 500,000 cedis in a week".

The “500,000 myth” is an appropriate description given the lore surrounding the nameless porter. For head porters, the motivation to move to Accra is informed by an “imaginary” that transcends space (Appadurai 1996). There are varying accounts as to how this anonymous woman acquires her wage money. Stories suggest she did not engage in illicit activities to earn 500,000 in a day. She is, “just a regular porter”. All the stories have a common theme. The young woman returns to her village and lives a “comfortable” life in the North. Amina’s friend says this woman, “left the city some time ago”. This explains why no one remembers her name or where she lives in the North. This lore is common in narratives about migrations from rural areas to cities. Particularly among workers in the informal sector, the widespread belief that a porter could earn about \$50 in a day, as opposed to the usual \$2-4 a day signals a rare possibility, despite the long odds of such an occurrence.

Current economic conditions brought on by global economic restructuring and cultural conditions spurred by the proliferation of technology and the wondrous tales of success compels young women to leave the social comforts of home to travel to Accra and Makola Market. There are 28 markets open in Accra. Some are daily markets; others are held biweekly. Makola, the largest of these, is in Accra’s central business district (Robertson 1983). Every day, hundreds of people throng Makola Market. The workday starts right before dawn, around 6 am. Women display goods on sidewalks, curbs, and alleyways. Sections of Makola are similar to aisles at Euro-American supermarkets where fruit, meats and cereals are organized at trader’s stalls. Freight containers double as stores. There are distinct areas that specialize in electronics, cooking utensils, toiletries and fresh produce.

British colonization, and the associated clerical and civil servant jobs afforded exclusively to men institutionalized the pre-established niche women had as traders during

the 19th century (Robertson 1995). After World War I, the British built a railroad line between Kumasi and Accra to expedite the exportation of cocoa. In 1924, the Accra Town Council constructed a building to operate as a market site at the railroad (Chamlee-Wright 1997). Before then, the area was a neighborhood of mostly Hausa kebab sellers (Darkwah 2007). Ga women, who are indigenous to Accra, would collect fire from the kebab sellers. “Ma ko la” in colloquial Ga means, “I am going for fire” (Darkwah 2007: page#). Thus, the name came to characterize the one story building known as Makola Market #1. The building housed market stalls purportedly to “improve sanitation”. However, Clark (1994) argues that the stall structure was to make mobile sellers stationary. This act would facilitate taxation efforts. Stall areas were and continue to be, well-defined locations. Cloth sellers operate quite distinctly from food sellers. These women do not tolerate the smell of foods to permeate their fabrics (Chamlee-Wright 1997).

In the mid 1960s, there were 13 markets in Accra. By 1978, there were 19 daily markets in the capital with 70% of Accra household goods from these markets (Robertson 1984). Even as the number of markets increases, Makola Market remains the most prominent because of its wide array of goods. The state institutes price controls on many goods sold at markets, particularly imported canned goods (Clark 1994). From colonial to post-colonial administrators, the state uses the rental of market stalls and kiosks (which the government owns) as a mechanism to streamline tax collection, monitor price control and trader activity (Chamlee-Wright 2007).

In the early 1900s, markets established a “commodity queen” for various groups of goods. The structure was institutionalized during the 1930s and continues throughout markets in Ghana (Clark 1994). Clark says, “the increasing female predominance in marketplaces corresponded to an accelerating marginalization of market traders and of

women, in a mutually reinforcing pattern” (1994: 325). As women became more visible as traders, markets in Ghana operate as “sites of female accumulation” (Akyeampong 2000:222). The state routinely scapegoats women traders as the root of economic problems in Ghana despite the backdrop of men’s fall in wages that lead to an increased reliance on women’s wages (Robertson 1984). Diawara suggests that markets are seen as impediments to “modernization” because they “challenge the World Bank and other global institutions that consider the nation-states the only legitimate structure with which to conduct business in Africa” (Diawara 1998:116).

From the colonial administrator to the postcolonial governments, the state operated with a benign neglect of Makola Market (Chamlee-Wright 1996). In 1970, when the price of imported good swelled, the Busia government created a campaign against market women to claim small retailers were hoarding goods in order to command high prices (Robertson 1984). On August 18, 1979, the Rawlings Regime demolished Makola Market No. 1. During the bulldozing, a participating soldier said, “That will teach Ghanaian women to stop being wicked” (Robertson 1983: 469). The main cause of high food prices was the decline in agricultural production “in the face of sharp population growth and inflation” (Robertson 1983: 471). This important factor was subsumed under the public frustration of widespread hunger. Amidst the political instability of successive military coups and economic mismanagement, Rawlings also razed the replacement market Makola #2 in 1981 (Akyeampong 2000, Clark 1994).

Within a limited sphere of work for women, trade is one of the few occupations readily accessible to Ghanaian women. Women dominate trade in Ghana. Familial ties encourage and sometimes demand that women engage in some form of market trade (Pellow 1978: 770). Traders often receive seed money from family member or serve as apprentices to

mothers and aunts (Pellow 1978). Levels of affluence are associated with the trade of various goods at the market. Wealthier women, who can afford to rent stalls or import freight containers, trade consumer goods and electronics. Stalls are owned by the state and women must have political influence to secure these rentals (Darkwah 2007). Freight containers require the service of night watchmen to deter thieves. Less affluent women trade in foodstuffs that can easily be purchased at wholesale markets in Accra.

Pellow (1978) frames trade as a vehicle for time autonomy rather than a means for economic success. An overwhelming perception among Ghanaians is that traders secure “a good living” (Pellow 1978: 771). Pellow (1978) questions whether the lack of alternative ascribed opportunities is a more probable cause for women’s involvement in trade in West Africa. Ghanaian women wield the most influence in the running of households. However, disproportionate financial burdens and widespread male-female hierarchies throughout Ghana call into question the formidability of female traders.

There exists a troubling polarity in writing women’s experiences in the global south that correlates to ethnography of female traders in Ghana (Mohanty, Russo and Torres 1991). Ethnography often constructs the average ‘third world’ woman as either having “a truncated life based on her feminine gender” or scholars produce illustrious images of the women’s autonomy of women so as to counter the historical neglect of women’s practices (Mohanty 1991: 337). Indeed, much of “the ethnographic record in many places in West Africa seems to point to women’s power in the public sphere” however the dynamics between households and the market economy that play a part in that power or often overlooked (Ebron 2007:182).

Several ethnographers explore the powerful roles of women traders in Ghana’s open-air markets (Clark 1994, House-Midamba 1995, Robertson 1986, Pellow 1999). Market

women enter the trade business through familial ties and generational apprenticeships. The documentary *Asante Market Women* (1982) focuses on the contrasts between domestic and public life for market women in Kumasi, Ghana. In their homes, women are domestically subordinate in polygamous households. While at the market, women are tough negotiators and sellers of goods. *Asante Market Women* (1982) illustrates the difficult balance market women must maintain in these very different spheres.

Kayayei are “ubiquitous in the towns and cities of southern Ghana and part of the Ghanaian commercial vocabulary” (Opare 2003:34), yet their experiences take place on the margins of this informal economy of the market. Amina negotiated her arrival in Accra through a series of complexities that converge diverse local experiences about migration, ethnicity, informal work and gendered labor. *Asante Market Women* (1982) highlights how social status and power are ethnically informed at the Kumasi Market. Most women in the film are ethnically Asante, who are matrilineal Akan people. In the film, one’s ethnic identity, social class and history determines one’s place in the relationship to the “Market Queen”. At Kumasi Market, the queen bargains for the purchase price of goods that transport throughout Ghana. Women participate in the distribution, transportation and pricing of goods that operate at all markets in Ghana.

Because of their ethnic difference, kayayei operate outside these kinds of commodity queen hierarchies that operate at markets across Ghana. The visual cues of piety through headscarves informed Amina of potential allies. Her fast acceptance among a ground of Northerners secured a safe place to sleep. Footwear as meager as flip-flops, are still prized by kayayei who spend their workday walking on cracked sidewalks and dusty paths at Makola. Amina says the burglary of her slippers was “the price she had to pay” to sleep in a kiosk with fellow squatters.

Within the state discourse on female porters, kayayei are often conceived as vulnerable, but resourceful street children (Beauchemin 1999 CAS 2002, Hickey 2000). As of 1996, two NGOs (Street Girl Aide and Catholic Action for Street Children) that offer community service for kayayei estimate their numbers at 10,000. Five years later, the head count was closer to 20,000. The numbers show no signs of slowing (CAS 2001). As rural migrants to an increasingly globalized city, head porters are “strangers” in Accra. Kayayei sell physical labor instead of consumer goods (Opare 2003). Every kayayei I have met views portering as a path to greater economic and social opportunity. Their mobility within the nation-state offers an opportunity toward new ways to perceive distance, space and cultural norms (McKay 2006). There is little analysis about the underlying causes for the proliferation of head porters or an examination of what these numbers mean for the daily shifts that take place in the city as a response to the population influx.

This dissertation examines how kayayei create another layer to the concept of trader in Accra. Kayayei are women who work in spaces with “unequal subject position within common fields of power” (Tsing 1993: xi). The labor of physical services leads to distinctly subordinate roles and positions of socio-economic power at the market (Opare 2003). Within the market, trade is employment for time autonomy rather than economic power for most women. For most kayayei, “there is no career progression through the portering occupation” and most will almost always “begin and end [their careers] as head load porters” (Asomaning, Amponsah, Atta, Apt and Greico 1996:68). Few porters will earn enough money for their business goal to join the various associations for women’s traders in Accra. Because of their background in agriculture, most porters do not have the economic support of families to start businesses. Many of the women explain that they porter to take breaks

from the routine of village life or to care for their families. It is work that can be done quickly and needs no start-up monies.

Porters do not work in a customary fashion. Kayayei do not sell food, goods or bargain with customers at Makola Market. They are transporters. A concurrent theme of Ghanaian market trade is the importance of mobility and reliable transportation. Traders calculate the costs effectiveness of certain modes of transport. Women jockey for space on busses for long distance travel. Traders place high value on taxis for privacy to draw attention away from the quantity of valuables they move (Clark 1994). In the last ten years, road quality has improved in Ghana, but bus routes are not stable or scheduled. Neither are petrol prices. Ghanaian traders spent significant amounts of time calculating the impact of the movement of goods on their profit margins (Clark 1994). Motorized transportation has drawbacks but most times, goods get to the market. Once there, the importance of human labor is clear. The mechanic/human dichotomy of kayayei labor creates a particular way of existing because kayayei *become* technology through the mechanization of their bodies to carry various loads. Their limbs are, “the most immediate, proximate terrain where social truths and social contradictions” play out (Scheper-Hughes and Lock: 1987:221). Traders and buyers hire kayayei to transport goods to stores, stalls, warehouses, taxis, cars and trotros. Human labor is the most efficient way to navigate goods through the choked lanes of Makola.

There are gender differentiations in the equipment used for transport (Apt, Turner and Greico 1996). Human transport relies on bodies and have “personal and social consequences” delineated through associative technology (McLuhan 1995: page). Men use mechanical extension of their human body with hand-trucks, carts and barrels. In contrast, women do not use motorized or mechanized equipment to profit from transportation.

Because head carrying is naturalized as female, men are excluded from the “women’s work”. Traders and customers also worry that men will steal goods (Apt, Greico, Fouracre 1996). Transport equipment indexes power distributions at the market. This difference in equipment legitimates market work through gender norms. Women trust other women to carry goods on their bodies. Amina says the loads are too heavy to allow women to “run off”. When I suggest that wheel barrels and hand trucks make it easier to steal goods, Amina explains that while the trucks make it “easy for men to carry heavy items”, the market is too crowded for them to “properly run off...If a man carries on his head, he is strong enough to make his way with their property”.

Male hand-truck transporters garner higher wages than head porters. Men negotiate distances and wages with costumers before they load goods. Kayayei wages are not pre-negotiated. The depth of a customer’s generosity determines a head porter’s pay. Kayayei are subject to the labor discipline of their bodies that “reinforce their social subordination along the contours of gender and class” (Gunewardena 2007:36). The mechanical use of the human self that kayayei employ index structural economic distributions and reinforce male dominance. When masculinity is associated with technology, it translates into unequal access to earnings across gender (Bray 2007). This effect “limits women’s capacity for action and agency without wholly constraining and determining that capacity” (Bakare-Yusuf 2003:3).

In order to understand the diversity of Ghanaian markets and its practitioners, this dissertation examines ethnic constructs of African market women to include kayayei. Livelihood and work experiences shape people’s perception of their place in the world, as well as their ethnicity. Historically, people’s identities link to territory. In the case of kayayei in Accra, ethnicity shifts towards communities of work and the circumstances surrounding informal labor. But places of migration continue to inform these communities of work in

Accra. Kayayei experiences—as women, migrants and informal workers, are rich with ethnographic data about mobility, transportation and gendered work identity in West Africa.

In its broadest scope, this dissertation addresses three questions. First, as migrants in Accra, in what ways do young women’s head porter experience reveal some of the social tensions in Ghana that trace along boundaries of class, geography and gender? Second, how do women porters negotiate the economic inequity of informal labor and transportation systems in Ghana? Lastly, I focus on the possibilities of a creative research practices to coalesce with these complex realities. Given the intricacies of head porters’ lives, how can a methodology in collaborative reflexive photography, informed by feminist phenomenology, contribute to a more comprehensive anthropological understanding of the social and cultural challenges faced by young women in African cities?

In this dissertation, I employ a phenomenological framework to encompass the multiple realities of kayayei. In chapter two, I examine how phenomenology as a theory, avoids absolute claims about social relations. The first section discusses how phenomenology provides a system to evaluate how kayayei experiences are imbued with numerous perspectives and articulation of meaning; from emancipation and subjugation to survival. I draw on several bodies of literature in order to engage in the complex tapestry of head porter’s experiences.

Feminist ethnography adds an important contour to the phenomenological framework of this dissertation. Trade affords market women the kind of time autonomy they need to manage their heavy household burdens (Slocum 2001). The market operates as the arena for the articulation of power relations (Ulysse 2007). I use feminist theory to focus on the kinds of skills kayayei develop in order to survive and negotiate socio-economic hierarchies of urban space. The performance of gender reveals how class and ethnicity create

referents for informal work. A feminist framework allows me to illustrate the subtleties between the physicality of kayayei bodies and their embodiment perspective about that lived experience. This embodiment communicates between body and world. Embodied technology disciplines kayayei movement. But the body is also situated. Clark briefly describes kayayei labor and writes,

Heavily burdened head carriers slip and fall on the cracked, slanted, littered pavements or in the jostling crowds. In the rainy season, carriers go barefoot for better footing on slippery stairways and eroded slopes, risking illness and injury. Such haphazard conditions puts a premium on experienced and reliable carriers who know their way through the market and its environs, but the extra tip paid them is not enough to make this an attractive occupation for those with any reasonable alternative (1994: 152).

As Clark (1994) suggests, most head porters conduct *kaya* because there are no “reasonable” alternatives. This ethnographic accounts points to the ways in which transportation plays a prominent role in the success of the sale of goods. Market necessity of human transportation positively constructs portering as easy niche for self-employment (Apt, et al. 1996, Opare 2003). Head porters use the fallow and growing seasons of their home villages as a period to make money in the city. Migrant women draw on their rural household duties of collecting firewood and water from long distances. The migration of kayayei to Accra is, in many cases, the pathology of urbanization and gendered work.

This praxis of molding rural tasks to urban settings illustrates one way with which kayayei creatively make economic opportunities despite limited spheres of work (Das and Poole 2004). Since Pellow (1978) suggests trade as a limited sphere of work for some women, it is notable how kayayei creatively draw on that historical role. A feminist approach, informed through phenomenology, helps illustrate how kayayei take advantage of the social norms of human transport in Africa. Head porters institute a way of survival that depend on other women’s sales of goods and the need to transport them, rather than as traders directly.

In chapter three, I discuss the history of pre-colonial Ghana. Even when, “one’s embodied perception of an encounter...may well be unsystematic and unstructured, it is always historically, socially, and politically situated” (Stoller 1997:23). I focus on the political economy of Northern Ghana because of the large number of kayayei migrate from the Northern Region (Opare 2003). There are important historical moments that engender the proliferation of head porters in Accra. The history of Northern Ghana connects to the emergence of tribes as a socio-political concept during colonization. British administrative policies institutionalized pre-existing tensions between competing agricultural and consumer modes of consumption in the country. The notion of tribes marked modes of production, consumption, religion and marriage in ways that remain salient. I examine how the construction of tribes in Ghana spurred the uneven economic development between Northern and Southern Ghana. Postcolonial development and the associated neoliberal government policies of Ghana build on the institutional structures of tribe and impact internal migration in Ghana. I examine I show how these tensions about modes of production trace along ethnic lines that continue to impact the work practices of head porters.

Gender performances are more than work strategies (Butler 1990). These performances crystallize class, ethnic and economic distinctions in the informal sector. Despite ideals of African nationalism championed by Kwame Nkrumah’s (1989) Pan-African agenda for postcolonial Ghana, ethnic identities are still paramount. Ghanaians assent to broad racial identities of black or African if prompted in direct conversation. For many, however, ethnicity is far more salient. Embedded in all identities are religious, spatial and ethnic specificities. Even though national identities are hailed, “the overwhelming majority of Africans still do not live their normal everyday lives as Senegalese, Nigerian,

Zaireans...instead they live there lives as Wolof, Yoruba, Igbo, Kikuyu, Asante....” (Ekwe-Ekwe 1993:95).

Ethnicity is an important node for community identification (Toland 1993). As social fixtures in Accra’s markets, *kayayei* are also contradictorily “out of place” for a variety of reasons. Women who conduct *kaya* hail from the ethnically heterogeneous Northern Region of Ghana. Many speak Dagomba as their first language, which is not widely spoken outside of the north. Islam, both religiously and culturally, heavily influences the North, which contrasts to the predominately-Christian south. Even as they are marginally self-employed, *kayayei*’s ethnic identity is of paramount importance in relation to the complex network of socio-economic exchanges that happen at Makola. Amina, for example, secured a place to live through the visual cues of headscarves and a common language. Ethnicity informs the kinds of work that Northerners are “allowed” to do as unskilled laborers at Makola. Gender informs the kinds of work that women can engage in within the informal work sectors of Ghana.

Like most African states, Ghana’s urban population grows as the rural populations decrease. The need in urban Ghana for housing, food and employment outpaces economic resources. Scholars point to the lack of attention given to women migrants in these shifting communities (Greico 1996). Migration for *kaya* work produces economic liberation as well as stretches economic strain across wider spaces. Women’s participation in African urban migration is rarely addressed because colonial African cities comprise overwhelmingly male populations (Little 1973, Sheldon 1996). In chapter four, I examine how women in Ghana help spread capitalism during colonization. The mobility of women operated through systems of migration (Gocking 2003). This mobility informs how gender affects informal transportation in Ghana.

The tension between the rural and urban, combined with the lack of research on women's roles in these processes, is one focal point of chapter four. I discuss the history of Makola Market and the continued role women like kayayei play in the proliferation of capitalism. This chapter also discusses some of my pre-existing relationships with traders at Makola Market. I also sketch some background information about the 12 kayayei who are the focus of my fieldwork experience. In the last section of chapter three, I argue that kayayei work practices give rise to emergent forms of agency that disrupt socio-economic hierarchies that operate among market women at Makola Market. I conclude that kayayei are an emergent category of trader. The role of women, in informal sectors of transportation and work at the market, affirms the ways in which gender informs the flexible accumulation of capital at Makola Market. Economic agency is diminished for many women as a result of neoliberal policies of development. I suggest that this gendered referent excoriates kayayei migration and contradicts the economic need for human transportation labor that has always been a characteristic of trade in Ghana.

State practices of development operate through discourses that focus on the vulnerability of women's labor. Head carrying is a 'natural' extension of the role played by rural African women (Byerlee 1974). Pellow (1978) recalls the importance of small goods for flexible schedules. Women with toddlers prefer to sell small goods and food in order to couple work with their childcare responsibilities. Similarly, porters who have recently given birth sometimes migrate in order to supplement their meager rural earnings until children are toddlers. Young porters use carrying as a way to respond to the financial constraints of their rural communities. Women remit wages to families and intend to return to the rural community at some point (Apt, et al.). Others come to the city to procure goods for upcoming marriages and the associated domestic responsibilities.

The dynamic role of women traders is well documented (House-Midamba 1995). However, the burgeoning interest in gender segregation in intermediate labor markets fails to include head porters within discourse on African market women (Greico 1996). Most research focuses on African market women as traders alone. Clark's (1994) seminal ethnography, *Onions are My Husband* examines the varied trader identities that function at markets in Kumasi, Ghana. Clark's (2010) more recent collection of life histories includes a photograph with a rear view of a porter on her way to make a heavy delivery (Clark 2010:110). Kayayei embody a type of anonymity, but that does not preclude them from having aesthetic, cultural or epistemological concerns.

The experiences of kayayei are irreducible within the current ethnographic record of women market labor. In chapter four, I examine how collaborative ethnographic photography provides an avenue for a fuller account of market women's narratives. The crisis of representation in anthropology informs much of the critique of photography in anthropology. I argue, however, that contemporary uses of collaborative media in the field help counter some of the critique of media in anthropology. In order to further these claims, I sketch a brief history of photography in anthropology. I also connect this history and photographic praxis of photography in Ghana.

Collaborative methods in anthropology, grounded in visual practices such as photography, highlight the importance of a shared experience for the construction of knowledge. Photography was a way to build trust within the segregated communities of kayayei. I had pre-established relationships with many traders at Makola Market, and photography fostered my navigation through hierarchies of social class and power that operate between women at Makola. Through ethnographic photography with kayayei, I examine how economic insecurities ascribe to women's bodies through the marginalization

of their labor. I also explore how the experience of collaboration with kayayei reveals the ways in which social oppression is normalized at Makola Market.

Kayayei represent an important community within the field of African market women. Head porters' realities provide insight into the socio-economic contribution of internal migrants and the role they play in the shape of urban communities in Africa. In chapter six, I analyze kayayei reflections on photography, Makola Market and migration. I discuss how this creative methodology contributes unique insights into emergent forms of agency and limitations related to women's work and gender performance in Africa.

Photographs produced by kayayei narrate some of the experiences women have about the limitations to economic autonomy that comes along with their labor.

In this chapter, I also argue how the politics of appearance and visibility at the market denote social capital. Appearance is an important mechanism for making "hierarchy" both "visible and recognized" (Ulysse 2007:29). I examine how photography by head porter reveals these tensions as well as allows women to proclaim their presence. Chapter six is also an in-depth analysis of visual narratives and dialogue with kayayei about their photographic practice. I examine the importance of the senses and tactile knowledge. This anthropology of every day life, "discloses the unexpected niches where insights about our contemporary condition can be revealed" (Seremetakis 1996:11). I focus on practices of self-making the women employ within and beyond the photographic experience. This experience translated everyday activities into survival strategies.

In chapter seven, I focus on how this dissertation contributes to ethnographic research that connects phenomenology and the senses to photographic methods in ethnographic research. My fieldwork with head porters contributes to a broader understanding of informal labor and women's work in Africa. Images provide commentary

for social discourse (Pink 2001). Feminist and embodied theoretical concerns inform my collaborative ethnographic photography. Through these theories and methodologies, I constructed a shared research community with kayayei. The most important aim of this approach was to equalize access to data, provide wider anthropological contexts about urban markets in Africa and enlarge the ethnographic scope of how embodiment take place in action. This approach enriches the anthropological literature on African market women, the role of gendered work in the use of technology and the cultural contours of human transport. Because photography has moved from an “archive” of knowledge to “more differentiated and complex acts of anthropological intention” (Edwards 2001:29), my research presents collaborative photography as a useful praxis to mark complex intersections within representations as well as subjectivities in Africa.

Collaborative methods help erode a central African paradox; the assumption that the continent is so overwhelmed with inadequacies that the historical significance of African experiences are invalid (Enwezor 2006). Kayayei are subject to the distance demands of customers. Shoppers curse kayayei ubiquity as they crowd market spaces, yet when customers complete their transactions, they seek the same women to carry their goods to the taxi rank or lorry-park. Through a, “synthesizing agency that weaves the world into meaning and the source of emerging of knowledge, value and signification” (Bakare-Yusuf 2003:7), this dissertation illustrates how creative practice can address numerous complexities of African social life. I coalesce concerns about “seeing culture”, “writing culture” and the primacy of vision to summarize how collaborative ethnographic photography challenges the neutral authority of an image and posits media as incomplete authored creations that are both selective and partial (Clifford 1986).

Livelihoods and work shape people's experience of their place in the world. Place is the physical and imaginary site where people come from or move to. Kayayei narratives offer new alternative perceptions of spatial-temporal relationships. Kayayei are a community of African market women who move discourse beyond dichotomies of liberated or subjected women. This dissertation expands anthropological knowledge about the anthropology of market women, gendered technology and the fruitful potential of photography in ethnography. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I summarize the ways in which this dissertation addresses numerous typologies about urban Africa such as agency and subjectivity, articulations of identity and the disjunctures and limits to autonomy.

CHAPTER TWO:

FIELDWORK BEGINNINGS, THEORIZING SELF AND NARRATIVES OF BLACK WOMEN

A painting used to hang in the ante-room of the former President Kwame Nkrumah. The painting was enormous, and the main figure was Nkrumah himself, fighting, wrestling with the last chains of colonialism. The chains are yielding, there is thunder and lightning in the air, the earth is shaking. Out of this, three small figures, white men, pallid. One of them is the capitalist, he carries a briefcase. Another is the priest or missionary, he carries the Bible. The third, a lesser figure, carries a book entitled *African Political Systems*: he is the anthropologist or social scientist in general (Galtung 1967:13).

The danger in writing is not fusing our personal experience and our worldview with the social realities we live in...No topic is too trivial. The danger is in being too universal and humanitarian and invoking the eternal to the sacred of the particular and the feminine and the specific historical moment (Anzaldua 1981:170).

When you enter the winding market behind Accra's High Street in the central business district of the city, you arrive at Makola Market. The entrance reads, "31st December Market" although no one refers to the market by this name. The 31st of December refers to two historic events. On December 31, 1981, Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings seized state power. A year later, the 31 December Women's Movement formed its mission, being, the amelioration of the lives of Ghanaian women. Women traders operate market unions in Accra. Kayayei transport goods throughout the market. Makola is like most markets in Ghana because there are few other business communities where women are the largest majority of stakeholders; owners and employees are women (Clark 1994).

In some form, whether personal or political, all anthropologists align themselves with the communities, ideas and people that they choose to study. In this chapter, I discuss some of the experiences that led me to choose Makola Market as the site of my dissertation fieldwork from December 2007 to August 2008. I explain how these events inform the

theoretical orientation of this dissertation in phenomenology, feminist anthropology and the intersections between theory and praxis that orient my fieldwork. In subsequent chapters, I clarify how these theoretical precepts, which I use to examine the senses; gender and embodiment also inform my decision to use ethnographic photography as a fieldwork methodology.

My first visit to Makola was in 1998 when I was an undergraduate exchange student at the University of Ghana at Legon. A Ghanaian classmate told a group of international students how we were overcharged for our toiletries at the “Bush Canteen”, the two-aisle open market on the Legon campus. My roommate and I, enamored with shea butter since our arrival, wanted to buy large blocks as gifts for family members in the United States. Another friend wanted alata-samina (soap made of palm nut and herbs) and a fourth needed a towel because her own would not relinquish its moldy smell no matter how many days she left it to dry in the sun.

My friends and I took a minibus, known as a tro-tro, to Makola Market, in the heart of the central business district of Accra. There were no signs on the tro-tro to say where it was going, but every tro-tro has a driver and a mate. The mate shouts the tro-tros final destinations as the minibus moves down the dusty road to pick up waiting passengers at makeshift bus stops. Tro-tros travel across the city and these usually dilapidated minibuses run the length and breadth of city and country. We heard the mate shout, “Accra, Kra”. In a taxicab, the ride would have been 20 minutes. By tro-tro, the trip took nearly an hour. The maximum capacity written on the outside of the minibus reads fifteen but I counted about 26 people aboard, plus the mate and driver. The calls for Accra, told us which tro-tro would get us to Makola Market. We uncomfortably settled in as the mate collected our fare, and the tro-tro sped towards Tetteh Quarshie Circle into Accra. After a series of stops through

various Accra neighborhoods, the tro-tro terminates at the major bus stop in the city center, Tema Station.

My friends and I moved with the throng of people out of the station and into the market. The press of limbs, the cacophony of sounds, and the smells of meats triggered fears about space I never knew I had. The overwhelming feeling of being pressed to someone else's back as we moved through a crowd frightened me. The sweet, sticky scent of fried donuts enticed my nose but also made bile rise in the back of my throat. The number of people moving in various directions was startling. My friends and I got lost. There were no street signs at Makola, or elsewhere throughout much of Accra for that matter. Determined to find women who sold shea butter, I walked around in circles. A pepper seller at a junction between the market and the bus station tapped my shoulder to ask what I was looking for. After I explained my desire for shea butter, the seller shouted in Ga to what seemed to be no one in particular. However, moments later, a young woman with a basket of shea butter on her head emerged from a group of sellers nearby.

During our lost wandering and purchases, my roommate and I were separated from our friends. Another market woman sitting by a building entrance told us how to negotiate the market maze to find our friends who she had seen pass by. Somewhere along the way, my roommate's pockets were picked. My friends did not find her alata-samina soap but now carried black plastic bags filled with alternative goodies. As we board the tro-tro back to the university campus, my friends and I deemed our adventure marginally successful as we left the market.

First impressions are misleading and our first experiences grew deeper. The second trip to Makola Market was more satisfying, with more monies spent rather than pick-pocketed. Subsequent visits in years that follow revealed how the chaotic Makola Market was

a system of subtle organization. Clothes selling areas blend, but never merge, with manufactured goods. Market women do not want food smells to permeate clothing. Second hand clothes sales operate in adjacent markets, TS (for Tema Station) and Kantamanto Markets. Food sellers cluster around areas in which dairy, livestock and beverages are sold. Aluminum pots and pans sell near Nkrumah Park side, across the road from the wax-print cloth sellers. Smoked fish is behind the Ashfoam store, while fresh trout and salmon are in the covered building by Rawlings Square. Beef, goat, and pig meats are down a lane near the pepper sellers and halal foods are separate.

The Ghanaian marketplace has always been a historical place of contention--between women traders and state agents. Both colonial and postcolonial state agents' conflict with market traders over price control, the regulation of urban spaces for commercial uses and the legitimacy of commercial activities in the informal economy (Robertson 1983). When Makola Market was bulldozed in 1979 and burnt down in 1981, the Rawlings regime used market women as a scapegoat for the spiraling economy that had resulted from diminished trade supplies. Despite the need to rebuild Makola twice, women traders continue to dominate the redevelopment, operation and sales at the market with sharp business acuity (Robertson 1983). I discuss the economic and political contours of these events in chapter three. I read about them in ethnography. But it is Akosua and her mother, Mama Akosua, who guide my understanding of what the political economy of Makola Market actually means among sellers and between women at Makola Market. Akosua and her mother are my favorite sellers. When the loneliness of Accra crept into my thoughts, I went to Akosua to break that feeling. Akosua and her mother reminded me of my own relationship with my mother. Akosua has a lively personality and we are close in age. Mama Akosua is a great

storyteller. Over the years, our relationship has moved beyond the market and I am invited to birthday parties and holiday gatherings at the women's home in Osu.

The younger Akosua conducts the day-to-day transactions at the stall, while Mama Akosua supervises. Their stall is near the junction for the booksellers near Barclay's bank. Little Akosua uses a big tin can to measure my rice, gives a fair price and tends to have jasmine instead of long grain. Akosua, like most sellers, buys in bulk to sell small quantities to consumers, and aggregates small purchases for resale to other sellers. When the sun is especially hot, I arrive at Akosua's stall sweaty, sticky and tired. She always offers a satchel of ice water from her red cooler.

I conducted preliminary fieldwork in Ghana from 2005 to 2007. Those visits always required market trips to buy groceries. I prefer Makola Market to the market in my neighborhood Osu, in which the residents enjoy higher average income, which makes it a more expensive place to shop. Osu Market has only a handful of tomato sellers, and one businesswoman who sells rice, so I regularly went to Makola. This is how I met Akosua.

Akosua and I both do business in central Accra, even though we lived near Osu, a neighborhood about 15 minutes away. Akosua has taken over more of the day to day selling that she has learned from her mother, which is one of the standard ways that women enter trade (Darkwah 2007). Akosua's mother usually sat in the shady areas on the cool concrete of the pot sellers shop opposite the stall. One afternoon, Mama Akosua jumped off her seat with a startled laugh. She recounted a day at the market a few years earlier. Mama Akosua never forgets a face and told me she remembered me as this, "the tall, fair Rasta girl" who came to the market years earlier with her friends. She called me an *apushkeleke* (girls who wear revealing clothes) who wore short denim shorts as she searched the market for shea butter. Mama Akosua surprised herself for not remembering me sooner. She said my cadre

of friends; all African American women with Afros or dreadlocks were very distinct for Ghana circa 1998. Mama Akosua explained how foreigners who shopped at Makola then were usually in large racially mixed tour groups. It was unique to see five young black foreign women at the market. She even remembered seeing us arrive by tro-tro.

My relationships with Akosua, Mama Akosua and their colleagues and family parallel my journey into fieldwork. It was the younger Akosua's paternal aunt who directed me to my lost friend who searched for *alata samina* eight years earlier. Mama Akosua laughed at my "obsession" with shea butter, since the product is so commonplace in Ghana. Their family friends tell stories that range from when the market was burned down to the methods one should use to assess a customer's creditworthiness when their money is tight. Akosua's mother told me that when I'm in the market, I should pin my money to my bra. Those words exactly echo my great-grandmother's advice.

I had obliquely seen head porters around the market from my very first visit in 1998. In 2003, I went to Makola Market to buy shea butter and soap as gifts for friends in the US. I witnessed an argument between a head porter and a watermelon seller who careened into each other as they navigated through the choked traffic on 28 February Road. A few days before Christmas in 2005, I paid close attention to porters for the first time. I had been to the market daily since I arrived in Accra earlier that month. My friend Sheila's new tailoring business required many trips for fabric and supplies. I happily accompanied her on these frequent trips to Makola Market, and spent my time chatting with women at the market. By now, the flurry of people excited me. The metropolis had a frenetic rhythm that reminded me of home.

One afternoon in December 2005, I impulsively bought more goods at the market than I could carry alone. It was Christmastime. I had bought a 20-pound bag of rice in

addition to holiday decorations and produce. Akosua saw me with my load and called a kayayoo (head porter) to help carry my purchases to a taxicab. I noticed how these women were distinct from traders at the market. Kayayei were not customers. Head porters almost always wear skirts and cover their hair--- a display of modesty that honors Islam. That alone was not surprising, as many women wear headscarves and dresses at the market. What was curious was that the head porters sold nothing, only moved goods. Almost every other woman I had seen in Accra's market sold some kind of tangible product. Akosua and I usually conversed in Ghanaian Pidgin English with smatterings of Twi. Akosua and many other market women have their business transactions in Ga, Twi, English, and smatterings of Ghanaian Pidgin English. As she addressed the head porter, I heard Akosua speaks Ga, mixed with a few words she's picked up in Dagbani.

During most of my visits to the market, I had my camera. The day Akosua asked the head porter to carry my goods to the taxi, I asked the porter if I could take her picture. She demurred. I was thinking about the feasibility of research with young women traders like Akosua who learn their trade from their mothers. The head porter piqued my interest. I wondered why I had been so blithely aware of head porters, despite being intrigued by Makola Market for years. I questioned what contribution I would offer anthropology. Ghanaian market women like Akosua and her mother are well documented in scholarship (Clark 2010). Mama Akosua is a high school graduate but has been interviewed often enough by graduate students to know the language of research. She was interested in my qualitative notions of fieldwork, which contrasted to her experiences with scholars focused on triangulation and quantitative designs.

The head porter I asked to take a photo of showed up at Akosua's stall the following Friday. I was at Akosua's for another visit. With a small curtsey, the woman introduced

herself as Rahida. Rahida wore a peach and navy colored wax printed dress with a matching lace hijab head covering. Rahida shyly explained in Ga, that she was, “now ready to take a picture”. With my thoughts constantly brimming about Ghanaian traders and dissertation research, I took a photograph of Rahida. I then agreed to meet Rahida at Akosua’s stall to return her print. Rahida curtsied again, thanked me and walked away.

After Rahida left, Mama Akosua said she was shocked “by Rahida’s heart”. Head porters often do not engage in conversation with people at the market. Most kayayei do not speak English or Twi. Rahida spoke to us in Ga, which Akosua translated to me. Rahida approached us, rather than the usual practice of customers and sellers calling out to head porters.

The photography norms in Ghana as well as the complex cultural modes of women’s dress in Ghana are two important layers to this encounter. Rahida did not want her picture taken in her work clothes. That alone is not very remarkable. I know many people at the market who are wary of tourists with cameras. A produce seller, Aunty Comfort, has a general fatigue from people who, “get off their tour busses, take pictures and go on with their lives”. I assumed Rahida felt the same way.

Photo processing took about a week since I spent a few additional days to finish the roll of film. I often snapped photographs for different market women when they dressed up for occasions like bridal showers, weddings and funerals. These women stopped at the market to check on daughters and other apprentices before events. During Christmastime, the lace clothes and intricate head wraps were notable. I took photos of traders in their finery and would print the pictures to bring them back to the market. It was nearly another week before I returned to the market. When I arrived at Makola, Akosua told me how Rahida passed her stall everyday since I had taken her picture. Rahida did not greet Akosua,

but would make eye contact each time she passed with goods on her head. Akosua said she doesn't understand why Rahida doesn't say anything. Akosua speculated that she was too shy to ask about the picture. Mama Akosua said "Oh! What else could she be doing coming here every day, every day like that?"

When I asked Rahida about pictures, she said she did not want to be photographed in her work clothes even though she was excited to have her picture taken. She had seen a photograph of herself only once before. Even when I had persisted that the print was free, Rahida said her work clothes were not "suitable" for a photograph. That is the reason why Rahida passed by Akosua's stall on her way to Jum'ah (Friday prayer). On Fridays, Rahida felt "reasonably dressed". She had seen me take pictures of traders before they attended "fancy" events. Rahida wanted to, "look decent" for her own photograph. She planned to take the picture to a friend to give to her family on their return trip to northern Ghana.

In chapter five, I delve deeper into the importance of clothing to mark class in Ghana and the ways in which photography is emblematic of these relationships. However, to briefly contextualize my exchange with Rahida, she simply did not want her first photograph to memorialize the blue speckled pan she carried on her head for work. Rahida wanted to display her adherence to faith practice, a sense of modesty and a modicum of success in Accra. In contrast, I wanted the photograph as documentation of a head porter social reality. Rahida reshaped her experience with me as a photographer. I acquiesced to Rahida's desires of how she wanted to be subjectively oriented in order to take the photograph. Rahida used the aesthetic of clothing to align with the function of much of the photographic norms in Ghana.

Rahida was my first reliable contact among head porters at Makola Market.

Guided by Maxwell Owusu's (1978) challenge that anthropologists make more serious efforts to learn indigenous African languages as a fundamental fieldwork tool, I spent two years studying Asante/Twi. I learned to speak Ghanaian Pidgin English from my initial field interests in Ghanaian hip-hip. Pidgin is useful and popular in that context. Because Twi is the most widely spoken language in Ghana, I wanted to avoid claims without the appropriate vernacular. Yet, as I spent more time at the market, my research interest shifted from English, Ga and Twi speaking traders to Dagbani speaking head porters at Makola. This challenge was the first time I thought about the importance of being flexible (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). I had a growing nervousness about trying to learn Dagbani after I had struggled to invest in Twi.

Margaret Mead (1939) states, "There is much misunderstanding of what is meant by using native language, a phrasing which I prefer to speaking the native language. The latter...terrifies students who have not yet tried fieldwork, and puts an undue premium on virtuosity at the expense of emphasizing that a language is a tool, not a feather in one's cap (1939:196). I met with Dr. Akosua Darkwah, a sociologist at the University of Legon and chatted with her about my interest in head porters. After that encouraging conversation where she offered the names of graduate students who might work as language tutors and translators, I left Ghana in January 2006 and returned to coursework at Temple University.

I returned to Ghana twice in 2006. Both times, I asked Akosua about Rahida. Rahida's work made her too mobile for me to look for her without assistance. By then, Rahida regularly stopped at Akosua's stall to seek customers. Rahida was not in Accra during my visit in the summer of 2007. She had returned to her village in northern Ghana, about 900 kilometers from Accra. By then, I had committed to conducting my dissertation with

head porters at Makola Market. I was nervous that I had lost my first contact. My anxiety about fieldwork jumped exponentially.

It was daunting to think about the possibility of having to meet another head porter. Rahida and I had built a rapport that didn't feel forced. We spoke in mixtures of Ghanaian Pidgin English and Twi. Rahida and I knew each other for two years before my dissertation research was scheduled to begin. Rahida and Akosua had cobbled a system where Rahida could count on a few extra coins from Akosua since she would regularly stop by her stall each day to help transport goods.

I was anxious about meeting head porters until I returned to Ghana in December 2007. Rahida was back in Accra. During my summer visit; I had left a few gifts for her with Akosua. Rahida was happy that I remembered her. She talked about how much her family enjoyed having the photograph I had taken of her. Early November to mid January is a lucrative time at Makola. Ghanaians who have returned from abroad for the holidays bolster sales. In turn, that would mean increased transportation needs. Rahida said she would return home again, to farm during the planting season in June, but would definitely be back to Accra by the time fieldwork started in December 2007.

Rahida spoke with pride about her ability to handle the pressure as the economic belly for her family. She was not in Accra when I arrived in the late spring of 2007 because it was the end of rainy season. There was work to be done on the farmland. For Rahida, the decision to move between the farm and the city was ordinary, unexceptional choice.

However, these choices reflect, "an intersubjective world of culture" (1978:135).

Phenomenology is the theoretical framework that would allow for an "epistemological flexibility" (Stoller 1997:116) to sufficiently contextualize my interactions with Rahida, Akosua and the other people I have met at Makola Market.

During the first two months of dissertation fieldwork, I outlined a rudimentary map of Makola to illustrate some of the main areas for kayayei whereabouts. I interviewed Accra residents who were frequent Makola shoppers. None of them remember seeing kayayei before the 1990s. Conversely, many of the kayayei with whom I work who are younger than 25-years-old had no older relatives who had migrated to Accra specifically for kayayei work. Indeed, kayayei are not the African market women ethnographers write about most often (Robertson 1983, Clark 1994).

Achille Mbembe contends that, “research on Africa has hardly stood out for its attempts to integrate nonlinear phenomena into its analyses. Similarly, it has not always been able to account for complexity” (2001: 16-17). I turn toward phenomenology and feminist theory in order to position kayayei within the social narratives about women at Accra’s largest market. Because of my personal relationships and background, I wanted to theorize the interplay between the personal and the political enmeshed in the social encounters I’ve had with women at the market.

Rahida’s circular migration is imbued with a wealth of knowledge related to migration, gendered work and the ways in which people construct livelihoods of survival in increasingly service oriented neoliberal economies. In the following section, I examine how phenomenology can, “help avoid reductionist views of social and cultural transformation” to create a richer, more vivid understanding of local experiences of change (Mills 1997:55). The intersection between the self and social history mapped within head porter mobility provides salient referents to the production of culture.

PHENOMENOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Originally² crafted by Edmund Husserl at the turn of the 20th century, phenomenology emerged as a response to the popular, yet problematic science of metaphysics. Metaphysical inquiry has a sustained history within philosophy, starting with Plato and Aristotle. Despite continued criticisms, metaphysics maintains its appeal as a Kantian explanation of transcendental knowledge. Metaphysics was conceived as a science of pure-being that addresses with the presuppositions that exist beneath the surface of ordinary science (Collingwood 1940). Husserl (1931) used phenomenology to assert an absolute subjectivity that moves away from transcendence and looks toward the social life of humans.

Husserl describes phenomenology as “the science of the essence of consciousness” focused on the defining moments of intentionality. Phenomenology unearths the perception of consciousness without judging the validity of thinking and existence. By approaching intentionality explicitly, “in the first person”, Husserl’s *Ideas* (1931) creates phenomenology as a descriptive analysis. The study of appearances or phenomena seeks to understand the factors that have created the emergence of experience.

Many philosophers succeed Husserl’s (1931) original premises and discuss the applicability, methodology and results of phenomenology. Heidegger (1962) rejects a metaphysical approach to being and characterized Husserl’s phenomenology as a transcendental idealism. Heidegger concludes that all appearances (or phenomena) are representations that have of identities on their own. There is an interpretative nature of all

² Husserl is widely recognized as the originator of the phenomenology movement. Husserl was a student of Franz Brentano who discussed descriptive, phenomenological psychology as the root of all conscious acts. However, Husserl grounds phenomenology as a rejection of the interplay between the authentic and inauthentic acts originally conceptualized by Brentano. Husserl argues phenomenology is ‘absolutely subjective’ because the phenomenologist explore the production of assumptions.

experience, which is thereby subjective. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1962) addresses the temporality of existence. Utilizing a time-space continuum to locate one's sense of self, Heidegger reminds social theorists, through his concept of *dasein*, that the way human beings see themselves is not necessarily intentional, rational or 'theoretically transparent' (Moran 2000:239). However, sociality is an authentic experience and a method of understanding within the context of being with others.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre (1942) asserts freedom as the basis of existential human existence through the ability to structure meaning for the present and future (Moran 2000: 362). There is no dividing line between being and the appearance of being. Concerned with sociality and being-in-the-world, Merleau-Ponty (1964) problematizes Sartre's view that phenomenological description reveals human beings to be pure, isolated, and free consciousnesses. Stressing the role of an active, involved body in all human knowledge, Merleau-Ponty (1964) extends Husserl and Heidegger's analyses of perception and the focus on the "body image". Merleau-Ponty (1964) culls the contours of a bodily experience through its significance in activity. Merleau-Ponty knows the body as an embodied encounter rather than a mental trajectory.

Rahida's migration is an "embodied transformation" located within, and beyond the market (Dundon 2005:23). Experience is not the inventory of one's brains but the perceptions of one's body. Migration is not about moving minds, but moving bodies. If the body is central to experience, it is a matter how people think differently when they are doing rather than simply thinking about what they were doing.

Coupling the rejection of Cartesian duality that privileges the mind over the body, Merleau-Ponty (1945) describes phenomenology as the direct description of human experiences. This resonates with anthropology's production of ethnography. Irrespective of

rationality, experience creates knowledge. No human being ever has total knowledge, even if Western traditions attempt structure truth as a pathway to totality. Life-worlds consist of acts such as remembering, deciding, willing, valuing, expecting, hoping, and so on. It “seems impossible to imagine any anthropology without a Western epistemological link” (Mudimbe 1988:19). However scholars have created distance from objectivity and positivist paradigms, especially since experience rarely fits neatly within rational and justified assertions.

Stoller (1997) cautions that there has been an anthropological neglect to the senses, particularly the disjunctive expressions of taste, sight, touch, hearing and smell that extend outside of western classifications. Western epistemologies place an ontological primacy on vision that often causes ethnographers to ignore how people socially organize through non-visual perceptions. Sense driven scholarship, grounded in phenomenology, rejects that premise. Ga people in southern Ghana often “hear scents”³. The Dassanetch of southwest Ethiopia affirm modes of production and class identity through smell (Almagor 1997). Songhay sorcerers “eat power” and sibling rivalries manifest through the taste of foul sauces (Stoller and Olkes 1987, Stoller 1997).

Geurts’ (2003) sensuous ethnography describes how engaging in the bodily modes of storytelling with Anlo-Ewe people shaped the understanding of how identity is felt beyond being thought and talk among Ghanaians. In Geurts’ (2003) experience, knowledge was action culled through sensation. The influence of phenomenology for this analysis is, “the manner in which it has steadfastly protected the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of understanding the nature of knowledge” (Moran 2000:21). Because the life-world is a universe of significations where the senses are provinces of agency, humans are bound to one another.

³ In casual conversation, people often talk about appetizing foods in this context.

Phenomenological inquiry never produces unquestionable knowledge because, “the most important lesson that the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction” (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 14). Guided by the senses, head porters like Rahida are expert social observers when anthropologists recognize their lens. Ingold insists the problem of perception is the question of, “how anything can be translated from the outside to the inside” (2000:245). However, all human sciences are born from the ‘praxis’ of everyday life and continue to play a role in it (Kultgen 1975).

Csordas (1990) offers three useful propositions that allow anthropologists to frame embodied sensory experiences. The first is that ‘sensory regimes’ are the relationship between language and experiential perception. Second, the senses are an intersubjective force. Third, embodiment comes with being grounded to a place and the sensory perspectives of alienation. There are prominent body symbols kayayei share that connect to Csordas’ propositions--from the language head porters speak, the kohl that often lines their eyes and the headscarves they wear for modesty. These “sensuous regimes” allow anthropologists to understand the ways in which head porters are, “negotiated, foregrounded, backgrounded, remembered and forgotten in relation to one another” and oriented “to a greater whole (lineage, the community, the region, the state)” (Stoller 2004:820).

Amina said when at home she thinks of herself as someone’s daughter, sibling and friend. In Accra, she is a “hustler”, scrambling to make money. The first time she was robbed was when her flip-flops were taken from underneath her while she slept. Amina explained how she is a “shadow” in Accra. The head-carrying pan makes her feel “street”. Being a head porter demands that Amina “come out of her feet” in order to secure money. Amina only hears one name when she is hired; kayayoo. It is up to anthropologists to pay

close attention to the structural forces that determine actions as well as the associated nuanced contestations embedded in these interactions.

The initial contact and the subsequent work at Makola confront Amina's body with threats of non-being. The mimetic practice of becoming a human shopping trolley to earn money disciplines Amina's body to a particular way of being. But these interactions do not occur in isolation or in a detached manner. Amina reacts to this opposition to her humanness. Amina reclaims her selfhood in the ordinary moments when she uncovers her hair, calls her sister at home or cooks with other women in her line of work. This creates diverse existential meanings.

Gender is a structured, contested and augmented cultural construction enacted and transformed by a multitude of social agents (Comaroff 1985). Women often engage in limiting practices of behavior that seemingly undermine their agency (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). Harding states anthropologists should never appear as, "an invisible autonomous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete specific desires and interests" (1987:9). Thus, ethnographic research, grounded within phenomenology and feminist anthropology provides a further nuanced understanding of the urbanization taking place in West Africa, and the role of rural-urban migration by Ghanaian women in these processes.

Head carrying is normative female behavior, but there are specific ways in which being kayayei shapes the kinds of experiences that these women access at the market. There are limitations and liberties women face because they are women. These limitations extend further because head porters are outsiders to Accra. They are poor, uneducated transporters. However, head porters' bodies are neither pure physicality, nor passive receptacle of cultural forces. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf (2003) couches phenomenology in a gendered African

perspective that is useful. The body is, “the fundamental synthesizing agency that weaves the world into meaning and the source of emerging knowledge, value and signification” (Bakare-Yusef 2003:7). To pay attention to embodiment among kayayei is to address gender differentiations of labor and the typologies of the urban landscape---to power and resistance as well as articulations of identity.

There are two areas where kayayei consistently gathered in large numbers at Makola. These were Rawlings Park and in the area around Tema Station. Before dawn, there is an uncharacteristic absence of noise on the streets of Makola Market. Near 31s December Road, it is easy to spot dozens of women and children sleep atop and inside the bowls of metal carrying pans. Night watchmen guard market wares stored in shops and freight containers. About a month after I arrived in Ghana to conduct fieldwork in December 2007, I noticed a group of head porters at Tema Station as I left a late night party. Tema Station is the same place that marked my initial arrival at Makola when I was an undergraduate. The next day, out of curiosity, I drove to Tema Station at three am. I had already noted the primary areas where kayayei roam and rest at Makola. I had light conversations with women, including Rahida. I had not spoken with women at Tema Station. During the day, the area is congested with foot, tro-tro and taxi traffic. The quiet of the night hours seemed a suitable time as any to introduce myself to the kayayei I saw there. There are about a half dozen wooden tables set up in the lot between parked tro-tros. I parked adjacent to the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park that is about two blocks from Tema Station.

Newspaper articles frequently discuss how head porters engaged in sex work at Tema Station in order to supplement their wages (Yeboa and Appiah-Yeboah 2009). Since I felt safe to roam the streets of Accra at late hours, I thought this would exclude me from confronting the illicit informal work that characterizes most cities. I often stayed late at

parties hosted at the nearby Accra Arts Centre. I had mostly genial conversations with nightshift taxi drivers and tipsy revelers. In Accra, I never had any experiences that mirrored the violent encounters that checkered my adolescence in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

I wandered into Tema Station with plans to talk with porters there in order to have a diverse group of head porters represented in my dissertation. I did not have a systematic approach gaining rapport with head porters, nor was I interested in making broad claims about 'the head porters of Makola Market'. Still, I struggled to feel like I had started fieldwork, despite my interview notes and reflections on interactions with women at the market.

I stood at the traffic light next to main entrance of the station. After a few minutes, I took a seat on a wooden bench under a tree. Tema Station had been turned from its daytime purpose as a bus terminal. There were more than 30 people who milled around the area. I watched women sell shots of Kasapreko, the local gin, to night watchmen. People danced on the sandy ground as music emanated from battery-powered radios propped on women's stalls. There were wooden benches and plastic chairs in the parking spaces vacated by busses. Men sat to drink and casually converse with women who pass by. Tema Station, as the entry to the market, also serves as a locus of gender significations and sexuality (Seligmann 2004). A woman walked by in high heels. One of the men called to her and she dipped her head close to him to talk as he sipped a beer. Their words could not be heard over the music. After a few words, the man stood and ushered the woman behind a nearby freight container.

Another group of women sold smoked fish and banku, a cooked mixture of fermented corn and cassava dough. The men tapped their fingers into small plastic satchels that hold hot peppers. They alternated their bites between banku, pepper and smoked fish.

The smell of marijuana wafted through the air. A woman in flip-flops stood atop of large silver pan. She wore a sheer black dress and looked up and down the road as she puffed on a marijuana joint. After I stood nearby for a few more minutes, the woman asked me to “move away”. She said my conspicuous presence was “driving away” her sex work business.

I stepped deeper into Tema Station and exchanged greetings with a drink seller. She told me how the dilapidated shack behind her wooden table rents by the quarter hour. The shadows of the freight containers were used for sex when there are no security guards. By kerosene fueled light, I saw a half a dozen more women selling locally brewed Star beer, bottled sodas and bags of water. I introduced myself to Adisa, a petite Ghanaian woman with braided hair and deep-set brown eyes. She stood next to three metal pans. The day-market is obviously closed, but I asked Adisa, whether she is a head porter.

“Not right now”

“Do you porter when the market is open?”

Adisa nodded.

“I want to learn about kayayei and write about them”.

Adisa asked, “Will you pay?”

I explained how I am a student with little money.

Adisa replied, “Give me money. Pay for my talk”

“I am a university student. I don’t have any money”.

Adisa playfully slapped my hand and said, “You white people are funny. Always pretend you don’t have money. If you pay, we go talk”.

I replied, “No one gave me money to be here. I saved and borrowed to be here. I certainly don’t have money to give to anyone else”.

“Okay”. Adisa shrugged her shoulders and walked away.

This was not the first time someone called me white in Ghana. Because of my dreadlocks, which are strongly associated with the musician Bob Marley and Rastafarianism, some Ghanaians presume I am Jamaican. Occasionally I am called “white”. Whiteness, as a category in Ghana, often marks foreign-ness and perceived affluence, rather than skin-color (Akyeampong 2006). Ghanaians sometime describe me as “bright” because of my less than mahogany skin color. No matter what, I am always a foreigner, with the rare shouts of “Coconut!” to mark me someone who may be brown on the outside but definitely white, privileged and separate on the inside.

However, I was annoyed by Adisa’s statement. As a working class, first generation college student and black American woman, I was completely unfamiliar with this categorization of assumed privilege. The moment became even more complicated when a security guard introduced himself as Ray and explained that he overheard my conversation with Adisa. After our introductions, Ray asked, “You be supi or something?”

Supi is Ghanaian Pidgin English for lesbian (Dankwa 2009).

I asked Ray, “Why do you think say I be supi?” (Why do you think I am a lesbian?)

Ray replied, “You ‘dey chat this and that with that ashawo girl so I think say, you want do the this thing. If it be so, make you go to Circle (another large bus station in Accra) where they do that sort of thing”. (You are here chatting with a female prostitute so I thought that you would want to do that sort of thing. If that is so, you should go to Kwame Nkrumah Circle where they do that sort of thing)

The conversations with Ray and Adisa highlight the need to address tensions regarding the positionality and representation of the ethnographer. Identity is always grounded in social interaction, with categories externally defined (Jenkins 1994). These

externally defined categories, such as race, gender class and sexuality place people in specific historical contexts. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) describes this as an “outsider-within” that can play out in everyday conversations, like the one I discussed with Adisa, who is an agent of knowledge. Adisa knows there is an unequal power relation between us, even if I do not want to align myself with privilege. I wanted to avoid creating a false gender identification of universal solidarity with Adisa. In some ways, this goal runs counter to the “the quality of belonging with or being at ease with black women” I meet in and around Makola Market (Dunham 1994:2).

I want to highlight how social engagements engender the contexts, performances and diverse cultural codes. This constitutes fertile data, particularly since anthropology, as a discipline, has marginalized black women, as both ethnographers and as subjects (McClaurin 2001). Feminist anthropology has no “uniform canon of research principles” but does herald the importance of critical engagements in relationship to the process of producing ethnography (Stacey 1988:21). Because there is no monolithic feminist position, I ground the theoretical framework of the dissertation in the traditions of feminist anthropology that move away from white middle-class articulations of power differentiations, to more polyvocal assessments of racialized gender struggles, sexualized class stratification and the exclusion of sexual minorities.

Numerous seminal texts explore the politics of encounters for women ethnographers. The recognition of the self guides several feminist ethnographies. Lila Abu-Lughod elucidates, “To speak more plainly and concretely, imagine the women fieldworker who does not deny that she is a woman and is attentive to gender in her own treatment, her own actions, and the interaction of people in the community she is writing about” (1990:26). This feminist approach centralizes the complexities of women’s migrant experiences.

In some cases, an ethnographer's perception of her marginality is challenged in the remoteness of location in the field (Tsing 1993). Politics of visibility imbue the field experience and feminist anthropologists strive to translate that embodiment into the ethnographic discourse. This means that, "my subjectivity, my sense of myself as a person, my existence as a subject in the world were constructed through the conjunction of ideas, meanings, images, discourses and actions emanating from different social and cultural domains" (McClaurin 2001:103). I use phenomenology to translate that gendered embodiment into the ethnographic discourse.

The feminist turn to narrative engages the social function of multiple intersections. Perception begins in the body and end in objects, rather than the other way round. This dissertation approaches cultural mediation, "in apprehension of one's environment and apprehension of one's own orientational state within the behavioral environment of the self" (Geurts 2002:15). The purpose of this, suggests Oakley (1981) is for feminist researchers to live the fieldwork experience vibrantly and reflexively. This way, conversational interviews allow ethnography to reflect a form of mutual desire and aspiration. Thus, as a theory that avoids making absolute claims about social relations, a phenomenological research agenda understands the tremendous social changes that give rise to the identities included in practices of existence. I analyze the form and performance of head porters in relation to laborious experiences of their work in the informal sector.

Phenomenology and feminist anthropology allow me to ground the locus of this dichotomy in bodies that permeate with multiple perspectives and articulations of meaning, from emancipation and subjugation to survival. Kayayei embody a type of anonymity, but that does not preclude them from having aesthetic, cultural or epistemological concerns.

CHAPTER THREE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GHANA AND THE MAKING OF ETHNICITY

Ghana is a country with 23 million inhabitants, from 60 ethnic groups (World Bank and Ghana Statistical Services 2008). There are approximately three million people who reside in Ghana's capital, Accra. English is the official language and there are 50 languages and 300 dialects spoken throughout the country. Ninety percent of Ghanaians speak an indigenous language in their daily discourse (Dakubu 1988). Throughout the nation-state, ethnic identity often corresponds with language groups, regional affiliations and modes of production (Lentz 2000). The four most prominent ethnic groups are the Akan (45.3%), Mole-Dagbani ⁴(15.2%), Ewe (11.7%) and Ga-Adange (7.3%). Groups with smaller percentages of the population are the Guan (4%), Gurma (3.6%), Grusi (2.6%), Mande-Busanga (1%) and a variety of other groups (Ghana Census 2000).

The Akan divide into 11 subgroups of related, but not necessarily mutually intelligible languages groups. These linguistic subgroups also demarcate ethnic identities. The most dominant of these are the Asante, who speak Twi (Gocking 2003). The Asante are popular among anthropologists because of their practice of matrilineal descent, military might and strong archaeological record (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1967). The coastal resident Akan, the Fante historically lived in the central region of the country, where Cape Coast and Elmina Castle were built. The Fante have had the longest contact with Europeans, due to their residence near colonial and pre-colonial European forts that line the coast.

⁴ Variations include Mole-Dagbane, Moshi-Dagomba and Mole-Dagbon for this language group. Mossi people have also been describe as Moshi. The geographic area is called Ashanti, while the people are described as Asante. The spellings of these cultures, language classifications and geographic areas have changed significantly over time. Throughout this dissertation, I follow the most prominent usages made by Ghanaian scholars.

Mole-Dagbani is the second largest language group in Ghana. The name comes from two closely related languages. The Mole/Mossi people speak the Moore languages. The Dagomba speaks Dagbani and mostly reside in the Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions of the country. These languages are part of the Gur language group, which is one of the major language groups in the savanna of West Africa, not just Ghana (Lentz 2000). Most Moore language- speaking people live in the neighboring country, Burkina Faso (Dakubu 1988).

Mostly pastoralists and small-scale agriculturalists, Mole-Dagbani language-speaking people follow patrilineal rules of descent, which some suggest is reinforced by the long history of Islamic influence in the area (Lentz 2000). The Northern Region is heterogeneous because it is also home to many Hausa, Gurunsi, Frafra and Fulani people. These diverse groups engage in trans-Saharan trade and are linked through the prominence of Islam in the areas. Conversely, Ghana has the highest percentage of Christians in West Africa (Debrunner 1967). Most Christians reside in southern Ghana, while northern Ghana is predominately Muslim. Animist religious practices are prevalent throughout the country.

The third largest ethnic group, the Anlo-Ewe, comprise 13 percent of Ghana's population, who live mainly on the eastern side of Lake Volta. The Ewe people have historically live in southeastern Ghana, with transnational ethnic communities across Ghana, Togo and Benin. Ga-Adangbe people are the indigenous inhabitants of Accra, the Eastern Region, Togo and Benin. Ga groups generally occupy Accra, while the Adangbe reside in the eastern plains. More than any ethnic group in Ghana, a majority of Ga people live in Accra (Yeboah 2008).

The above broad generalizations about ethnic groups and languages in Ghana are often taken for granted truths within the political economy of Ghana (Ayittey 1991). While

“certain social categories are meaningful and important to know, it does not follow that these should be swallowed whole as *analytical units*.” (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007:75). In this chapter, I examine several tendencies in the intersection between ethnicity, history and development in Ghana in order to ground the discourse related to the pre-colonial history of Ghana. In order to assert that the North of Ghana functions as a monolith in discourse on modernity, I examine the historical marginalization of Northern Ghana. I examine the reification of ethnicity in Ghana and its ties to the development of agricultural and industrial modes of production. This economic marginalization, both economically and culturally predates colonialism, yet informs much of the institutionalization of ethnic identity that occurred during the colonial period.

The spread of capitalism in the region engendered how colonization institutionalized ethnicity along geographic boundaries via state societies and perceptions of civilization. I also examine the role of anthropological monographs to institutionalize these disjunctive categories of ethnicities and tribes in Ghana. The broader goal of this chapter is conceptualize these historical modes in order to frame how women’s mobility in Ghana facilitated the spread of capitalism in West Africa. This is necessary because the constructs of ethnicity, modernity and state discourse are salient within Ghana’s urban development policies. Development policies, which reverberate throughout the informal market, impact the livelihoods of kayayei in the city in numerous ways that I will discuss more specifically in chapter five.

When Trade Became Colonization

A number of ancient kingdoms thrived in the area of what is now the Republic of Ghana. The Empire of Ghana was actually not one of these. The Empire or Ghana, also called the Wagadou Empire existed in southeastern Mauritania and Western Mali from about 300 BCE to the 13th century. The archeological records indicate that the capital city, Koumbi Saleh, at the cusp of the Sahara Desert, was a large royal town, with copper textiles and grand architecture (Levtzion and Hopkins 2000). Through the trans-Sahara trade in gold and salt, camels were introduced to West Africa. In 1957, Ghana was chosen as the name for the newly independent Gold Coast in homage to this ancient kingdom.

The Republic of Ghana is on the West African coast, between the countries of Burkina Faso to the north, Cote d'Ivoire to the east and Togo to the west. The southern part of the country borders the Gulf of Guinea, which has a fishing resourceful coast that filters to the Atlantic Ocean. The Equator and the Prime Meridian intersect in the gulf. The Volta River, the largest in Ghana, drains into the Gulf of Guinea. The country has three distinct climate zones; the grassland of the south, the thick rain forest in the southwest, and the dry hot savannah of the north.

Centralized and multiethnic state societies emerged in Ghana (the western Sudan) towards the end of the 15th century. By the late 1500s, most of the ethnic groups that comprise the population of modern Ghana were permanently settled in the region. Having migrated from the Sudanian Savanna, the tropical area that runs east and west across the continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the mountains of Ethiopia and Somalia, residents of these kingdoms engaged in long-distance trade across the Sahel and Sahara with Arab traders (Gocking 2005). Along with this trade came the institutionalization of Islam, an influence that remains strong in northern Ghana.

As early as the 3rd century BCE, the Sudanian Savanna of modern Ghana was populated with Mole-Dagbani language speakers. Saharan desertification had led to migration to larger river basins. Oral histories explain that the Mamprusi, Dagomba and Gonja, Yatenga and Wagadugu states were the earliest kingdoms of present day Ghana (Lentz 2000). Centralized states, such as the Mamprussi, Dagomba, Gonja and Mossi Kingdoms existed well into the 15th century. Mole-Dagbani states were involved in long distance trade through the Sahel and across the Sahara with Arab traders. The names of these early states in pre-colonial Ghana correspond to contemporary ethnic groups, rather than strictly to geographic area (Lentz and Nugent 2000)

Between the 16th and 18th centuries, these kingdoms expanded their influence through slave raiding and kidnapping wars against non-centralized communities such as the Ewe people, who resided near Lake Volta. This lucrative enterprise spurred an, “indigenous slave trade linking desert, savannah and [the] forest belt” (Eguavoen 2008: 43). This internal trade of war captives would position the northern region as a staple supplier of Africans for the Transatlantic Slave Trade (Kankpeyeng 2009).

When the Portuguese arrived at the shores of the Gulf of Guinea in 1471, they built a massive fort in a quest to secure gold from the famed Asante gold mines in the hinterland (Anquandah 1999). The Castle of Sao Jorge a Mina, more commonly called A Mina (the mine) was a quickly established as a stronghold for Portugal’s trading enterprises in the region’s interior. Christianity arrived with Portuguese Catholic missionaries by the late 1500s (Dickson 1966).

The river that drains into the Gulf of Guinea, the Portuguese named the Volta River. The Volta proved to be an advantageous access point. The Volta River facilitated the transport of gold to the Atlantic Ocean. Gold, which the Asante held in abundance, was a

lucrative trade commodity along with ivory. The labor of enslaved Africans from nearby kingdom of Benin allowed the Portuguese to introduce sugar to the area in the late 16th century as part of their trade with the Asante (Holsey 2008). The sources of labor and exports, alongside “interregional slave-trading activities were to be the launching pad for the transatlantic slave trade that came to define the relationship between Europe and Africa” (Gocking 2005:26).

Despite attempts by the Spaniards, French and English, the Portuguese held a monopoly on A Mina and the coastal areas around the fort for over a century. By the end of the 16th century, the Gold Coast, supplied one-tenth of the world's gold supply (Daaku 1971). The Dutch arrived in the 1642, captured A Mina Castle and expelled the Portuguese from the coast. The name of the castle shifted from A Mina, to Elmina Castle, which still stands as the first example of European architecture on West Africa (Holsey 2008). Since the surrounding town of Elmina had 150 years of contact with foreigners from abroad, the area was given the nickname *Aborekyir kaakra* (Little Europe) (Holsey 2008). For much of the sixteenth century, Europeans centralized on the coastal areas and left control over the interior to the indigenous populations.

On Dutch heels came the English, French and Swedes who dotted the Gulf of Guinea coast with fortresses to battle for control of gold, sugar and ivory exports. Christianborg Castle, built by the Danes in 1661 and Cape Coast Castle, seized from the Swedes by the English in 1665, are some of the remaining forts from the more than 100 Europeans built on the Gold Coast by 1800 (Anquandah 1999). Because the area was so lucrative, Europeans named the area the Gold Coast (Gocking 2005).

Forts were built with permissions granted by residents of coastal regions. The Ga, Fante and Ewe people lived in autonomous towns along the country's shores (Gocking

2005:27). In competition with traders who supplied the Asante Confederation of the interior, the towns of Cape Coast and Elmina thrived as cosmopolitan trading centers for British and Swedish trade. Pidgin English became the lingua franca along the Ghanaian coast (Anquandah 1982). Protestant mission schools coincided with the spread of British influence on the coast during the 17th century.

The Asante, who are members of the Twi speaking Akans, have the most cohesive archaeological history and were located in what is now central Ghana (Gocking 2003). As a community of people, the Asante migrated from the Niger River area after the fall of the Empire of Ghana in the 13th century (Braffi 1984). The word Asante is derived from *osa nit* (because of war). Upon settlement in the forest belt of modern Ghana, the Asante dispersed into competitive and often antagonistic states such as the Denkyira, Akwamu and Akyem (Rediker 2007: 87).

There are two important historical narratives that converge at an important place in Asante culture. Akan political systems relied on clans with each headed by a chief called the *Amanhene*. The Oyoko clan settled in what is now Kumasi, the capital city of the present day Asante Region in Ghana. Due to conflicts with other clans, the Oyoko clan built alliances with other groups into a loose confederation. The Oyoko clan became part of a new elite in the region. Due to their procurement of guns from the Dutch, the Oyoko became known as the *awurafam* (masters of firepower). Thus, “political power grew out of the barrel of a gun” (Rediker 2007:87).

In the late 17th century, the Asante centralized their power under the leadership of Osei Tutu I. According to Asante history, a priest named Okomfo Anokye and his friend Osei Tutu called a meeting of clan heads to discuss land settlements. During this meeting in 1690, Okomfo Anokye commanded the heavens to send a golden stool. During the meeting,

a golden stool floated down from the skies and landed on the lap of the clan leader Osei Tutu (Braffi 1984). Okomfo Anokye pronounced the Golden Stool a symbolic representation of the Asante royal throne (Boateng 1996). After this miracle, the clan leaders in attendance swore allegiance to Osei Tutu. As their new leader, Osei Tutu I of the newly founded Asante Confederacy declared war on the non-aligned Denkyira clan. After the Asante Confederations' success, the Golden Stool became widely seen as a sacred representation of the Asante identity (Kyerematen 1969).

The Golden Stool was a mass of solid gold that stands 18 inches from the ground. The seat is about two feet long and one foot wide. Treated as a living being, with regular feeding intervals, celebrations and festivals, the stool holds the *sunsum* (spirit) of all the Asante people (Kyerematen 1969). Conflict over the Asante stool would become a source of war between the Asante Confederacy and the British during the early 20th century.

The Asante skills of war proved to be lucrative. The Asantes began trading in slaves in the 16th century when the Portuguese introduced American maize as an export crop (Carney 2005). Inter-regional markets became more regular when Europeans started to purchase rice from the north as a surplus provision (Carney 2005). Slavery was a significant part of the Asante economy and northern goods were often handled through Asante middle men.

After the expulsion of the Portuguese, the Dutch became the Asantes most significant trading partner. With the consolidation of Asante Confederacy power, there were eighty thousand men in the army by 1780. Over half of these men carried arms (Hosley 2008). Through the 17th and 18th century, the Asante frequently raided the northern hinterland for humans to sell. The ease of this was facilitated by the strict gun embargo the Asante Confederacy held against the northern area until the turn of the 20th century

(Konczacki and Konczacki 1977). The power of the gun and the unification of clans allowed the Asante Confederacy to control much of what would become the Republic of Ghana by the end of the 18th century.

The Asante primarily traded gold and slaves with the Dutch, while their principle adversary, the Fante Confederacy, traded with British throughout the 17th and 18th centuries (Chamlee-Wright 1997). The Fante acted as intermediaries for trades between the Asante and Europeans through strong control over coastal access points. The Asante ignored the British abolition of slavery in 1807 and continued to furtively trade with Europeans on the coast (Chamlee-Wright 1997).

Tensions rose when Fante communities harbored fugitive domestic slaves from the Asante Confederacy that same year (Grier 1992). The Asantes enacted a deadly invasion to the Gold Coast. The Asante plundered the coastal region in the Asante-Fante war of 1806-1807. Successive invasions in 1811 and 1814 led the Fante Confederacy to enter into a protectorate agreement with the British in 1815 (Grier 1992). These invasions disrupted the export trade throughout the area. To protect their financial interests, a consortium of local Dutch, British and Danish local authorities known as the African Company of Merchants, signed an agreement that recognized Asante sovereignty in 1817 (Mamdani 1996). This agreement also acknowledged Asante Confederacy's authority over the coastal areas, including the Fante Confederacy and groups closer to Accra.

New trade commodities, such as teak and cotton were introduced as an alternative to slaves. Slaves in the Caribbean, who may have originally been forced migrants from West Africa, now produced cotton that was then imported back to West Africa. Cotton was imported to the Gold Coast, where the Asante sold the raw materials to northern peasants.

In the non-farming season, cotton weaving was one of many extra subsistence activities (Johnson 1974)

Throughout much of the 19th century, the Fante and Ga people along the coast relied on British protection to resist Asante invasions. In 1824, the British Crown removed British merchants from agreements with the Asante. The British charged Governor Charles MacCarthy with the task to secure British forts, enforce the abolition of the slave trade and economically support Fante resistance to the Asante Confederacy (Johnson 1986). Later that year, MacCarthy declared war on the Asante Confederacy. At the battle of Nsamankow, the Asante army ambushed MacCarthy and his troops. The governor was killed, along with seven officers and all but 20 of the 400 soldiers (Grier 1992).

In 1826, with the support of the British, Fante, Ga, Denkyira, Akyem and Akwamu forces avenged the crushing defeat of Governor MacCarthy. After this battle at Dodowa, the coalition's success led the Asante to sign a treaty. In 1831, the Asante recognized the independent states of Denkyira and the Fante Confederacy. The Ga, Akyem and Akwamu were agreed to remain under British protection.

Until the Bond of 1844, a treaty drawn between Britain and Fante chiefs, British rule was not codified into law. The Bond, as a recognition of "the power and jurisdiction" of British administrators, conceded to the British, judiciary powers to adjudicate all "serious crimes" on the Gold Coast (Grier 1992:24). This was the start of formal colonial law on the Gold Coast in exchange for "protected trade" with Fante traders along the coast. The Ga people of Accra also signed the Bond in the interest of economic security.

Through the Bond, Britain expanded their presence on the Gold Coast. England claimed the entire coastal region as a "Protected Territory". Through the British colonial standard of indirect rule, by 1850, Britain relied on Fante chiefs to facilitate their influence in

the Gold Coast. This increase in British common law in the colony led to disputes between protected territory and sovereign states over the control of the timber trade and gold mining in the Asante region.

Four Anglo-Asante Wars took place between 1823 and 1896. When Britain purchased Elmina Castle from the Dutch in 1874, Asante military power was severely weakened. The purchase of firearms was lost to the confederacy with the Dutch departure. Still, the Asante Confederacy did not come under colonial rule until 1901. In 1893, Asantehene Nana Prempeh I rejected British offers to become a British Protectorate. In 1896, a British expedition force arrived in Kumasi, the seat of power for the Asante Region. The British arrested Nana Prempeh I, his mother and numerous advisors. The governor demanded retribution for payments not made to the British during the treaty of 1874. The Asantehene was imprisoned at Elmina Castle and the Asante region was declared a British Protectorate.

In 1900, a new British governor, Sir Frederic Hodgson visited Kumasi to announce the banishment of Nana Prempeh I and levied fines against the Asante for British losses in Anglo-Asante wars. At the conclusion of the meeting with the Asante rulers, Hodgson demanded the surrender of the Golden Stool so that no new *Asantehene* could be enthroned. To further the insult, Hodgson demanded to sit on the stool, the site of Asante power and identity (Brempong 2000). The Asante did not oblige Hodgson because the stool was hidden in the countryside for protection.

The governor's position clarified the point that the *Asantehene's* imprisonment was not a temporary one. Nana Prempeh I was moved from Elmina Castle to Freetown Sierra Leone as a British prisoner of war (Brempong 2000). When Hodgson departed to the British fort at Kumasi, the Asante decided to act against the colonizers. The leaders of the

resistance chose the queen mother (the sister of the former *Asantehene*), Yaa Asantewaa to lead the resistance forces. Throughout 1900, Yaa Asantewaa led a siege against British troops at their Kumasi fort that lasted for several months. Yaa Asantewaa and her 14 advisors were only captured after a British mission of 1,400 soldiers sent to quell the Asante army (Adu Boahen and Akyeampong 2003). Exiled to Seychelles Island, Yaa Asantewaa died in 1924. In 1930, her remains were exhumed to Kumase. Yaa Asantewaa is buried in the royal lineage cemetery at Edweso and is a much beloved figure in Asante history (Adu Boahen 2003). The War of the Golden Stool was the last violent Asante resistance against colonial advances. After a century of rebellion and revolution, the Asante Confederacy became a British colony in 1902.

The British colonial period saw the creation of three entities, the Gold Coast Colony, Asante Territory and Northern Territory. These three geographic areas had no political continuity, except as part of the British Empire. However, these three entities would later become the Republic of Ghana (Weiss 2005). The Asante and Northern Territories became protectorates, while the Gold Coast Colony was a European settlement. There were marked differences between these two categories. British interests would involve direct intervention and the assimilation of “natives” into British institutions in the colony. In contrast, protectorates fell under “modes of domination over a ‘free’ peasantry” (Mamdani 1996:17). The English created a state-based structure with native authorities as the subordinate to British officers. This would become the hallmark of the British Crown’s policy of “indirect rule” in Africa (Mamdani 1996). To facilitate indirect rule, ethnic determinations were made through the institutionalization of chiefs throughout the territories (Wallerstein 1960).

The hierarchical structures of the Asante Confederacy and royal lineages were already well known by the British through the Anglo-Asante Wars. In 1932, British commissioners

were responsible for collecting the histories and customs of the unfamiliar Northern Territories. The British wanted to codify the hierarchy of power in order to ensure the success of their indirect rule policy (Lentz 2001). Ghanaian intellectuals largely informed British perceptions of Ghanaian ethnic group and hierarchies. Scholars discussed common features of among people on the Gold Coast. Authors tended to ground ethnicity and tribal identity into primordial or constructionist notions. Ethnicity was connected to perceptions of a larger common heritage that is embodied (like the Akan affiliates) or as a political identity that ties the self-interest of various actors, like the Fante and Denkyira at the Battle of Dodowa (Lentz and Nugent 2000).

This British “ethnicization agenda” relied on concepts of a chieftaincy as a “well organized central authority whose rule is accepted by all creates a conflict” to make determinations of tribes (Lentz 2006:10). The term tribe became largely associated with the smaller “stateless” groups of the Northern Territories from which many kayayei call home. There was no interest in ethnicity as a “flexible and contested idiom” (Lentz and Nugent 2000:12). The Fante representative of the British Crown, George Ekem Ferguson described the organized communities of the Northern Territory as “wild tribes, naked living in independent family communities” (Lentz and Nugent 2000:9). Weiss states that, “George Ekem Ferguson’s investigation into the Asante hinterland revealed centralized kingdoms which existed side by side with so-called stateless or acephalous groups” (2005:6).

John Comaroff reminds that, “In as much as collective social identity always entails some form of communal self-definition, it is invariably founded on a marked opposition between ‘we’ and ‘others’; identity, that is in relation inscribed in culture” (1997:77). These accounts by Ferguson and others omit that much of what became the colonial Northern Territories had, prior-to the 18th century, been autonomous communities who lived in close

proximity to one another. Scholars also failed to note the continued rule of the Asante Confederacy to plunder this area during pre-colonial wars. Thus, 'tribes' in Ghana are an amalgamation of British colonial practices affirmed by social actors who, "moulded political and cultural traditions in accordance with their own self-interests" (Lentz and Nugent 2000:5).

For the goal of classifying groups, indigenous scholars focused on how Fante and Asante were part of a larger Akan ethnic enclave. Despite the competitive differences between the Asante, Denkyira and Fante, the Akan were framed as part of a cohesive lineage. This consolidation of divergent groups into a singular ethnic group known as Akan simultaneously created Others out of groups who did not belong to the Akan affiliate and settlement narratives (Lentz 2006).

Only centralized kingdoms were useful to British colonial administrators, "since they had identifiable rulers with whom one could negotiate and sign treaties" (Weiss 2005:6). In the Northern Territories, the British created chief structures between the Dagomba and Kokomba, two groups who had no previous continuous chieftaincy hierarchies. The Mole-Dagbani are the majority of Muslims in modern Ghana. This religious difference fueled stereotypes about "heathen barbarians" of the North in comparison to the "civilized" Christian descendants of *Aborekyir kaakra* (Little Europe) in the South (Holsey 2008:102).

Like the Akan, the Mole-Dagbani diverges into five groups that share the same oral history of origin. The Mamprussi, Mossi, Dagomba, Nanumba, and Gonja trace their history along a common oral narrative (Pellow and Chazen 1986). A father forbade his warrior princess daughter to marry because of her acute military intelligence. Distraught, the young woman fled on horseback and falls asleep under a tree. A prince from a neighboring community spots the woman asleep and sexually assaults her. From this assault, the woman

falls in love with the price and had a son. Their son, Gbewa becomes the first leader of the Mole-Dagbani kingdom (Lentz 2006). Gbewa migrated his people from the Lake Chad area to the south of the Niger bend in modern day Nigeria.

Through conquest and colonization, the Mole-Dagbani assimilated the Zamfara into their socio-political structure. Upon his Gbewa's death, his son, Zirile, succeeded him. When Zirile died, conflicts erupted over his successor among his three surviving brothers and their supporters. The resulting civil war split the Mole-Dagbani people. One formed the kingdom of Mamprussi and the other two formed the Dagomba and Nanumba. The Mamprussi later splintered to form the Mossi Kingdom. The fifth group, Gonja, migrated from what is currently Mali near the end of the 16th century. The oral history of Mole-Dagbani groups point to a common origin, but strong differences exist between these groups. Yet, colonists created hierarchies between groups that were inconsistent with these pasts.

Lentz and Nugent (2000) explain that, "before colonization, so the argument goes, Africans belonged simultaneously to a bewildering variety of social networks—nuclear and extended families, lineages, age sets, secret societies, village communities, diasporas, chiefdoms, states and empires. Loyalties and identities were complex, flexible and relatively amorphous, and certainly did not add up to clearly demarcated tribes living in well-defined and bounded territories" (2000:5). Colonial rule emphasized topographical differences between the Gold Coast, Asante Confederacy and the Northern Region. The primary area of British interests was the coastal region. The Asante Confederacy was annexed as a separate territory with a governor distinct from the legislative council on the Gold Coast. Northern Ghana became a secondarily annexed protected territory, where "the power of jurisdiction and legislation were kept separate from the colony" (Gocking 2005:46).

Prior to independence, the area north of the Asante Territory was known simply as the “Northern Territories of the Gold Coast” (Kelly and Bening 2007). The area covers 37,000 square miles. Even with indirect British rule in place, Lentz (2000) maintains that the divisions of upper east and upper west was along socio-ethnic lines with political implications largely ignored in the early anthropological record. These three colonial areas of Ghana became the start point for post-colonial demarcations of the ten administrative regions that make comprise contemporary Ghana. But this northern area is not simply a cartographic notion. All of the Ghana is heterogeneous and the north is no different. In the Northern territory, pre-colonial households were economically self-sufficient and dispersed. Indigenous groups were sustainable through horticultural, pastoral and semi-agricultural modes of production as well as enduring communal cooperation and distribution (Steady 1996). British colonialism honed capitalist practices that focused solely on resource extraction from the North. This was in the form of people, minerals and cash cropping. Resources were taken, but development was not to be given. Human transporters brought goods to the Asante region and railroad lines picked up where the people dropped goods off (Lentz 2006). There were no plans to include the Northern Territories in the railway plans of the 1920s (Chamlee-Wright 1997).

Through the categories of land and chieftaincy, indigenous groups delineated their perceptions of entitlement. Robertson and Berger (1986) explain how this stimulated economic inequality through individual accumulation that altered modes of production unevenly. The political economy of Northern Ghana is situated within the circulation of ethnic identities.

These constructs inform how ethnicity in Ghana has historically been interpreted in anthropological discourse. As Holsey states, “In common parlance, ‘the North’ can extend

into Burkina Faso, Ghana's northern neighbor, or refer to Hausa peoples or Muslims in general who are also associated with northern-ness" (2008:95). Anthropology was no exception in the ways in which western discourse constructed identity in Africa with a static, timeless unity and disconnected from the 'real' world.

In the 1940, Fortes and Pritchard published *African Political Systems*. Fellow structural-functionalist A.R. Radcliffe-Brown wrote the foreword for the text. In this text, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940) classified two types of African political systems that echo the sentiments of British colonizers; the centralized state society and the stateless society without clear leadership authority. That same year, Evans-Pritchard was the single author for *The Nuer*, a monograph about pastoral groups in East Africa. All of these texts operated from the premise that tribes were groups of people bound by a common language, territory and custom who lacked a centralized authority.

To prove the strength of structural functionalism in the forties and fifties, anthropologists were tasked to classify cultural traits within an empirical framework. Kinship was the index to determine whether a culture was productive. Functionalism strove to prove that societies belonged in cohesive systems. Participation observation would unlock the logic of the working systems of any given community. Institutions were categorized by the efficiency of their function. In order to bolster the scientific validity of anthropological research, Meyers Fortes wrote, "A culture is a unitary in so far as it is tied to a bounded social structure. In this sense I would agree that the social structure is the foundation of the whole social life of any *continuing* society" (1953: 22-23).

Throughout the 1950s, Fortes wrote monographs about the Tallensi tribes of the Northern Territories. With his colleagues, Edmund Leach, Evans-Pritchard, and Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes built careers in British social anthropology where they theorized on the social

structures of colonial West Africa and used what they perceived as empirical classifications to make these claims. Meyer Fortes (1953) and Sir Edwards Evan Evans-Pritchard (1969) were pioneer anthropologists who studied the historical particulars of Africa.

In opposition to these constructs, Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992:26) writes, “Whatever Africans share we do not have a common traditional culture, common languages, a common religious or conceptual vocabulary...The central cultural fact of African life remains not the same sameness of Africa’s cultures, but their enormous diversity”. In the seminal paper, *The Illusion of Tribes*, Aidan Southall (1997) levies a harsh critique of the use of the word tribes in anthropological discourse. Southall (1997) maintains that, besides the pejorative connotation of the word tribe, the notion obfuscate the cultural complexity that operates in the formation of identity.

Northern Ghana has been systematically “non-developed” before, during, and since colonization (Plange 1979). Songsore and Denkabe (1995) argue that labor migration is correlates to the industrial underdevelopment and policies of neglect with regard to Northern Ghana. Pre-colonial relationships between northern and southern Ghana, where kingdoms operated in opposition to decentralized ethnic groups, ensured that northern Ghana was the Other; a labor reserve for timber and mining enterprises outside of the region (World Development Report 2006). The institution of chiefs engendered persistent tensions and violent conflicts within Northern Ghana and between leaders in the North and other political parties dispersed throughout the country (Lentz 2006).

Northern Ghana has so “often been shaped by external forces” with so many people as “victims of their political environment” that “a mistrust against intruders and ‘*anything they brought*’ remains part of the collective memory” (Eguavoen 2008:45). Small-scale agricultural surpluses were transformed into trade commodities. Bacho concludes, “In economic terms,

Northern Ghana is best perceived as the backyard of Ghana. This is an entrenched view that has roots in the official policy of deliberate separate development pursued since its birth in 1902” (2001:21). This “birth” refers to the when Northern Ghana was subject to British colonial authority.

Practices of separation prior to colonization and since independence are also part of that narrative. Holsey notes, “The North as a distinct geographic locale has continued to have many negative connotations since the days in which it was regarded as a pool of potential slaves” (2008:95). These kinds of essentialized notions of ethnicity and geography frame “the North” of Ghana. Outside of the actual Region, people who hail from the Northern Region are often described as “Northerners” or “from the North”, despite the region’s ethnic diversity. Many Ewe people from the Eastern Region are described as Ewe, not Easterners. Fante people from Central Region are described as Fante or Akan descendants. This is not the same for people who hail from the agricultural backbone of the country.

The Asante Confederacy used the North as an easy source of captive slaves. The British followed along with their perception of the North as a reserve army of labor. In the early 1900s, males on northern farmers were recruited to work in Asante gold mines (Kimble 1963). The newly placed chiefs of the area earned payment for every laborer they sent (Plange 1979). The area that was once the collection area for the trans-Atlantic exportation of humans quickly turned into a fertile resource to hire men to engage in the dangerous work of mining. As a result of a historical “proletarianization”, increasingly common cycles of drought and an overwhelming lack of employment, migration to southern Ghana is a staple income opportunity for most northern farm communities (Plange 1979:12).

Women were conceived as “true” representatives of the “traditional” economy, while men were cast as facilitators of “developed” cash crops economies and vocational work. This is a historical trend that continues within perceptions of *kayayei* in Accra. Women have always carried foodstuff, as it is primarily men who carry out long distance caravan trade (Mikell 1989). In 1602, a Dutch trader wrote about women, “Carrying fish at least an hundred or two hundred miles into the land, for a great present.... so that oftentimes, they come heavily laden from the market as they went thither” (Pierter de Marees, quoted in Nypan 1960). European trading houses used a ‘passbook system’, whereby women receive supplies on credit in exchange for their distribution of goods throughout the colonial territory (Robertson 1984:99). Women were an important part of the colony’s transportation infrastructure, even though the “unprogressive nature” of tribes was often demarcated through images of women (Landau and Kaspin 2002).

Mobility in Ghana highlights how human labor operates as a flexible response to the spread of capitalism throughout the country during colonialism. Ninsin (1991) explains how colonization precipitated dually fueled informal work sectors. Commodity exports such as timber and mining were combined with the public works as essential formal means of development in Southern Ghana. Formal labor was afforded exclusively to men in the colonial administration. Clerical posts were given to educated men from the South.

A diverse informal sector was required to sufficiently support the formal work projects with laborers, transporters, buyers and middle-trades persons (Ninsin 1991). In 1910, the Gold Coast was the world’s largest producer of cocoa. Because the British made of cocoa an essential cash crop commodity, by the 1950s, Ghana provided over 50% of the world’s cocoa. Frimpong-Ansah (1992) contends that dual economic structures, where southern Ghana’s export sector overshadows rural farming economies characteristic of

northern Ghana remain is an institutionalized approach to economic stability in contemporary Ghana.



Map 3.1: The ten administration regions of Ghana (<http://www.ghanaembassy.org>)

On March 6, 1957, the British colony of the Gold Coast became the first independent nation-state in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, a staunch anti-colonialist and socialist was the country's first president. Nkrumah was an avid promoter of a united Africa due to the influences of Marcus Garvey's writing on the collegiate as an undergraduate at the Historically Black College and University, Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. As a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, Nkrumah corresponded with Trinidadian Marxist CLR James and other Trotskyites (James 1977). These interactions cemented Nkrumah's socialist leanings.

Under the tutelage of George Padmore, Nkrumah founded the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. The OAU is the predecessor for the African Union. Except

for Nigeria, Ghana is the only English speaking country in the region. The remaining fourteen West African nations are former colonies of France. Ghana is about 92,000 square miles, slightly larger than the UK. The country's capital and main city of commerce is Accra.

The Ghana flag reflects Nkrumah's Pan-African vision. The Ghana flag has red, gold and green horizontal stripes and a black star in the center. These colors represent the blood of the African people, the fertile lands of Ghana and the wealth of gold. The black star symbolizes freedom for the continent.

With a constitutional democracy as the basis for the government, the country has ten administrative regions. The north of Ghana is mainly savanna woodland and includes parts of the Northern, Brong-Ahafo, Upper East and Upper West regions. Most of southern Ghana is the evergreen or semi deciduous forest areas of the Central and Western Region. Tropical fruit grows well in the Volta Region. Gold is found in the Ashanti Region and is the country's largest export, followed by cocoa. Palm trees grow wild in the coastal Central Region. Cocoyam, the most important food crop for domestic consumption, is grown in the savanna woodlands of Northern Ghana, along with other staples such as shea trees, rice, maize, cassava, peanuts (called groundnuts in Ghana) and plantain. Ghana's capital, Accra, is located grassland area along the eastern coast (Gocking 2003).

When Ghana gained independence from Britain, the newborn nation-state was the world's leading producer of cocoa, was touted as a middle-income country and considered one of the most developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa with regard to infrastructure such as hospital schools and social services organizations (Gocking 2003). Nkrumah's interests in a socialist agenda for development led the state to finance most of the infrastructure development projects in Ghana. Under the umbrella of a "big push" agenda (Chamlee-Wright 1997:11), Nkrumah's government envisioned industrialization as a way to

reduce dependence on cash crops (Chamlee-Wright 1997). Ghana was a leading exporter of cocoa. The proceeds from cocoa exports paid for the completion of Akosombo Dam in 1965. Often heralded as a visionary plan of Nkrumah, the Akosombo hydroelectric project was originally undertaken to produce electricity for an aluminum smelting company in Tema, a suburb of Accra. The dam provides electricity for Ghana, Togo and Benin. Dam construction flooded the Volta River basin in southeast Ghana. This displaced 80,000 people, who were inadequately resettled into 50 different villages (Gyau-Boakye 2001). The flooding process also created Lake Volta, the world's largest manmade lake and a thriving tourist attraction (Gocking 2005).

The completion of Akosombo Dam was the only completed industrialization project of the Nkrumah government. By the mid 1960s, falling cocoa prices on the world market stunted income to fund many of the country's development plans (Rimmer 1992). Consumption increased, while growth in the GDP steadily fell from 8.8 percent in 1960 to 14 percent in 1965. The GDP was flat by 1966 (Rimmer 1992). Professionals felt the impact through increased unemployment, with many of the educated elite migrating abroad to more lucrative opportunities in graduate programs and white-collar jobs in Britain and the US.

This financial decline, along with Nkrumah's anti-colonialist Pan-African visions prompted a CIA assisted coup that overthrew Nkrumah in 1966 (Stockwell 1997). In 1969, Ghana returned to civilian rule in 1969 under the leadership of Dr. Kofi Busia. In the 1970s, occupational needs did not keep up with labor growth. Unemployment was 50 percent (Gocking 2005). The cocoa export dependent country suffered on the global market of falling prices. Debt outpaced foreign aid. Successive coups ended with a seizure of power led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings in 1981. Rawlings banned political parties in Ghana

when came to power. The Rawlings regime maintained control of the country until the transition to democracy in 1992.

Rawlings maintained populist support throughout the much of his time in power. He often voiced anti-capitalist rhetoric and was critical of dependency theory (Chamlee-Wright 1997). As much as Rawlings aspired to withdraw Ghana from global trade, cocoa remained the country's leading export, even as market prices were in a sharp decline. By 1983, inflation was over 100% (Kapur 1991). For five years, the GDP fell. The currency was over-valued. Only in 1983, "when he was in considerable danger of losing political control, did Rawlings grudgingly accept the conditions of an IMF Economic Recovery Program" (Chamlee-Wright 1997: 85).

In a similar predicament as the many newly independent states in the global south, Ghana signed on to its first structural adjustment program. The program called for a devaluation of currency and the decentralization of government. The economic recovery plan included decreased trade barriers, devaluations of the currency (the cedi), widespread privatization and a diminished role for the state in the country's economy. Inflation did drop to 25 percent by 1993, but in much of the same manner as the former British colonial administration, structural adjustment revoked state subsidies for social service programs.

The Economic Recovery Program fueled the growth of an informal economy because there were few private industries to absorb the government employees dismissed as part of the downsized "bloated civil service sector" (Chamlee-Wright 1997: 85). Seventy percent of new capital was spent in Southern Ghana's private sector (Rimmer 1992). The state focused attention on agriculture markets in order to garner greater export power. Export rich industries, such as timber, mining and cocoa, were privatized. These labor-

intensive jobs are located outside of Accra, and mainly inaccessible to the capital, where most of the public sector jobs were shed (Awumbila 2005).

The privatization of previously state owned and controlled enterprises alongside the removal of government subsidies on goods spurred increased inflation, widespread unemployment and the growth of the informal sector (Gocking 2005). The macroeconomic successes of the state during the 1980s did little to sustain most Ghanaians, particularly Northern farmers like kayayei families, who struggled to pay the rising cost of goods in the midst of long-term underemployment for men who worked in mines. Shortages of water and electricity were increasingly common throughout the city. State funded healthcare, was weakened by the introduction of a ‘cash and carry’ system that required pre-payment for hospital care (Clark and Manuh 1991). Hospital care is centralized in Accra, which has two teaching hospitals. There is none in the Northern Region, where patients see doctors who rotate duties in health clinics across the country.

The cuts in social programming, the devaluation of currency and increased taxes are all hallmarks of an IMF stabilization program. During the same period, Ghana experienced severe droughts and political tension with Nigeria that led to the deportation of one million Ghanaians (Manuh 1994). By the late 1980s, the ILO (1989) noted that economic growth was 90% in the informal sector and 4% in the formal sector. The very nature of the informal economy makes estimates difficult to obtain but the 2000 Ghana Census found that 83% of Ghanaians conduct some form of informal work (GLSS, 2000).

The labor force in Ghana is predominately agricultural, but 35% of the labor force is employed by the state or private industries (Ampofo-Tuffuor and DeLorme 1991). Ampofo-Tuffuor and DeLorme explain how, “money wages in the private sector are higher than the public sector, but the reverse is true for combined or full wages including both money and

nonmonetary elements” (1991: 546). Non-monetary wages include subsidized housing, subsidized education for children in the household and bribes. Twelve thousand jobs were slated to disappear every year under the recovery program. However, the state remains the largest employer, particularly since the government employs more secondary school and university graduates than any other sector in the country. Even so, government jobs remain scarce, especially management level public service positions.

Colonial interests were always centralized in the southern export economy (Awumbila 2005, Owusu 2005). The state squarely blamed British colonization for the patchy infrastructural growth in the country. Rawlings’ government designed the Integrated Rural Development Programmes of 1988-1992 to ameliorate uneven economic distributions in Ghana. The IRDP was precipitated by the initial bursts of migrants who left the staple crop agricultural economy of the north for the increased wages of cocoa growing regions in the country (Awumbila 2005).

The state implemented a decentralization plan to, “promote rural developments through the distribution of resources to the individual district assemblies throughout the country” (Ayee 1996: 33). In order to, “encourage a greater degree of local autonomy and make district administration and development more efficient, the decentralization programme is a logical continuation of the broader structural adjustment effort” (Owusu 2005: 55). The diffusion of economic, administrative and development responsibilities were delegated to 110 districts, up from the previous number of 65.

The goal of this economic decentralization was to reduce the north-south economic polarity through government sponsored rural developments in infrastructure and to redirect populations away from over-burdened cities (Ayee 1996, Owusu 2005). The program produced incremental changes such as road repair and electricity infrastructures in the North

however these results are marginal in relation the extensive needs for employment (Owusu 2005).

Rural migration did not peter as a result of structural adjustment programs. Owusu (2005: 54) states, “While the explanations suggested may hold for other Third World countries...they fall short in the case of Ghana”. Foreign investment remains concentrated in Accra. The Accra metropolitan area accounts for 70% of Ghanaian manufacturing sectors. There were exponential jumps in the cost of living in Accra as rent seekers continued to arrive in Accra from the hinterland to seek employment and accommodation. In 1981, rent comprised from 15 percent of monthly wages in 1981. By 1984, the cost of rent was 26 percent of monthly wages and has not fallen since (Ampofo-Tuffuor and DeLorma 1991).

Structural adjustment brutally affected Ghanaian women like head porters, particularly since household economies divide along gender lines (Naylor 1999). In Northern Ghana, “young girls get their start in trading by drawing water from the river bed or the dam and selling it by calabash to thirty market visitors” (Tripp 1978:130). The expectation that women address basic needs of households did not diminish, even though economic resources are stretched (Bortey-Doku 2000). Women bear the costs of household needs, regardless of whether their spouse earns enough income to sustain their family. Along with drought in the 1980, widespread layoffs for men in the formal economy spurred market competition for women in trade.

The implementation of structural adjustment relied on women’s subordination. In the North, many men earn income from domestic agriculture. Married women typically grow subsistence crops and do not earn cash income from crops controlled by their spouse (Elson 1990). Overall, women spend larger portions of their income on family needs than men,

even though their earnings are much lower. This social norm operates in conjunction with rising prices for household necessities as a result of inflation and weak infrastructure. This restricts many women's abilities to shift expenses away from food, clothing and fuel since household income is not pooled.

Despite the historical trade niche, women's work is constructed as, "supplementary or incidental wages for women within the assumed heterosexual family [that] both organizes and devalues women's work" (Alexander 2005:104). During the early 1980s, Makola Market was demolished twice burned by the Rawlings government. Market women bore the brunt of anger for the shortage of goods (Robertson 1983). Structural adjustment programs identify labor as neutral, despite the historical and practical precedence that gender denotes differential incomes that can be traced along gender lines (Tsikata 1995).

In 1992, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) political party, founded by Rawlings, won the General Elections. The negative growth rate turned around to a five percent growth rate and was spun as a success story (Kapur 1991). Rawlings was re-elected in 1996. Jobs in the formal sector continued to shrink as the informal work sector ballooned. Ghana's constitution bars the president from serving more than two four-year terms. In 2000, the major opposition party, the National Patriotic Party (NPP) won the election. John Agyekum Kufuor, nicknamed, the "Gentle Giant" was reelected in 2004 and succeeded by John Atta Mills in 2009.

With external debts in excess of \$4 billion dollars, Ghana continues to follow the IMF structural adjustment program guidelines (IMF 2009). This debt is a far cry from the economic position Ghana held at independence. In 1957, Ghana and South Korea were considered countries with more similarities than differences. Both countries were new independent nations, with similar per-capita incomes and dominating agricultural modes of

production. In the 21st century, the two countries share more differences than similarities—South Korea is a highly industrialized country with a per-capita income that outpaces Ghana ten-fold (Gocking 2005).

George Ayittey (1991) argues that the failure of international aid and development lies in the lack of attention to indigenous institutions and development programs. However, the diversity of indigenous economic institutions from pre-colonial Ghana to the present calls this claim into question. The disparities between northern and southern Ghana cannot solely be explained as a result of the colonial order. The forces that spur young women to migrate from northern Ghana to the manufacturing and servicing driven economies of the southern Ghana cannot be placed solely at the responsibility of failed aid programs. To make that argument erases the powerful political climate that existed before the first Europeans arrived in the Gulf of Guinea. Financial accumulation in Accra is informed by the informal economy and made even more complex by the politics of gendered labor as it relates to porter work in the city. Thus, this chapter examines how historical disparities across modes of production have been powerfully informed and diffused at various moments in history. These histories continue to operate in the contemporary subjection that occurs through labor in Ghana, particularly as it relates to the head porters of Accra.

CHAPTER FOUR: HISTORICIZED LABOR AND THE GENDER OF MAKOLA MARKET

The number of women who arrive at Makola Market in the early mornings of Accra could easily be likened to a parade. Most kayayei don secondhand skirts and t-shirts as well as colorful scarves to cover their heads in Muslim piety. Some women carry pans on their heads with donut shaped cloth cushions for neck support. Dozens of head porters queue near wooden tables to rent plywood or aluminum basins for the day's work. Wealthy women hold handfuls of keys to unlock their warehouse and shop security doors. Hawkers enter the market with baskets of fruit and vegetables. Before sunrise, these traders bought wholesale produce from the nearby Agboghloshie market. The innocuous rhythm of these daily tasks amid the arrival and departure of trade goods, the sales of aromatic food and haggles over prices link to interstitial narratives about migration, ethnicity and the growth of informal work in Ghana. This chapter is a detailed introduction to Makola Market and the women I worked with there.

Makola Market originally consisted of two selling areas, the formal stall market constructed by the Accra Council near the railroad line in 1924 and an adjacent area used by informal traders (Robertson 1983). Makola Market is now a discontinuous space of clustered adjacent markets such as Okaishie, Tudu Station (or TS), Kantamanto, Makola Mall and a host of sidewalk sale areas. Accra residents and market workers call the sprawling collection of markets that cluster in Accra's central business district by one name, Makola Market.

In the Accra central business district, different areas of the market have varied types of goods. Okaishie Market has beauty supply stores and pharmacies. Makola Mall is a four-storied building off Kojo Thompson Road. Makola Mall has wholesales stores and European and African designer clothing, wax-printed cloth, cosmetics and sewing supply shops. TS

and Kantamanto are popular shopping destinations for *obruni wawu* or dead white men, the colloquial term for second-hand clothes imported from abroad. Adjacent to Kantamanto is Timber Market which houses hardware, paints, wood and a variety of construction equipment. Opera Square, between Rawlings Park and the Ghana General Post Office, is where new and used electronics are found off Pagan Road.

Shoppers use the broader term “Makola Market” to describe most of these areas. The markets of Makola abut the Supreme Court of Ghana, several state buildings, national monuments, the Accra Arts Centre and the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Park. Tro-tros provide the most economical transportation to Makola because they terminate at the nearby Tema Station. At the northern side of the market is Kinbu Gardens, a patchy grass area, lined with palm trees. The Gardens is opposite the premier Novotel Hotel, one of the few four star hotels in Accra.



Photograph 4:1 The Arch in Rawlings Park Square, Makola Market.

Rawlings Park is a monumental Square on Market Street. This less hectic area, in the heart of the Makola has a wide range of restaurant. Because the park sit adjacent to a parking lot, there is much less foot traffic on the actual park. The large archway is a major depot for trucks that arrive at Makola for deliveries. Besides the large archway created by the Rawlings regime, there is a seated statue for King Tackie Tawiah I. Commissioned by the former President John A. Kuffuor in 2003, the monument for the Ga Mantse (king) of the late 19th century also sit on the south side square at Rawlings Park.

Rawlings Park is a common place for delivery trucks to unload goods from Asia and Europe. These deliveries are carried to shops and warehouses by kayayei. Kayayei generally clustered in the center of the Park to await these trucks. Most women did not roam throughout Makola Market, but instead awaited deliveries to and from warehouses. Because women were stationary at intermittent periods, Rawlings Park was an ideal setting for participant observation at Makola. I conducted most of my Makola Market fieldwork at Rawlings Park between December 2007 and August 2008. Many kayayei at Rawlings Park did not roam throughout Makola to solicit customers throughout the day. Nearly all the porters at Rawlings Park were Kokomba or Dagomba. Rawlings Later in this chapter, I will discuss some of the spatial distributions across ethnic lines that operated at the market.

Rawlings Park (or Rawlings Square) was once the location of Makola Market #1. In 1979, JJ Rawlings bulldozed Makola No. 1. The replacement market, Makola No. 2 was destroyed two years later on December 31, 1981 (Robertson 1983). After Makola No. 2 was destroyed the Rawlings Administration named the subsequent market area around the Square “31st December Market”. The 31st December Market dedication honors the second coup led by Rawlings in 1981. The date also marks the formation of the 31st December Women’s Movement, a development NGO created by Nana Agyeman-Rawlings (the wife of

JJ Rawlings) (Fallon 2003). In the center of square, which marks the entrance to 31st December Market, there are remnants of a children's playground. The traces of a merry-go-round and a few swings in disrepair are at the base of a monolithic archway at the center of the square. In 2001, The Greater Accra Regional Coordinating Council and the Accra Metropolitan Assembly agreed to revert any remnants of signage for 31st December Market back to the original name, Makola Market (Joy Online 2001).

When I talked with women at the market, many of them considered the name change from Makola Market to 31st December Market and back again as mere political moves. During my first visit to Ghana in 1998, signage for the market area of Accra read, 31st December market. The areas where sellers, market stalls and mobile traders begin to wane and are generally less congested are the streets I mark as the boundaries of the market. Many times, there were few street signs. Maps provided clues to street names. At the north east exit of Rawlings Park is Market Street. Market Street is in the neighborhood known as Ussher Town. This is the most hectic area of the market area. The presence of *kayayei* is most visible on Market Street as the adjacent roads that flow into the street are inaccessible by car. Street stalls, with colorful umbrellas to shade from the sun line the brick paths that were once the sidewalks of Ussher Town.

Most people in Accra offer directions based on landmark buildings. Pagan Club Road and Thorpe Link mark the western limits of the market. During interviews, some traders describe Salaga Market Street as an additional border street. Most shoppers and costumers agree that the northern market border is Kinbu Road, which is bisected by Barnes Road and Independence Avenue. Secretariat Road is the eastern boundary of the market, behind Tema Station. The 28th February Road marks the southern edge. On quiet evenings, you can hear the waves crash on the nearby beaches for the Gulf of Guinea.

Aunty Comfort used the Rawlings' marriage to couple the 31st December name to connection of women to Makola Market. During our conversation in 2005, Aunty Comfort said, "Its funny, isn't it? Everyone knows that this entire area is Makola market. JJ [Rawlings] destroyed some of it and that hurt us. I suffered bad after that. But Nana [Agyeman-Rawlings] stood up for the women after it happened. She stood for education and care for pregnant women. Plenty things for the women. But Makola shows how the two things go together--the market and Ghana, the man and his wife. They fight each other, but at the end of the day, they still go together. That is just how it is". Aunty Comfort waved her hand across Rawlings Park as she said, "Everyone calls this whole area, Makola Market. Past High Street and down to the courthouse is Makola. The small-small markets are inside, but all of it is still Makola". Aunty Comfort's field of vision about Makola Market is sustained through a perception of immutability—of markets and marriage.

During my fieldwork in Accra from December 2007 to August 2008, my research included interviews with thirty female traders, fifteen male traders, thirty kayayei and ten truck-pushers and other male transporters. I interviewed evening security staffers like Ray, who Ghanaians call "night-watchmen". I also interviewed two field officers from Catholic Action for Street Children, and the director of Change for Northern Ghana. I briefly interviewed two social workers from the Ministry of Women and Children, and three police officers from the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. Of the thirty kayayei I met in Accra, I spent most of my time with twelve of these women, whom I taught to use cameras and take photographs. Participant-observation and semi-structured interviews were in Twi, English, and Ghanaian Pidgin English or translated from Dagbani by my field assistant, Afushe Adams.

Reliable data on the number of kayayei in Accra is problematic. Despite the fact that kayayei regularly arrive in Accra to seek work as porters, operation within the informal sector remains precarious. Short-term NGO projects often fund head counts to meet requests for specific types of interventions for “street children” (Manuh 2007). Research often includes kayayei in studies of hawkers and child laborers who sell petty wares at Makola. This is not entirely problematic, but it is misleading. Hawkers who sell at Makola are often Ga or Akan and either permanent Accra residents or fostered/apprenticed relatives of family members who live in Accra. Child fostering by relatives has a strong tradition in Ghana (Bledsoe and Bradon 1992). Families send children to live with relatives in the city for work, schooling opportunities and trade apprenticeships (Schildkraut 1981). When teenagers migrate as foster relatives for apprenticeships, this work often replace formal education (Porter and Blaufuss 2002). In exchange, the young migrant gains vocational experience and educational opportunities not afforded to them in their hometowns (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985). Fostering has mixed success and apprenticeships sometimes yield work hours too long for time at school.

The spatial differentiations between the kinds of work and leisure porters engage in contrasts to the experiences of fostered relatives and apprentices. Porters are usually circular migrants with no permanent relatives in Accra who foster them (Greico, Apt and Turner 1994). The kayayei I conducted fieldwork with are porters at Rawlings Park who live in Agbogbloshie, a market and slum village near Makola. Kayayei who live at Agbogbloshie have dubious accommodations, shelter in poor sanitary conditions and hustle for meals.

In March 2008, I asked several of the women when we could meet away from the humid shade of palm trees at Rawlings Park. The labor intensity of the Christmas shopping season that requires especially heavy loads for carriages had waned. Aissatou invited me to

cook with her and her friends on a Saturday evening. While Makola traders store food on cool corners of concrete floors and secure their goods, Aissatou and a few other women who work near Rawlings Park return rented pans to their owners. When the last of mammy wagons trickle from the market and taxis join the cavalcade of vehicles that depart the Park, Aissatou, Rahida, Sakina, Kisu and I walk about a mile to the sprawling Accra suburb of Agbogbloshie.

Approximately 23,000 people live in Agbogbloshie (Ghana Census 2000). If one looks on maps for Accra, the name for the area is Korle Dudor or Old Fadama. Agbogbloshie reaches from Korle Lagoon to the mosque at Abossey Okai . On the deadened Korle Lagoon, wooden shacks and kiosks house thousands of market workers. During rainy season, the area is constantly flooded with pools of stagnant water that mosquitoes circulate around. The swampy fields behind Agbogbloshie market are a dumping ground for electronic spare parts and computer waste from the US (Claiborne 2009).

The area is the central depository for human, hospital and industrial waste for the entire city of Accra (Boadi and Kuitunen 2002). Surprisingly, Agbogbloshie Market is the first stop for much of Accra's fresh produce that arrives, "straight from the farm without delay", according Aunty Comfort. Astute produce shoppers place a premium on produce at Makola that arrived via Agbogbloshie because oranges and bananas that arrived there could have been picked less than a day. In Agbogbloshie, the women live in an area called Kokomba, the colloquial name for one of the many shantytowns in and around Agbogbloshie where Northern Region migrants are the primary residents. Accra residents who live outside these areas call the entire suburb Sodom and Gomorrah, in reference to the Biblical cities destroyed by God for its impudent sins and rampant immorality. This is the dominant perception of Agbogbloshie that circulates in public discourse.

West African markets are sites of transnational space, mediated through experience, consumption, movement and perception. Diawara writes, “Markets...are the place where Africa meets Europe, Asia and the Americas: as they say in West Africa “visit the market and see the world” (1998:122). Makola Market serves as a site to witness the tangled spatial-temporal relationships of embodiment. Kayayei embrace these time-space expansions “in order to stay afloat” economically (Katz 2001). As the state sheds responsibility for social welfare through the proliferating informal economy, kayayei “habits of coexistence” retain the salience of cosmopolitanism. Although family norms are disrupted, women struggle to maintain social norms.

Kayayei in the city live in a state of flux between rural and metropolitan settings. Accra, with storied buildings and upscale shopping districts are unaffordable to these women, but this is the place where they earn enough money to return to their mud and brick homes in the rural village. After a period of employment in Accra, from six months up to two years, head porters expect and work towards their return to Northern Ghana. Accra-life is distinct from home life. Amina confirms that, “Accra life is not living, but we move to live at home”. The women are always moving. There is the mobility of coming to Accra, the movement of human transportation, the walks to and from the market, and the movement of going back to the Northern Region.

None of the thirty head porters I worked with remember any women from their previous generation doing kaya work outside of the Northern Region. All of the women have some work experience portering for wage. Many women worked in the small Tamale Market, carrying wares for local customers. Several women had portered at Kumasi Market in the Ashanti Region before they came to Accra. Kumasi Market is closer to the Northern Region, but the market is the largest in West Africa. Kayayei use portering as a stepping-

stone to loftier trading goals, preparation for marriages and the investment in apprentice tools, such as sewing machines or beauty supplies (Potts 2000). Most single kayayei use portering to build capital because there is no familial support for investments.

Habiba is a twenty-something Kokomba woman, from the East Gonja District, in the Northern Region. Her village is about 100 km from Salaga, the district capital of the East Gonja District. Habiba came to the city after her junior co-wife portered for nine months in Accra. Habiba is one of the three married kayayei I spent time with during my participant observation at Makola. Habiba's perspective illustrates an often-overlooked aspect of migration, the role of household composition as a decisive factor for migration.

Polygyny is common in Northern Ghana. Christian elites in Southern Ghana vilify polygamy as "bush" and "backward" behavior (Karanja 1994). This perspective adds to the social Othering of Northern Ghanaians. However, polygamy and portering both offer women more opportunities to contribute to their household funds in farming communities. Men are motivated to have two or more wives. Families are expected to have many children in a household. Women and children serve as an inexpensive labor force that allows for the cultivation of farmland. Women and children also complete the arduous domestic chores of fetching water and wood, cleaning and cooking (Boserup 1985).

Habiba is the third spouse of her husband. Habiba's household is, "a residential unit, where members share domestic function and activities--a group of people who 'eat out of the same pot' or 'share the same bowl'" (McIlvaine-Newsad, Sullivan and Dougherty 2003:307). In this community perception of household, Habiba's first wife assigns and distributes chores. Her husband is a maize farmer. Habiba expressed her desire to porter in Accra after her son was born. Her husband's first wife suggested that Habiba came to Accra with her 15-month-old son Rashid because it is "the easy" time. Habiba explained how

bringing her toddler to Accra was advantageous. Rashid was too young to contribute to the household. At home, Habiba would have spent most of her day “doing in-house work”, because of her need to breast-feed. This would limit her farming time and ability to contribute to her household fund. With Rashid in Accra, it would take “weight” off the family in the village. This would allow Habiba to contribute to her household through remittances. She also could enjoy her one-on-one time with her son and the “freedom” Accra afforded her away from the village and when she returned.

Habiba adds, “When my sister, Salamatu (her junior wife) returned to the village, she had a lot of stuff. She had pretty cloth and cooking pots. Her attitude was different when she came. She was showing me level, even though I’m above her. I came to Accra with my baby so I can do the same”. What Habiba means by “showing level” is that her junior wife came to hold more socio-economic power in the compound, despite her fourth wife status. Because Salamatu arrived with household goods acquired outside of spousal support, she garnered complete autonomy over their use. Habiba said, “She got more control. This let me know that if she wants to go, she can go on”. The goods gathered through kaya work allowed for a flexible accumulation that translates into socio-economic power. For Habiba, her labor in Accra is not subordinate to her household tasks, but reveals how head portering can increase her bargaining power within her household (Feldman 2001, Freedman 2000).

Sixty percent of Ghanaian households depend solely on the income of women to meet a household’s needs. Aradayfio-Schandorf (1994) suggests the responsibility on women to run households corresponds to the widespread practice of polygamy in Ghana. Polygamy is often constructed as evidence of women’s subjection in weak economies. In Ghana, however, polygamy “is easily seen that whilst the heavy economic responsibilities of women add to their labour and toil, their roles as earners and heads of households expand and

extend their decision-making and decision-taking powers beyond those enjoyed generally by women” (Greico, Turner and Kwakye 1995:2). Habiba’s experience illustrates this point. She is one of three women I worked with, who had children with them in Accra. The mothers preferred to bring their younger children until their toddling ages. Leaving youngsters in the village creates a burden on families because the children are too young to take up household tasks.

Polygamous households facilitate the ease with which married women migrate to Accra for portering. Women have co-wives to pick up the labor tasks they leave behind. This also afforded kayayei the opportunity to supplement the household fund. Like monogamous households, women in polygamous household experience divorce and remarriage. Habiba’s responses reflect a “gendered livelihood epistemology” (McIlvaine Newsad 2003). These are the complex set of environmental, economic and gendered issues that determine mobility to Accra. The decreased economic power of agriculture impacts historical household roles for women as well as their pressure to provide for a household’s nutritional needs. Rural to urban migration provided an economic adaptation for farmers in Northern Ghana. Ghanaians from the north usually maintain a semblance of production in agriculture, for sale and/or subsistence.

Ahjara is from a village near Larabanga in the West Gonja District of the Northern Region. Larabanga has a mud-built whitewashed mosque that dates back to the 15th century and is also the main entry for Mole National Park, a game reserve. Ahjara’s village is about 3-hour walk from Larabanga. The village is accessible by car only during the dry season. There are two reasons why Ahjara came to Accra to porter. Two years ago, her father switched the family cash cropping from rice to tobacco. Ahjara said it was a difficult decision to make,

because tobacco inflicts long-term damage on the already fragile soil. But her family decided to try tobacco since it grows quickly and garners a higher wage than rice.

Between 2005-2005, rainfall was sparse throughout much of the Northern Region. Tobacco needs heavy rains in order to grow. After the first poor growing season, Ahjara decided to go to Tamale to be a head porter. In Tamale, human transportation for goods is more common than cars. Also, the market is smaller, with little congestion. There wasn't much money for Ahjara to make in Tamale. Ahjara's relatives there suggested that she travel to Accra. Ahjara said, "They told me I was strong, still not married. That I had to do something so I could marry and get out the house. So I came to Accra. But I have so many things eating my pockets". Ahjara's comments echo sentiments cited by ethnographers; that migration allowed women to pursue a higher degree of autonomy in marriage choices (Ong 1987). Ahjara said that the more household goods she accumulated in Accra, the more decisive she can be about her choice in marriage partner. The more she brings to the marriage household, then the higher her expectations of her future husband can be. Also, Ahjara gains voice at the farming decisions of her father's land because she contributes cash, rather than labor, which is undervalued since it is free.

Ahjara met Sakina at the tro-tro station in Tamale and the two traveled together to Accra. When Ahjara and Sakina arrived in the city, there were shocked by the city's bustle. They stole food and slept "rough" the first few weeks. When I asked Sakina about sleeping rough, she said, "When you sleep outside and the mosquitoes are biting you, you are sleeping rough". Ahjara said she could not afford to spend any money on herself when she first arrived in Accra. She had a cousin who was going to return to the village in a few months. That was going to be the cheapest and safest way to send money to her village in a timely manner. Ahjara planned on "wasting no time" During her conversation, she ruefully

admitted, “I looked at all these people, sleeping rough. I thought, I can do this for 3-4 months and then go home because I am not lazy. I do not love Accra. It is exciting, yes. There are plenty things to buy here. But I just don’t love the place like other head porters love it. My father will go back to rice if I give him the money to give up on tobacco”. Ahjara’s remittances are for her family’s daily upkeep due to the lack of earnings the household secures from tobacco. Ahjara constructs the primary role of her remittances as an opportunity to ease the burdens of the farm as well as increase the family ‘s potential for future earnings.

Ahjara’s mothers want to return to rice harvests, however her father is “stubborn”. Ahjara adds, “My father wants to stick to tobacco because he has pride. My mothers and I want to do rice again. The money was smaller, but we ate well everyday. I am in Accra to send money home for them to eat because tobacco is not feeding the family”.

When Ahjara talked about meeting Sakina in Tamale, Sakina joined the conversation. I asked Sakina how she felt traveling with her newfound friend. Sakina entered the conversation to say, “Coming to Accra is madness”. Sakina shook her left and right and turned her mouth into a frown, before pointing to Ahjara.

To tease Ahjara she points to her and said,

I did not trust this girl, with her cute face.... As for me, I hear [understand] Gonja, Dagomba, Kokomba, Hausa and some small Pidgin. I hear plenty of languages. I can talk to anyone. I’m from West Gonja and a lot of people live there. Frafra, Hausa. They are all over the place. When we stopped in Kumasi on the tro-tro, I got down to buy some oranges. I went to buy the thing and I couldn’t hear a single word anyone said. Dagbani. Nothing. Frafra. Nothing. I tried Hausa. Nothing! I couldn’t hear a single word! No one could hear a word I said. Pure, Asante town. Those people only hear themselves.

Sakina made a face and covered her face with her scarf in coyness. Her giggle bubbles out as she said, “That was so scary. After I got back on the tro-tro, I decided to like Ahjara”.

Ahjara exploded with laughter at Sakina's gesture. As I learned over time, Sakina is bold and open. Ahjara thinks of her friend as absolutely fearless. Sakina Anduni described herself as a "wicked woman". When Rahida and Ahjara walk through the market, they make it a point to carefully walk to avoid confrontation. Sakina on the other hand will immediately step into a heated discussion with anyone she feels has mistreated her. That is why Ahjara was so tickled when Sakina feigned fear of anything.

Hanifa Abdulla is a tall, twenty-something statuesque woman. The average Ghanaian woman is 5 feet 2 inches (Moradi 2002). Habiba Abdulla attributes her 5'8" height to her father, a tall lanky Mossi herder from Burkina Faso. Hanifa Abdulla came to Accra from a small village in the Yendi district in the Northern Region of Ghana. She is the third wife of Abu-Bakr Abdulla. Hanifa has two children, Akem, who is almost three and Ramata, 13 months. When she came to Accra to porter in 2008, Hanifa Abdulla brought Akem with her but she had to return to the village in less than three months. Her son Akem would cry throughout much of the day. Habiba said, "He would cry the whole. The market is loud and this boy would add on. He would just cry and cry some more. I fed him biscuits (cookies) every single day, all day long. It was too much". Habiba's expenses climbed because she had to buy cookies for Akem. The seven women she rented a shack with in Agbogbloshie got tired of the noisy, colicky baby.

As Habiba told me about Akem, her daughter, Ramatu played in a flattened tire in the shade of a delivery truck. Habiba started laughing when Ramatu waved her hands at us. Hanifa smiled said, "Now that Ramatu, she is younger, but she's tougher than my fat little Akem". Hanifa added mischievously, "Ramatu even made Rashid cry the other day... Oh yes, that little fire. I will bring her every time. But Akem will stay with my sisters-wife. He is too troublesome because he is worrisome".

Kisu Mahatma is a slightly built energetic young woman, who is about 18-20 years old. She is the youngest of the kayayei I spent time with in Accra. Kisu is from a village in the East Gonja District in the Northern Region. Her conversations were always filled with smiles and laughter. She reveled in the bustle of Accra, despite the hard work of her job as a head porter. Kisu suffered from chronic neck pain from carrying, but Kisu's eyes still shined whenever she told stories about life in Accra. Kisu is the youngest of the women I conducted participant observation with. When Kisu is around, the conversations brightened because she made every encounter dramatic with her artful storytelling.

When I would do shopping at the market, it was Kisu who would always insist on carrying my load. I felt shy and embarrassed to ask anyone to porter for me once my fieldwork started. A few of the women had a good laugh when Kisu knocked some packages out of my hand one day. I was shopping on the opposite side of the market. I had seen Tani chatting with some friends near Kinbu Gardens and waved. It was February and I had settled into a rhythm between my fieldwork days and my shopping days. I did not see that Kisu walked closely behind me. I carried a corn broom and some canned goods in a plastic bag. Kisu knocked the broom out of my hand. My reflexes caused me to instinctively step on the broom while reaching to the side for the person who grabbed my arm from behind me. Kisu chuckled and scooped up my broom as she took my canned goods from my hands. She wanted to carry for me. The day before Kisu had complained about neck pain. I had given her money for paracetamol, a common analgesic. I didn't want Kisu to carry for me, but she wouldn't let me collect my things from her pan and started walking further into the market. I was obliged to follow. Kisu walked me directly to the traders I buy from regularly. I was not surprised.

Kinbu Gardens is on the opposite side of the market from Rawlings Park, but the head porters I spent time with knew my shopping habits. I had only been Accra doing fieldwork for about a month, but people knew me around the market. In earlier years, whenever I would go abroad and come back, people at the market would greet me and say, “Long time”. My absence was noted and people wanted to discuss where I had been. The issues of my visibility would become an important part of my conversations with kayayei. I discuss that more detail in the next chapter on the photographic processes I shared with kayayei.

Tani does not know her age, but she appears to be in her mid-twenties and knows that she was born on Monday. Tani is a popular first name for Dagomba females born in Mondays. Tani’s mother is Dagomba. Her father is Mamprussi. She lived in neighboring country, Burkina Faso until her father died when she was about ten years old. After her father’s death, her mother moved Tani and her two sisters and four brothers to a village near Yendi, in the Northern Region of Ghana. Lahari and Tani met their first few weeks in the city. Lahari is Kokomba, from Buipe. These two women argued like sisters, often and to the annoyance of their friends around them. Adisatu, Khadija, Aisha, Mariama, Zahra and Fatima all live together in a shack in Agbogbloshie with five other women, plus Lahari and Tani. Except for Tani, all of these women are from the Tamale area. They traveled separately to Accra but became close friends at Rawlings Park.

I had been to Accra seven times in the last ten years. I had many friends among young traders and apprentices at the market but I did not any close relationships with kayayei before my fieldwork started. As an exchange student in 1998, all my local interactions were with university students who lived in upper class neighborhoods throughout Accra. In 2006, I led photography projects with young adults from three poor

neighborhoods in Accra. As part of an NGO initiative, the Accra Art Alliance wanted to highlight the creativity of local young artists in Accra's slums. In 2007, I shot images for the British Council's Black History Month programs.

Outside of preliminary library research at the University of Ghana, aimless walks at Makola Market and a few scattered conversations with Ghanaian academics, I had never been to Accra as an "anthropologist". In order to conduct fieldwork at Makola, I felt it was necessary to re-connect with traders as a way to feel more at ease about being in the market as a researcher, rather than a customer. This was selfish perhaps, but it was a mechanism for me to have a familiar start in an unfamiliar capacity. What I did not know at the time was that this choice, to enter the field through my pre-established connections with traders would reveal some of the dynamics of social class and power that operate at Makola market.

I was unsure about how to approach kayayei at the market. Kayayei worked alone with they carried, but they would cluster in areas with other head porters when they are not carrying goods at the market. I relied on my relationship with Rahida and Akosua to garner introductions to more head porters. This is how I met the women I introduced earlier. After that initial contact, I used a chain sequence of introductions and recommendations to meet kayayei. I wanted work mostly with women who were not connected to business relationships with traders I knew. Rather than spend nights wandering around Tema Station, I spent the first few weeks reestablishing my relationships with sellers like Aunty Comfort and Akikey. I talked with them about my research interest with kayayei. I explained how I wanted to use photography during fieldwork in order to create a shared experience, like I had done with traders. When I took pictures of women on their way to special events, I learned more about social status, cloth and gender performance than I could have with interviews.

Some of the friendly relationships I had with sellers turn cold and hostile once my dissertation fieldwork with kayayei began. Gender inequality in the heavily feminized labor force of Makola Market operates through lenses of ethnicity and class. This friction emerged when I did not honor the social hierarchies that privilege traders over head porters.

Gender operated at Makola as one of “multiple, interlocking systems of domination” (Clarke 1994:422). In a variety of social settings, anthropologists have explored how gendered ideologies discipline workers to produce flexible women workers within the nation-state (Ong 1991, Safa 1995). In this section, I explore how hegemonic gender meanings inform the lived experiences of women at Makola Market. Kayayei represent a pool of vulnerable labor in the lowest wage sector of Makola Market, yet their presence threatens the identity of intermediate traders at the market.

Akikey, who calls herself my sister because we are close in age, pulls me into the quiet corner of a shop on an afternoon in January. Akikey wanted to discuss, “my alliance with kayayei”. Akikey explained,

You are obruni (foreigner) but you’ve done well. All these years, you come to Accra. You’ve grown. You take care of a family. You come and shop, buying big things and small things. We traders respect you because you come to the market yourself. You know prices. You don’t send your house girl for your shopping. You started as a small girl at the market and now you are a proper Accra lady. But now...you wear the same short man pants every day and spend your time with these kayayoo. Ei! They are suffering. Everybody knows. We are all suffering. Pray for them, but don’t spoil your character.

Akikey says kayayei are “subordinates” who will “spoil” my own social standing as “an Accra lady”. Akikey explains how the perception that, “I’ve done well”, comes from my on-going interactions at the market; with traders. Though I have ‘grown’ from my days as an exchange student, I do not act like a “big woman” and send house staff to do my shopping.

Akikey assumes I had housekeeping staff because I am an “Accra lady”. Akikey described an Accra Lady as “toughness with class”.

I did not have to be Ghanaian to be an Accra Lady. According to Aunty Comfort, I do have to be well versed in the “ways about Accra life” including markets, dress and social custom. That is the reason I was considered an Accra lady. This experience reveals some of the complex layers to social relations that operate in the informal economy of Makola Market. As a scholar who strives to experience a fieldwork identify with women as co-collaborators, rather than as ‘subjects’, I cannot parse these moments from my writing process. Fieldwork crosses boundaries of self/other and subject/object in ways that reveal nuances of “a complex and historically and politically determined world” (Abu-Luhod 26). Akikey pulled me close to her and furtively spoke about how my interactions with kayayei will “bring down my position”. Ulysse (2002) writes about comparable moments during fieldwork with informal commercial importers in Jamaica. Ulysse describes a “reluctance to accept beauty practices as fieldwork” (2002:11). This resonates with my reaction to Akikey’s words about my frequent wear of “short man pants”—a pair of multicolor cropped trousers. I regularly wore these pants to the field for several reasons; the fabric breathes easily, the trousers dry quickly on the clothesline and easily matches with several t-shirts. I do not want to care that my clothes are somehow about to cause my “lady” status to tumble down.

Clothing is part of bodily practices that reflect social values (Lock 1993). This is especially true in Ghana. Prior to paper money, cloth and clothing, “was the most common kind of currency for ordinary marketing” (Bohannon and Curtin 1988: 186-7). Dress remains social valuable “because cloth is involved in every aspect of African life, playing an essential role in marriage, political and ritual exchanges” (Perani and Wolff 1999:9). Clothing is a valuable politics of identity that is always grounded in social interaction. Women traders

made it a point to be well dressed when they came to check on apprentices. The hierarchies of power and inequality communicate through class, ethnicity and age. These characterize status markers among urban women in Ghana (Robertson 1984, 1995). Akikey, who had earlier offered stern advice, simply stopped speaking to me one day. She ignored my greetings. Akikey would walk in circles when I approached her stall. She would pretend to be so focused on arranging her goods that she does not see me. Annoyed at being ignored, one morning, I stood directly in front of her and said, “Good Morning”.

Akikey looked at me with a false surprised expression. I asked,

“What did I do? Why are you ignoring me?”

Akikey replied, “I talk to you like my sister and you didn’t mind me”. Akikey goes back to rearrange her already perfectly lined cans of fish. A moment later, she looked over her left shoulder to eye my clothes from head to toe. Akikey pointed her finger at me and said, “look at you”. She sucked her teeth and went back to her work. I looked down. I wore the cropped trousers Akikey had complained about weeks earlier. After that day, other than customary good morning or afternoon greetings, Akikey did not hold any conversations with me.

My desire to conduct fieldwork with *kayayei* strained my relationships with several traders with whom I spent time with. The level of empathy between women who work at Makola delineate along class lines. Robertson (1983) describes the way in which the Ghanaian government vilifies market women as responsible for the economic hardships of the late 1970s in Ghana. Robertson states, “The market women, because of their *visible* role, were forced to bear the brunt of public displeasure provoked by shortages in goods, *invisible* inflation, decline in terms of trade, corruption, and incompetence” (1983:489).

Sidewalk sellers, who lay their wares on narrow paths, run the risk of their perishable goods being trampled on when the market rush swells unexpectedly. On a monthly basis, the AMA allocates police officers to work at Makola Market. Clarke argues that, “traders threaten or defy state control of the national economy” and their high visibilities in the informal sector “advertise[s] the inadequacy of the official distribution channels” for goods (Clarke 1988:1). To oppose this visibility, the state attempts to control trade activities through price control policies and the destruction of wares. These officers raid Makola Market with machetes and break down the makeshift wooden tables of women who operate without licenses (Clark 2010).

The strained relations between the heterogeneous traders and the state operate existing patterns of subordination for migrant women who depend on the transportation of market goods to earn income. The presence of *kaya* workers exacerbates these historic tensions between traders and the state (Awuah 1997, Clark 1988). Aunty Comfort, who sells produce in the asphalt parking lot of Rawlings Park, described porters as “nuisance necessities” to her sales operations. Aunty Comfort was occasionally commiserative with head porters, who are, in her opinion, “small girls away from home”. She adds, “But make no mistake. All of us are all suffering here”. Women like Aunty Comfort suffer at the hands of officials because they do not pay taxes or legally rent the space where they sell. Shoppers and *kayayei* occasionally ruin their products because they are on the sidewalks.

Aunty Comfort and Akikey both mention the issue of suffering in their conversation about their daily work. Of all conversations I had with people at Makola, whether truck pusher, head porter or petty trader, every person on one occasion or another, mentioned the way in which they suffer. The context in which each of these individuals use the term coalesces with the definitions of social suffering anthropologists employ. Social suffering, in

anthropological context, “is the effect of the social violence that social orders—local, national, global—bring to bear on people” (Kleinman 1997:226). Kleinman uses the term social suffering to contextualize violence beyond social dichotomies of public versus domestic, ordinary versus genocide. Aunty Comfort and Akikey, even when they subtly malign my fieldwork with kayayei, acknowledge the way everyone at Makola suffers for their wage.

The everyday ordinary is a tool to understand how larger orders converge within “micro-contexts of local power” (Kleinman 1997: 227). These micro-contexts are manifestations of structural violence that are often normalized by society. The structural violence of head porters lives are revealed through their intolerable living conditions at market, discrimination due to their religion, economic subjection through their informal work, and the normalization of head portering as women’s work. Akikey, Amina and many of the women at Makola are well aware that because they are poor, they are more likely to suffer. Farmer explains that the poor are not only more likely to suffer, they are also more likely to have their suffering silenced (Farmer 2003).

Hawkers and petty traders like Aunty Comfort have to deal with competition for space on market sidewalks. Their inability to obtain credit to procure goods impacts their supply and lessens their earning potential. Because these women cannot garner enough credit to buy large amounts of wholesale goods, or have storage facilities for such perishables, they must pay higher prices for goods; yet compete against women who are able to pay for large wholesale. Petty traders also do not have licenses to operate in pathways and are subject to harassment and abuse by district officials. The internal periphery amid these multiple layers of informality illustrates how space is a very active structure of subjection for those confined to the urban margins (Harvey 1973). This proliferation of informality is an

advanced marginality, which is, “an emergent form of structural violence that stitches together color, class and place” (Feldman 2001:58).

Within the proliferating informality, hierarchies still exist. Large-scale traders who rent warehouses also tend to be politically affluent and engaged in international travel to increase the profit of their trade activities. These women can afford to employ non-relatives as apprentices to address the everyday tasks of the market (Darkwah 2007). The heterogeneity of trade and traders highlights the fluidity of informal versus formal work in Ghana. Women who owned shops oscillated between amusement and annoyance at my interactions with *kayayei*. They, like some of intermediate traders, expected “a woman of my class”; both educated and foreign, to spend her time “more usefully”. Aunty Comfort’s friends thought I should pay closer attention to “what real traders do”. Although Aunty Comfort and I enjoyed pleasant interactions when I visited Makola, the process of narrowing the field-site and gaining rapport with *kayayei* jeopardized other pre-established relationships with some of these intermediate traders at the market.

The younger Akosua was incredibly sympathetic towards head porters. She pays porters well because she sees how they are often “mistreated” at the market. Akosua said that the times I had traveled back to the states, she made it a point to “look after” Rahida. After meeting Rahida, Akosua began to chastise sellers she saw shoving *kayayei* from their path as they walked towards a customer. Rahida said she would be sure to regularly pass Akosua’s stall, because Akosua or her mother would call her to carry for “big shopping” costumers. When Rahida subtly complained that a customer has given her “tiny dirty coins”, Akosua supplemented her wage. Smaller and lighter than a US dime, the 1 pesewa coin is similar a penny with its copper color. The color differentiates the pesewa from other silver or gold colored coins in Ghana’s currency, the cedis. Because the pesewa is worth less than

one cent and has no singular purchasing power, many Ghanaians describe them as dirty coins. Akosua was embarrassed that this customer pressed five of these coins into Rahida's hand and drove off in her pricey Peugeot.

Akosua's sympathy is economically situated within her spatial and economic security at the market. Akosua's business is lucrative due to her long-standing ties with buyers who purchase large amounts of goods. Akosua also rents her selling space on a yearly basis, which decreased her overhead costs. If a trader rent space yearly, it is cheaper than subletting on a quarterly basis. Akosua also has a cohesive network of support rooted in the inter-generational family experience at Makola Market.

Social scientists give sustained attention to the limits of the informal economy, but agree that a common theme is that work in the informal economy is outside of state regulation and generally untaxed (Hart 2000). Through the informal work of trade, women in Ghana hold historical roles as breadwinners (Robertson 1995). The pressures of the informal sector operate through the absences of consistent labor protection practices, "as a semi feudal realm of kickbacks, bribes, tribal loyalties and ethnic exclusions. Urban space is never free. A place on the pavement...a day's labor on a construction site...all these require the patronage or membership in some kind of closed network" (Davis 2006:181-5). Intermediate traders pay large fees for their market stalls when they lack the political power to navigate the multiple channels of sublets that operates for stalls (Potts 2000).

Head porters are in the periphery of this consumer sector. Since the 1980s, the neoliberal policies of structural adjustment have resulted in an increased marginalization of African economies globally (Aryeetey and Harrigan 2000). In Ghana, between 1985-1991, formal work sector positions fell by 60% (Hilson and Potter 2005:106). By 1995, as a result of currency devaluations, cuts on state sponsored social welfare programs such as health

insurance and education; wages were half of what they had been in 1970 (Fine and Boateng 2000). The continued ‘informalization’ of Ghana’s economy is a structural force that manifests in the social relationships at Makola Market (Castell and Portes 1989).

Foucault (1980) argues that forms of power may be the result of labor and capitalism, while others normalize through social regulations. Kayayei are “hypermobilized in a way that substitutes ‘biological’ attributes for work performances” (Alexander 2005:105). The internal periphery amid these multiple layers of informality illustrates how space is a very active structure of subjection for those, like kayayei, who are confined to the urban margins (Harvey 1973). There is swelling inequality *within* the informal sector, and between the informal and the formal. Kayayei are often “insulted” by dirty coins when they porters at the Market. Her wages never rise higher than \$2 a day.

When Habiba Abdulla had her son with her in Accra, she tried to hire a babysitter at one of the crèches at the market. A cramped square shack sheltered up to 20 toddlers for the day. The floors are damp and dark. The walls were splintered. The sitter, usually an elderly woman who used to porter at the market, could only afford to prepared one meal a day Akem. Habiba explained it was “foolish” to spend 50 cents a day for such poor accommodations.

Rahida cannot afford to purchase an aluminum pan to work. Kisu carries with a rented pan. Ahjara bought her pan from a woman who was returning to the north for about \$5. Carrying pans cost between \$7-12, depending on one’s bargaining skills. Rahida said buying a pan is a “waste” because it is difficult to mark ownership in the aluminum. If someone steals it, Rahida would have no proof of the theft. Adisatu saved to buy a pan each time she came to Accra. She has several pans “back in the village”. She said, “The first time I went home, I carried my things inside to go. I thought I would carry it back to the city, but

my mother wanted to have it for the house. I gave it to her. So I've been to Accra four times. Three of them I bought a pan. They are for my family right now, but when I marry, I will take the pans to my married house”.

Head porters can rent pans for about 10 cents a day. They pay a day's wages deposit, for their use. “No one steals pans from renters,” said Sakina. “If you do, trust me, they will find you. They will beat you very well”. Women who buy pans can also rent to own from the renter's kiosks. Once purchased, some women will sleep inside or atop their pans to prevent theft. More often, women will porter with 2x4 of wood purchased at Timber Market for around 50 cents. The wood pieces last about six months before the woods starts to swell and splinter. Amina only migrates during the dry season, so she always buys wood. It is ideal. Just when the wood starts to deteriorate, she is on her way home.

The intermittent harassment by Ghana Police Services to implement anti-loitering laws cause kayayei to adopt diverse strategies to secure their position in the markets, some which include small bribes to officials (Payne 2003, CAS 1999). Kisu said police services would sometimes solicit sex as a bride. Kisu said, “Because I am fresh [young], they want to have sex with me. I don't have any diseases”.

Khadija, Aisha and Mariama came to the city together in November 2007. Aisha had come to Accra alone in 2006. Aisha, like many kayayei, arrived in the city without solid contacts. Aisha is a soft-spoken young woman in her early twenties, but she was very emphatic that she would never travel alone again. In 2006, Aisha stayed at Makola for three months. After that time, she took her *susu* (savings) to porter at Cape Coast because she felt bored and lonely in Accra. Aisha stayed at Cape Coast just six weeks. She was ready to leave after the second week but did not have enough money for the fare home. Cape Coast did not have cheap accommodation like Accra, so she slept between the kiosks at the market.

When the market opened, she would buy water to bath near the sea and pay to use the public restroom. Aisha had been in Cape Coast just over a week when she was nearly raped by an intoxicated man roaming through the market. Aisha said,

It was already so cold. The sea air is cold in Cape Coast. I had my cloth wrapped tight around me. So, I am sleeping and feel this man pulling my clothes. When I screamed, he tried to kiss me. I couldn't hear [understand] his language but I could smell the booze. Who could hear me? Ei! I shouted. I was lucky. Some Kokomba girls close by and shouted at the man too. They pulled on him to get off of me and he ran off. Those girls were tough. They shamed that man, talking about his small privates. They kicked him as he ran. I just watched them and pulled my cloth around me tighter. As for me, after that night, I didn't sleep again! I worked to get home. I took dirty coins. I forgot about cloth. I forgot about cooking pots. I just wanted to go home. I sometimes followed people after they paid me to beg more money from them. I carried from dawn to dark. I had to make the money to take tro-tro from Cape Coast to Obuasi, then to Bua. The extra stops cost extra money. Those same girls who saved gave me some small money when I was ready to go home. I only had the money for the fare but they added on so I could get some food. They were nice, but Cape Coast. Humph. I will *never ever* go there again.

When Aisha returned to her village she didn't tell her friends about the traumatic Cape Coast experiences. Aisha shared the story with me during a quiet afternoon when we sat alone at the market. Back home, Aisha did not want to scare her friends off the idea of working in the city. Instead, Aisha convinced Khadija and Mariama to come to Accra with her after the rice harvest. Aisha said, "There is more money in Accra than Cape Coast anyway. I'll never go to Cape Coast again! The place broke my spirit small. But with my sisters [friends] with me in Accra, we can go far".

When Mariama talked about a man who sold onions that she liked in Agbogbloshie, it was interesting that Aisha shared Cape Coast story with her friend as a "warning". Aisha said the man at Cape Coast was "poor, desperate and drunk". She used these claims to assert that poverty and alcohol had "encouraged" the man to attempt rape. In reference to "Mariama's onion seller", Aisha said, "He is already doing woman's work, selling at the market and she wants to go with this onion seller. I told her to forget a boyfriend and work

hard to get a good husband”. Hausa men who sell onions are becoming more common at Makola Market. Since trade is naturalized as women’s work, the men who sell onions are feminized and ostracized (Overa 2007). Aisha felt it was better to build individual income than to be enamored with someone who is “not doing well”. Mariama eventually agreed and did quell her crush.

Mariama felt “saved” from her “Accra fantasy”. Mariama said, “ I would be lost without her sisters. We have to pay for everything—water to bath, to go to the toilet, to have a place to sleep. I can’t pay alone. Aisha and Khadija help me. I do not want to struggle with a husband who is doing woman’s work. I might as well stick to my friends”. Women often they pay to use government owned public toilets and baths and some sleep illegally in doorways of stores, between trader stalls or in the makeshift kiosks that spread haphazardly in small slums around Makola. When they can afford to, women give money to market security for protection in these spaces. Others pay rent through sexual activities with security guards (Ephson 2005). Mariama’s friendships help avoid these undesirable options.

For the last two decades, anthropologists have argued that these economic insecurities trace on women’s bodies through marginalization and exclusion, as well as conditions of financial inequality. This chapter highlights how a characteristic of informal work such as portering is the ballooning inequality *within* the informal sector. This inequality spurs “invisible networks of exploitation” (Davis 2006: 181) that impact income, residency and alliances. The social discipline of kayayei delineates along gendered class lines within the informal economy (Apt, Greico and Fouracre 1996).

The savannahs of northern Ghana are the poorest areas of the country. Seven out of ten people in the area are affected by poverty (ILO 2004). Opare (2003) describes the growth of rural-urban migration as a response to these constraints. Accra has been a

boomtown for Ghana's economy since colonization and touts the most diversified economy of all of Ghana's major cities (Robertson 1983). Population growth has led to a proliferation of the informal sector in Ghana, as many rural migrants attempt to garner a sustainable livelihood. While there are varying levels of engagement in the trading practices of women in informal sectors, this chapter focuses on the experiences of kayayei, some of their conversations about their arrivals in Accra and trader's responses to their visibility at the market.

CHAPTER FIVE: PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICS OF FIELDWORK

Despite attempts to “reinvent anthropology” nearly forty years ago, issues of representation are part of ethnographic discourse that continues to be refashioned and re-cast in anthropological inquiry (Hymes 1972). Caught between positivist assertions of truth and colonial agendas of imperialism, Hymes (1967) articulated a disciplinary paradigm that would decouple linguistics from texts to studies of speaking as part of sociality. Feminist scholars challenged male biases and the invisibility of women in the ethnographic record (Lamphere and Rosaldo 1974). Concurrent with concerns about “writing culture,” visual anthropologists scrutinized the primacy of vision over other senses that pervade western social thought. The neutral authority of an image was questioned (Barthes 1978) and anthropologists asserted that media, such as film, television and photography were selective, partial and incomplete creations (Clifford and Marcus 1986).

Representations of Africans in media, whether through news outlets, artistic realms or academic discourse, are often highly problematic (Enwezor 2006). In the 1960s and 70s, when many of Africa’s countries gained independence, the energy across the continent was optimistic and ambitious. With regard to the widespread need for industrialization and internal infrastructural developments, the late president of Tanzania, Julius Nyere often said, “We must run while they walk” (Smith 1972:1). Kwame Nkrumah espoused widely supported socialist leanings. Across the continent, leaders rejected “tribalism” for “communalism” and socialism, financially shored up by the Soviet Bloc (Dubois 1965: 292).

Forty years later, media outlets question whether African’s future was as bright as the past. For a variety of reasons, Africa grows poorer, life expectancies decline and currencies plummet. These trends result in a general malaise towards Africa and her development. The

continent is the poorest continent in the world and depictions that reflect negative stereotypes are how this truth funnels across the globe (Gordon and Wople 1998).

The archetype of Mama Africa, as an overtly maternal figure, operates in public discourse across the continent. Nation-states construct women as this kind of symbolic and physiological “bearer” of the nation. However, women are denied direct access to national agency, “preeminently through lack of the franchise, but more extensively in a complex repertoire of silencing and disabilities, which barred them from property, education, profession and politics- all those opportunities that qualified men for roles in the public sphere” (Eley and Suny 1996: 26). Thus, my fieldwork with a group of marginalized Ghanaian women in a highly stratified informal work sector is fraught with questions of representation. I use collaborative photography to embrace practical use of technology in an African context. This supports the burgeoning attention to collaborative research projects within anthropology that search for more nuanced understanding of people’s responses to a barrage of sensory experiences. This allows me to sidestep regressions into an Afro-pessimism that expresses a profound cynicism about meaningful “progress” taking place in and on the continent (Werbner 2002). Lassiter (2005: 16) defines collaborative ethnography as, “an approach to ethnography that deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point of the ethnographic process, without veiling it—from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and especially, through the writing process.

Achebe and Teboh (2007:75) argue that it is, “necessary to use unconventional research methods and tools, when they enable women to tell their stories in their own words”. This was important in my fieldwork process for several reasons. Newspapers, television programs and state officials often frame discourse about kayayei around the notions of head porters as undesirable street children (GNA 2009). This is similar to the

vilification of traders by the state. In 2005 and 2007, the Minister of the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Hajia Alima Mahama made several claims that kayayei were, "a threat to the national development agenda" even while she confessed there are too few strategies to address the stressors associated with kaya labor (ADM 2005). I do not want to promote the notion that the state is not a powerful force in structuring women's daily lives, but I did want to use image production as a way to explore the ways in which women's (un)belonging are multifaceted experiences in Accra.

Photography was a useful mechanism to gain access to a group of segregated women at Makola Market. I had conversations with women about photography, cameras and the photography development process. I taught women to take pictures in order to build rapport with head porters. Through the trust building process of image making, the women and I explored the ways in which head porter's bodies are a locus for state discourses of development, gendered work and embodied labor. Kayayei shared their thoughts on the images of head porters that circulate in Accra. I wanted to explore women's emotions about their marginality in the informal economy. I found ethnographic photography to be the most meaningful methodological tool to explore the head porter's sensory perceptions of Accra.

In this chapter, I examine how the experience of image production with women provided a salient referent to understand some of the ways in which social and economic exclusion play out in Ghana. Social exclusion is never solitary or individualized. I used collaborative ethnographic photography with kayayei in order to understand how their economic marginalization is informed through the informal economy, gender and ethnicity. The kinds of acts women engage in, with and without the camera reveal some of the embodied tensions that connects to the varying degrees of exclusion women navigate through in the city. Collaborative ethnography invites commentary from our consultants and

seeks to make that commentary overtly part of the ethnographic texts as it develops”. Poole (2005:159) suggests that this moves ethnography away from grappling with “representations per se” create a “more complex discursive and political landscape opened up by the concepts of media”. My methodological approach illuminates how collaborations can be an equalizing experience for all participants. This cooperative approach enables people to articulate notions about their identities through self-made creative productions.

At the beginning of this chapter, I trace some of the intersections between the history of photography in anthropology and the discourse on representation. I examine the strengths of phenomenology and scholarly attention to the senses as theoretical contributors to the discourse on representation and the role of visual anthropologists in these processes. Collaborative image production is an inclusive research tool that facilitates the process of participatory action research (Mullings 2000). The criticisms as well as contributions of visual anthropology in photography are germane to the sensuous turn in discourse on representation.

In order to connect these concerns to my fieldwork practice in ethnographic photography, I provide a brief history of photography in Ghana to show how the photographic norms of Ghana inform my use of photography in fieldwork. I also provide a brief overview of collaborative anthropology and its importance to my visually oriented fieldwork practice. I suggest that collaborative methods, coupled with sensuous photography, highlights the strength and value of shared research experiences for the construction of knowledge. I also argue that collaborative ethnographic photography is a viable tool to construct fuller articulations of African market women as social agents.

The traveling exhibition of Sarah “Saartjie” Baartman, the petite Khoikhoi woman displayed throughout Europe as the “Hottentot Venus” is emblematic of prurient colonial fascinations with African bodies. The invention of photography in the mid-nineteenth century, along with the rapid expansion of the British Empire culminated with the Scramble for Africa in the early 20th century. Through the construction of colonial subjects as others, photography was a power instrument of colonial control (Jenkins 1994). World fairs and museum exhibitions with trophy head collections were all used to justify colonization and domination around the world. Photographs played an integral role in these processes (Edwards 1992). As a substitute for citizens who could not afford to visit museums and fairs, Europeans could gaze upon photographs and postcards from across the Empire. As subjects to technology, rather than as producers of technology, the colonial other could not return the gaze of the colonizer.

Photography arrived in West Africa shortly after its invention in the mid-nineteenth century (Schneider 2010). From the earliest recorded history of the first photographic encounter, Africa has been framed as, “at once strange, intoxicating, carnal, primitive, wild [and] luminous” (Enwezor 2006:1). A corpus of material exists that image Africa through fetishized visual tropes. Anthropometric photographs of African genitalia and skulls continued where the exhibit of Sarah Baartman left off to demonstrate European superiority through the denigration of Africans (Landau and Kaspin 2002).

During the late 19th century, missionary photography in Ghana was a mechanism to narrate the existence of indigenous groups. Jenkins (1994) discusses the ways in which photography mediated relationships between the North German Mission Society in Ghana and supporters in the colonial metropolis. Similar to contemporary “Save the Children” infomercials, where viewers are requested to donate “just 70 cents a day”, the North

German Mission Society sought funds from contributors in the home country so that they may, “see liberated children...in Christian care receiving education” (Jenkins 1994: 127).

These still photography practices carried the most popular images of Ghanaians to the West. Along with ethnography and the institutionalization of “tribes” under colonial rule, photography functioned as a tool to instill racial hierarchies and distance.

In the coastal regions of Ghana (including Accra and Cape Coast), photography was popular among Ghanaians during the end of the 19th century (Haney 2010). In the 1890s, Ghanaian elites owned photography studios. It was not until the middle of the 20th century that photographers became to create images there were not mimics of Victorian aesthetic photography traditions (Wendl 2001). During the 1920s, cameras were manufactured on the Gold Coast, which innovatively created a “darkroom inside the camera body”. According to Wendl this,

Permitted the production of a negative on printed-paper, which was re-photographed in front of the lens, in order to get, after processing (negative of a negative) a positive. This extremely practical and ingenious technique, popularly known as “Wait & Get” photography led to a new type of itinerant actor who offered cheap portraits and ID shots to the growing number of urban poor and to farmers from the remote areas on their visits to town. The result was a slow democratization of access to individual photographic representations, which had a privilege of the urban economic and educated elites. Yet, we should not lose sight of the fact that most Ghanaians first encountered photography while taking I.D. pictures.

At that time, the primary function of photography in Ghana has been to document events and clothes (Wendl 2001). This documentation occurred in studio portraits or at formal events, such as wedding and funerals (Wendl and DuPlessis 1998). Cross culturally, clothes always hold some sort of symbolic markers. In Ghana, the symbolism of clothes operates through the importance of *ntama* (cloth). How fabric is designed, how many yards are used for a dress, the width of a kick pleat and the location of a split, are all communications of a variety of social identities. Esi Dogbe notes, “For the individual

wearer, the accrued social, material and psychological value of cloth in Ghanaian society remains materially and viscerally vital for reconfiguring perceptions about who they are. On a group level, *ntama* is a conduit for the celebration and disruption of familial, gender, ethnic, class, nationalist and class affiliations” (2003: 378). Former president, Dr. Nkrumah’s preferred to wear kente cloth during state affairs as an aesthetic rejection of western suits and neckties (Allman 2006).

Ghana has a vibrant history in the manufacturing of cloth. The now globally popular kente clothe originated in Ghana (Perani and Wolff 1999). The wax-printed cloth trade that stretches between Europe and West Africa dates back to the 1700s (Hale 1970, Johnson 1979). It is unsurprising that a sizable portion of Makola is dedicated to the sale and trade of cloth. The wealthier women who came to the market before important events to check on apprentices used those visits to display their affluent social class. I did not realize that my photographs of the women before these events affirmed pre-existing social norms about the role of photography in every day life. The women’s dress “reinforce and illustrate social integration” (Wendel 2001:85). My images of traders at the market highlighted the importance of their fine attire.

The expense of studio photography production meant that Ghanaian the elite had insular access to images. The recent popularity of digital cameras and camera phones has spurred a proliferation of passport photo studios throughout Accra. These studios produce digital images as well as develop 35 mm film. The leapfrog technology from “Wait & Get” to the contemporary rise of mobile phones and inexpensive digital cameras imported from Asia fuels the growth of photography across class divides. In 2005, the circulation of passport photos among friends was fashionable in several Accra neighborhoods. I asked several high

school students about their passport photo collection. The common response was that the photos democratized access to a less expensive, yet studio style portrait.

Personal ownership of a camera remains rare in Ghana. But the legacy of portrait photography remains in the consumption desires of photo subjects (Ranger 2001). For example, Rahida shared her desires for her picture when we became more familiar with one another. Rahida demanded to be more than a subject of my camera and desire. She wanted to use photography to display her acquisition of lace, an expensive fabric and important material gain that being in Accra afforded her.

My initial experiences with Rahida piqued my interest in the use of photography at Makola. Photography was a vehicle to connect my personal background to my theoretical interests within fields of friendships and collaboration. However, the perception that photography cannot be part of “serious ethnographic texts” (Poole 2005:169) is especially relevant in African representations. African bodies are overwhelmingly consumed, dissected and displayed for prurient Western media consumption (Baker 2009). Objectification of African bodies creates, an “increase anxiety about the utility of the photographic image as an instrument of scientific research” (Poole 2005:165). The result, “puritanically” speaking, is that “academics often think of visual material as decorations...to get reader’s attention or interest...distracting from the real message” (Becker 1984:76). What is at stake then, is that photographs simply become “images on the edge of the text” rather than as avenues towards qualitative insights (Homiak 1991).

Even with sustained theoretical attention to visual anthropology in its broadest scope, photography receives tertiary attention after film and video (Sapir 1994). Ethnographic photography is often criticized as a practice without seamlessly grounded methods or a staunch theoretical canon (Ruby 1996). Historically, anthropologists used

images in fieldwork as a way to data. Malinowski and Levi-Strauss used photographs as supplementary role in field notes and a memory trigger during the write-up process (Prins 2004, Levi-Strauss 1995). Bateson and Mead (1942) are arguably, the first anthropologists to utilize photography and film as scientific instruments to study cultures. Mead and Bateson (1942) are widely heralded as key innovators of photographic ethnography because photographs became the subject of study, rather than a simple recording method. This approach was criticized as a kind of “salvage paradigm” (Pinney 1997: 45). However, Mead and Bateson did successfully use photography to conceptualize the image as both a research method and a research subject in an innovative way (Edwards 1992)

The scientific racism of the 19th century and its associated photographs that marked “empirical” racial hierarchies fueled anthropological suspicions about photography’s place in ethnographic research (Poole 2005:165). Photographs produced by Victorian anthropologists represented Native Americans and other groups in the colonized world, such as Indians and Algerians (MacDougall 1997). These images canonized the romantic primitivism of the nineteenth century in models of salvage anthropology (Geary and Lee Webb 1998; Ryan 1997). This harkens to the uncomfortable history of anthropology’s verandah approach to participant observation that closed, “the space between the site of observation on the colonial periphery and the site of metropolitan interpretation” (Edwards 2001: 31-32). Critics rightfully maintain that early image productions glossed divergent contexts of the photographs, manipulated the contents of a photo’s representation, and idealized images as displays of objective reality (Edwards 1992).

To avoid throwing the baby out with the bathwater, Edwards examines how anthropological media has moved away from an “archive” of knowledge to “more differentiated and complex acts of anthropological intention” (2001:29). Jean Rouch (2003)

created films where video cameras were, “effectively handed-over” to native subjects and subjected to their intentions, rather than the aims of the ethnographer (Ginsburg 1992). Worth and Adair (1997) shifted their anthropological focus in film from a documentary product to an attentive documentation of the social relationships that emerge through image production and consumption. These changes examine how cultural identities exist and are shaped through media forms (Poole 2005, Alexander 1998, Ginsburg 1995). The attentions ethnographers give to indigenous media practices also counters the traps of objectivity and romantic primitivism that pervade colonial representations. With these efforts, media are not flattened to praiseworthy or problematic representations, but become complex analytical tools. Poole argues that these changes in media, “effectively... destabilized earlier assumptions about the necessarily objectifying...character of still photographic technologies” (2005:171).

Anthropologists have taken the task to offer contributions in ethnographic photography that move beyond colonial representations. In *Visions, Race and Modernity*, Poole (1997) pointedly and reflexively assesses the power dynamics of race within colonial and postcolonial politics and the historical contestations that arise in imaging subjects. Lyndon’s (2005) photographic experiences with indigenous Australians reveal how photographs can construct revisionist memories and reclaim personhood and kinship, both fictive and biological. This ethnographic use of images serves as an affirmation of community connections to landscape. In *Photos of the Gods*, Pinney (2004) examines how image production affirms practices of knowledge. Photographs can serve as a mean to allow people to “formulate their own identities in opposition to hegemonic discourses that position them at the margins” (Ota 1997: 147).

MacDougall reminds practitioners that visual approaches, “never replace written anthropology, nor is visual media an understudy in the fieldwork practices” (1997: 292-3). Photography in visual anthropology usually focuses on three general areas: photography as a data collection tool, manual how-to guides for anthropological photography (Collier and Collier 1986) and photography as a research method (Schwartz 1989). Disciplinary paradigms shifts have given increased attention to collaborative media production and indigenous media production (Ginsburg 1997, 2002; Pinney 1997). Central to the theoretical orientation of photography within visual anthropology is the question of where (and how) to locate the production of meaning and ideology in the photographic process and how to delineate agency and interpretation. Bourdieu notes,

Because it is a ‘choice that praises’, because it strives to capture, that is, to solemnize and to immortalize, photography can not be delivered over to the randomness of the individual imagination and, via the mediation of the ethos, the internalization of objective and common regularities, the group places this practice under its collective rule, so that the most trivial photograph expresses, apart from the explicit intentions of the photographer, the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group (1990:5-6)

My use of photographs actively attempts to forge a grounded connection between visual methods and textual analysis (Behrend 2002). Ethnographic photography operates as a generative tool that examines thorny issues, such as marginalized representations of black women.

Andrade (2007:94) notes in writing about African women’s experience that, “I am deeply mindful of cautions against reading African women as rebellious subjects in a world context where the actions and agency of most are profoundly shaped (and sometimes undermined) by global forces entirely out of their control”. In a similar manner, I have little sentimentality about the lives of head porters in Makola or the images they produced. From

the beginning, my discussions with head porters centered on the harsh challenges of their experiences at the Market.

Collaborative methodologies offer a unique way for anthropologists to critically engage their role as interloper in a reflexive manner. Collaborative methods and theoretical frameworks are not new within anthropology (Lassiter 2005). Ethnographers engage in coauthored work and present their research to the communities they study (Worth and Adair 1997). Public anthropologists frame fieldwork as “deliberate efforts to be moved by community agendas, reactions and even resistance” (Cook 2009: 110). For example, John Langston Gwaltney’s *Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America* (1993) is a collection of interviews with *drylongso* (ordinary black people in African American Vernacular English). Through these narratives, Gwaltney argues (1980:xxix), “Black people are building theory on every conceivable level”. The theories about the nation-state, the social construction of race and whiteness unfold through discourse about the racialized “games” whites play and the double consciousness black people use to oppose subjection.

This ethnographic account centers on “ordinary” black folks articulations of power and representations of whiteness and white privilege. Gwaltney (1993) favors the narratives of barbershop, church and corner bar discourse and connects these conversations to anti-colonial sentiments in Africa and civil rights rhetoric in the US. Gwaltney (1993:xxii) takes a poignant political position that refuses to construct “romanticized representations” of black street life or rely on what he describes as, “street corner-exotica”. Instead, *Drylongso* avoids theoretical critiques based on case studies with people. Rather, Gwaltney (1993) turns what is usually constructed as the case study and turns narrative into theory.

Similarly, I favor the narratives of market women often unnoticed within scholarship. I place primacy on the daily tasks of their labor, rather than the movement of

market commodities. Although collaborations has been previously ignored or discarded in anthropological research designs, collaboration with research subjects is becoming one of the most ethical, theoretical, and methodological issues in anthropology (see Brettel 1996, Hymes 2002, Jaarsma 2002, Marcus 2001). The theoretical framework of anthropologists cannot be untangled from specific forms of encounter and temporality (Das 2003). I embrace how collaborative processes “required experimentation” in a manner similar to Gwaltney (Cook 2008:110). I used a phenomenological framework, informed by feminist anthropology to create an analysis of perception that focuses on the body and bodily images.

Out of the 30 head porters I met and interviewed between December 2007 and late-January 2008, I taught 12 head porters how to use cameras. They were Adisatu, Aisha, Amina, Ahjara, Fatima, Habiba, Hanifa, Khadija, Lahari, Tani, Sakina and Zahra. These pseudonyms are similar to reflect the similarity between the women’s birth names. I also chose these common Arabic, Islamic and ethnic born-day names to protect the women’s identity. Aissatou and Mariama were such close friends with so many of the women I did photograph with that they often participated in our group conversations. Aissatou and Mariama did learn how to use cameras and shot sporadically, but mostly they did not have sustained interest in photography. Their friends often included them in our talks. Where we at at Rawlings Park, it was common for different head porters to join our conversations. Sakina wanted to do something “fun”. Tani said she was, “happy to do anything that will not cost money” since “everything in Accra is expensive”. Amina would usually draw Mariama into our conversations since the two women were together so often.

For the field, I purchased 15 Vivitar 35mm point and shoot cameras. I asked 25 of the 30 women I spent the most time with if they were interested in shooting photographs together. I was nervous that more women would be interested in photography than I had

cameras for. Photography remains novel and I arrogantly assumed that many women would want to participate in photography. Similar to Aissatou and Mariama's comments, several women expressed that conversation and interviews were fine, but that photography was frivolous. Many women were too busy working to take part in the project. Most of the women who decided to learn to use cameras were the younger, unmarried porters. We spent a month on camera use, how to change the batteries and how to frame photographs. Many rolls of film were overexposed or double exposed, but by April, the women became more confident at taking pictures.

Daylight in Accra is sufficient for most outdoor photography and low light conditions, particularly when using speeds of 400 ISO. I also had an instant camera that I used during the first month of fieldwork. After an unfortunate incident when the film cartridges were overexposed to sun, I could not continue using the instant camera. Replacement film is prohibitively expensive in Ghana. I also utilized a Minolta 5 mega pixel and Kodak 6 mega pixel digital camera for personal use. After about five months of fieldwork, I shared the use of my personal digital cameras with kayayei. The women wanted to use the digital camera much sooner, but I had concerns about the possibility of theft at Agbogbloshie. When I did not go to Agbogbloshie, we would sometimes sit at the market until dusk. On those days, I gave the porters transport money to take tro-tro so they could arrive in Agbogbloshie before dark at their usual times.

During fieldwork, I used photography for three purposes. Initially, I used photographs to note various market landscape and work set-ups for kayayei at Makola Market. Makola Market is tranquil in the pre-dawn hours, but once the sun breaks the horizon, a dizzying amount of bustling occurs throughout alley and lanes that snake the market. Photography was a way to start fieldwork and help establish relationships with head

porters. Second, I photographed the physical environment at Makola, including taxis, busses, wheel-barrels and other forms of transportation. I shot buildings during my personal food shopping trips at the market. I integrated photography into my already known activities as a market shopper. Because of the pre-established relationships with a half dozen market sellers during previous visits to Ghana between 1998 and 2006, photographs were a way to explain my anthropological interest in Makola Market and answer questions about why certain types of photographs were useful to me.

Photography was an avenue to gain rapport from within a closed, mostly segregated community. My goal was to use collaborative ethnographic photography to “lead to new modes of constructing both the object of observation and the object of study” (Trouillot 2005:125). A visually guided fieldwork practice was useful because kayayei experiences are irreducible within narratives of market women. This required innovative methods to converse about women’s subjection that generally remain hidden from public view (Pink 2001).

Of the 12 women I worked with in photography, I explained that the cameras were a gift. Initially, I was hesitant to offer the cameras as gifts. I did not want the women to feel obligated to take pictures. Alternatively, I did not want them to feel like the cameras were mine and that they would be financially responsible for the cameras if something happened to them. One afternoon, I expressed my concerns as we talked about camera flashes. Tani said, “If we take care of them, we’ll keep them. If we don’t take care of them, if I lose them, then they are gone. What’s the problem then? You don’t have plenty to give. If we spoil [break] them, then it is lost. So its up to us”. With that, the women collectively agreed to accept the cameras as gifts.

With my experience with Rahida as a guide, I decided to use photos alongside kayayei. I wanted to create images that were cultural representative of head porters desires and expectations. On Fridays, we would go to each other's homes to take pictures for women to send home. At the end of my fieldwork, I gave the women extra batteries and film. I knew it was highly unlikely that Amina and the rest of the women would buy film or use their cameras very often. But it would definitely go far with regard to their social status and capital when they returned to their villages with cameras. When I left the field, I also placed a credit at a photography lab near Makola. The owner was the cousin of a friend who worked at the Accra Arts Centre. I asked another friend at the Arts Centre to check in at the lab to monitor the credit deduction to ensure the head porters were not going to be cheated.

This chapter explains some the usefulness of collaborative ethnographic photography and how my fieldwork practices contributes to the burgeoning sub-discipline. I illustrate how photography operates within and between sociality in Makola Market through various kinds of gazes and scopic regimes that function in every day work. These ideas substantiate the increased attention anthropologists give to intersubjectivity in the data collection process and my fieldwork methods supports my theoretical position as a feminist anthropologist who uses phenomenology to unpack these collaborative turns in my visual praxis.

Buckley's poetically states how, "the sound of a camera shutter making its slice sounds more like the snip of scissors, cutting out people, clarifying their edges, and making them cutting edge. Cameras... are scissors for seeing" (2000:72). My goal was to create a participatory research based dissertation that creates another interpretive community (Prosser 1998). Kayayei, much like the *drylongso*, are extraordinary social observers. Since my fieldwork is broadly concerned with the way human agents carry out, experience and comprehend

economic and political shifts at urban markets, kayayei recognize the moments when they are integral the consumer core of the market, even as they are economically marginalized on the periphery.

Collaborative approach invites commentary from women who can offer anthropological insight about the nuances of social life. hooks (1995:63) suggests pictures are, “maps guiding us through diverse journeys” that are bound neither to random individual acts nor wholly in the hands of opposing forces. Images foster an emotional sifting which highlights the difficulty faced when verbalizing how bodies sense the world. Photographs served as a site of engagement. This permitted me as the researcher to embrace a non-positivist perspective and work alongside women to produce nuances about African market women. This particular kind of dialogic approach espouses a more conscious politic of representation and actively engages the unequal power distributions that subordinate women in Ghana. In the next chapter, I examine some examples of how collaborative photography highlighted head porter’s efforts to displace hierarchies of domination that operate in their daily work.

Photographs produced by head porters, for head porters and their larger communities created a platform for commentary from young women that become, “part of the ethnographic text as it develops, which was negotiated and reintegrated back into the fieldwork process itself” (Lassiter 2005: 16). Head porters did not to merely discuss what the images within photographs meant, but spent a significant amount of time constructing what images are made to mean through conversations we had. The images are primarily for the women to discuss, send home, exchange with friends, or in some cases, throw away. The visual component of the fieldwork created a space for women to dissect between the images

to circulate in Accra among their peers, images for personal memories, photographs for display in academic research and photographs to be going home to families.

CHAPTER SIX: SNAP WRITING, KAYAYEI REFLECTIONS AND TACTILE KNOWLEDGE

Historical processes, contemporary politics of development and local discourses shape every day life in Accra. This chapter explores the ways in which kayayei treat photography to investigate their immediate perceptions of these worldly orders and the intermittent presence that the past plays in their daily lives. As Tani, Lahari and the rest of the women became more adept at photography, they often declared what they were going to shoot, rather than ask permissions from each other about photo subjects. Kisu, Amina and Aisha chose themes for particular rolls of film. During one of our meetings in May, Kisu said that her images were “too scatter, scatter”. That is, her pictures were disjointed and difficult for her to discuss in a single conversation. Kisu said her thoughts made her words “run over each other”. Although she enjoyed the rambling conversations across topics, Kisu suggested that the photographers “focus on something” or an idea for 2-3 rolls of film. All of the photographers agreed to try this approach.

This was the beginning of a process head porters described as snap writing. The kayayei I took photos with always punctuated the idea of taking a photo by snapping their fingers. Kisu used the term “snap writing” to describe two types of conversations we had. Snap writing is the quick paced conversation the women have after the photographs have been “washed” (processed and printed). Snap writings are my transcription of their immediate reflections and responses women to a collection of new prints.

The second meaning describes the images I include or exclude in my research for academia. The women and I negotiated terms of use for snap writing. Very often, photographs that women decided to send home to their families were excluded from this dissertation. The women did not grant permissions for these images. They felt these images

were “special” and needed to be kept private. Amina had photographs she wanted to share with her mother to illustrate how her eyes “were opened” in Accra. On the other hand, the women had pictures “for the world”. The head porters called the images for the dissertation or other written texts, pictures for “the world”. This was a hefty responsibility head porters gave me, to be responsible for how their images would circulate in the world. They imagined me at their primary connection to American life. They trusted me to “show America”. I was the portal in which they imaged themselves outside of Ghana. The head porters chose the images that would represent their thoughts. This chapter focuses on the snap writing process as well as discussions about the images the women decided “the world” would see through the vantage point of my research.

Migration was a marker of maturity for kayayei. Amina wanted evidence of that experience. The women thought of images for my dissertation as photographs “for the world”. They wanted me to “show hard work” to outsiders. When I asked the women why illustrating hard work was important Tani responded that, “Being a hard worker means you are good person; that you know value. Everyone should know that”. Kayayei often circularly migrate during dry seasons, between crop rotations and while their children are toddlers. The photographers wanted the dissertation images to reflect the intensity of their work in the city.

The time-space compression (Harvey 1989) that is a fundamental feature of globalization expands the terrain of social production from Northern Ghana to Accra, some 800 km away. For porters, kaya work props up an increasingly challenged local economy. Some remit wages to parents and families. The unmarried women use their wages to accumulate goods for marriages. Women often rely on the Susu Collector System as micro-savings schemes to earn starter funds for small businesses or the return journey home

(Aryeetey and Gockel 1991). As circular migrants, head porters are “rural cosmopolitans who take along materials and techniques” that transform social space in multiple worlds (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003:339).

In conversations with the kayayei who photographed, topics ranged from image content, the technique of shooting images to the relationships between researcher and research, as well as community activity within the market and beyond. Most times when topic conversations took place, I sat in the circle of conversation with Afushe, my field assistant who translated Dagbani to English. Afushe translated the dialogue about topics. I also recorded many of these conversations and took notes. Topic conversations casually take place about every three weeks from May to August of 2008. This chapter highlights some the advantages of collaborative photography that resulted in snap writing.



Photograph 6.1. Shani, a female head porter. Makola Market, Accra, Ghana.

The synchronicity of snap writing is exemplified in this photograph Hanifa shot of her friend at the market. Hanifa and Lahari often worked together to unload packages at Makola Market. I was at the market that day as well. We had all agreed to bring our cameras to market to shoot pictures. This image above is a photograph of Hanifa's friend Shani as she stood behind a sign advertisement for Super Snaps Passport Studio in Accra. When I brought this print to the market, I explained to the women how Hanifa had captured the word "snap" in her image. Rahida laughed at my amazement that Hanifa unknowingly took a picture of a word they used to describe snap writing. When Hanifa talked about the print, she said, "I just saw the picture in my head. Before I raised the camera. I saw Shani standing there adjusting her scarf. This is a picture inside this picture. The man is going for the tro-tro. Everything of the market is inside this picture". As I listened to Aushe translate, Hanifa snapped her fingers, and pointed to my notebook. Hanifa said, "Write this". She continued,

Everything in the market is there. You said it yourself, just now. The snap is inside the snap! I don't read words, but the snap is there. Look at all these people around this girl. None of them are minding her. None of them are minding me. Only Shani sees me snap her picture. Other than that, no one pays attention to me. But I am the tro-tro. When the mate shouts from the tro-tro, people mind him (pay attention). When the taxi driver presses his noise (horn), people mind him. As for me, the only person who minds me is Shani.

As the conversation progressed, Hanifa expressed an array of ideas. She talked about the differences between Shani and the truck pusher who was outside of the shot. When I asked Hanifa about "everything of the market" being in her picture of Shani, she explained further,

Look! There is a taxi. There is a tro-tro. There is a truck-pusher. Look at the boxes. There is Shani standing for a picture in front of this thing for pictures. I love this picture. Shani is the only one who sees me. The truck pusher, the taxi driver, the tro-tro mate, none of them see me. Shani sees me because I know she knows that I see

her pan at her feet. Heh! She was getting ready to curse me until she saw it was me with the camera.

Hanifa used a single photograph to examine the numerous layers to informal transportation in Accra. Characteristics of transportation; whether by foot, bus or bicycle form unique aspects of life that reflects social history and a myriad of social interactions (Winner 1986; Wittgenstein 1953). The normative framework for informal transportation in Ghana includes highly organized systems of both motorized and non-motorized transportation. Scholars define informal transportation in Ghana as any form of transportation not state-owned as informal (Pankaj and Coulthart 1994). These include the tro-tros that carried my friends and I to our first visit to Makola and the vehicle a man prepared to climb into inside Hanifa's photograph. Informal transportation also includes mammy-wagons that transport passengers and large goods, often simultaneously, shared ride taxis and the private taxis Hanifa imaged. The fares for tro-tros, shared taxis and mammy wagons are set by the Ghana Road Transport Coordinating Council (GRTCC) based on state controlled petrol prices. These prices are published in newspapers. As a result, driver's attempts to raise prices above those set by the GRTCC are often met with customers who refuse to pay new fares.

Greico, Turner, Kwakye (1994) argue that all transportation in Ghana is informal, even though many are state sanctioned, regulated and unionized. But Hanifa noticed something more inside of this. Although her work is sanctioned as market necessity and a common practice, Hanifa focused on the body politics and visibility of her work. Hanifa said the only person who sees her is Shani. When I pressed her to explain, Hanifa touched her clothes and her carrying pan and emphatically said, "You know, see me. To see what I am working with".

Hanifa tapped the top of the aluminum pan and added, “No one makes my price. I don’t get to call like a mate. I am just here. And the only person who can see me is another person who does not call. I am just here to quietly make money. But that costs”. Hanifa’s photography constructed an experience of bodies through an analysis of photographic activity. Lock and Scheper-Hughes suggest that attention to the body is a useful way to understand women’s experiences in public and private domains. Hanifa absentmindedly tapped her pan whenever she mentioned the quietness movement of kaya work. Hanifa said that “everything in the market is there”, inside of her photography. Her feelings about the image were an important area of focus in order for her to make connections between her individual body and the transportation politics of her work (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1987).

This moment in our snap writing encounter, where I transcribed women’s words amount images reminds me how anthropologists discuss photo elicitation in research interviews. John Collier (1957) first used the term photo elicitation to describe the incorporation of photography into research practice. Collier used photography surveys rather than a text questionnaire to conduct research on ethnic diversity within housing communities. Collier (1957:856) comments that:

The characteristics of the two methods of interviewing can be simply stated. The material obtained with photographs was precise and at times encyclopedic; the interviews were less structured, rambling, and freer in association. Statements in the photo-interviews were in direct response to the graphic probes and different in character as the content of the pictures differed.

There are a few studies that rely primarily on photo elicitation as part of fieldwork methodologies. Paul Messaris and Larry Gross (1977) analyze interpretations of image narratives across diverse age groups. Victor Calderola (1985) examined farm harvest in Indonesia using images of duck eggs. In *Sellers and Servants: Working Women in Lima, Peru*,

Bunster and Chaney (1988) engage in collaborative research with 200 working class women and market sellers in Lima, Peru. These authors detail the emotional intensity of combining textual participant observation with photographs of market and home activities embedded in the interview process (Bunster and Chaney 1988). The ethnography describes photo elicitation as “talking pictures” much in the same way that I describe the “snap writing” of kayayei.

Snap writing includes reflexive methods and elicitation mechanisms. The women and I collaborated on photography to creatively create data. The women’s process of using image to narrate experience is part of snap writing/photo elicitation that were the basis of analyses. For example, Hanifa’s perception of her body and work are indexed through images. Hanifa used the image to communicate more fully and expressively. She built a metaphor of identity through photography. Hanifa described the experience of being placed on the edges of an informal transportation economy in Ghana. Images, in the process of creation, became a reflexive practice. Her work practices connect to the ways in which transportation is differentiated between the utility of motorized versus non-motorized transportation as well as the economic agency each of these modes afford practitioners.

Informal transportation is a flexible response to the choked conditions of Accra’s streets and largely operates via the labor efforts of migrants. These non-motorized transportation networks contribute to the proliferating layers of informal economies in the city. The tendency to construct non-motorized transport such as hand-trucks, bicycles, wheel-barrels and head porters as part of the larger union based, state regulated informal transportation network in Ghana is problematic (Amponsah, et al, 1996). There are no taxes collected from truck pushers and kayayei. There is no union or government body that sets prices for distance traveled. Thus, non-motorized informal transportation networks must be

distinctly parsed. Hanifa did this through imagery. Head portering is an economic activity that is not taxed or controlled by the government. Head porters “quietly” move goods and do not transport people.

The women used pictures as a stimulus to have critical dialogues about what they have made and the place they work and live. Hanifa’s exploratory approach is a way of “processing through landscape to narrate story” (Jhala 2004:62). Much of the work on elicitation relies on film within visual anthropology. Although Jhala (2004) references film practice, it has had a similar effect in fieldwork practice of photography. Given the high mobility of kayayei and their bodily labor throughout the market, their use of photography provides, “an alternative way to transverse a landscape and monitor space” (Jhala 2004:62). Much like Martinez Perez in the film *Cronotopo* (1997), where native photography functions as the basis for creative dialogue, photographic exploratory approaches with head porters incorporated discussions about the photographs within conversations about social stratification, group dynamics, agency and accommodation.

When I brought newly processed images to the field, these snap writing moments were the foundation for all other conversations and interviews regarding images. Kayayei were the authors of images and also narrated of the experiences therein. Once a group of women began to flip through images, Sakina or Kisu usually started the talk about pictures. These two women would often keep their eyes on my hands to make sure that I was writing. Kisu periodically asked Afushe, my translator, to question me. She’d ask, “What are you writing? Are you writing down what I say or what you say? I think you should write what I say”. Kisu would switch between Twi and Dagbani in her conversations. Every week, she would exclaim, “The pictures are plenty. I can’t always remember what I think. I don’t

always know what I say. Write down what I think. Tell me what I say so I can remember. Do the snap writing”.

When I read my notes back, the porters used those moments to interpret their social interactions. Through snap writing head porters had a clearly defined role as sharers of knowledge produced, rather than as simply informants or subjects in my research agenda. I promised to bring copies of my dissertation as well as framed images back to head porters. Many market sellers and a few kayayei are familiar with foreign researchers and their unfulfilled promises to return. My pre-dissertation fieldwork in 2006 and 2006 lessened those concerns as I had already proven my commitment and followed it with fulfilled gift requests on subsequent trips. Only a very small number of the images women produced are in this dissertation and those that are were selected by kayayei.

Sakina suggested the first topic of food. When Sakina tried to offer guidelines for images, Kisu shushed her and said, “No no no. Food, just food. Anything and everything. Food”. There was no talk about specificities or boundaries. Kisu reminded everyone how the idea for topics was hers. Kisu patted Sakina’s hand and added, “We know why Sakina brought this good idea of food, these days she’s always hungry”. The group laughed at the expectant mother and Sakina grinned. Kisu continued, “But here’s the rule.... anything at all about whatever we decide about whatever we see. About food”.

Most of the photos were circulated among the women and their friends. Others, like the ones taken on Fridays at home, were sent home to the village. Sakina, who was visibly pregnant by the end of August, used her photograph to document her pregnancy. Sakina wasn’t interested in telling people what to see. Sakina clearly understood that there are no, “unmediated photographs or passive cameras” (Haraway 1988:583). For Sakina, her images served an evidentiary role. Sakina just wanted her image to be “chopped” (eaten). She said,

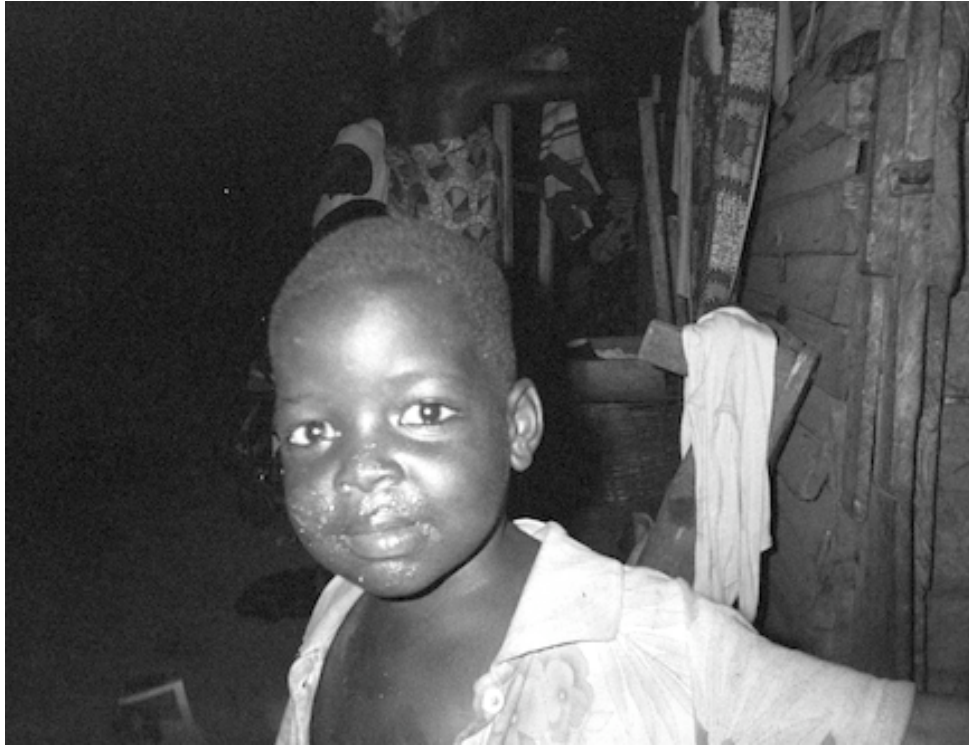
“I don’t write so the writing doesn’t matter much for the picture. They will read my picture.” The facts are *not* in the pictures, as Collier and Collier (1998) imply, but kayayei use photographs to recast the stories about their lives and “proclaim their presence” (Jhala 2004: 63). This action-centered approach allows photographs to serve a mediatory role rather than an abstraction (Gell 1998).

Photograph 6.2: Habiba’s son preparing for the evening meal at Agboglobshie.



I will send this picture home so they can see my boy is eating well. Look at home he enjoyed his food, very well. This snap makes me happy. Well, I wish his clothes were not dirty. But you show everyone. My son eats well”--Habiba.

Photograph 6.3: Habiba's son after having dinner.



Habiba looked at the pictures above and wanted “everyone” to know that the fruits of her labor means that her son gets to “eat well”. As an image practitioner, Habiba asserted a certain power since, “the very medium of photography has the uncanny ability to index the presence of the photographer” (Poole 2005:166). Habiba embraced the selectivity of the images because her camera was a “scissor for seeing” the progress of her ability to feed her son (Buckley 2000:72).

Habiba wanted to draw importance to certain types of knowledge. Habiba reflected on the subjective orientation of her son in her photography through her “sense of feelings and reflections” about her image (Ortner 2005:37). She is aware that one reading of image may focus on her son’s dirty shirt. But she overshadowed that interpretation. During snap writing, Habiba narrowed in on the importance of food. Habiba instructed the viewer eyes

away from a singular reading of the image. When she considered the image further, Habiba sighed and added, “But you see, this could also be a good thing. This way, they will know I am doing well enough to eat. But it looks so dark and dirty they should know I am not doing too well”.

Habiba did not want to be seen as “having too much” in the city. Although she wanted to feel like she was a “big woman”, she didn’t want any increased economic expectations of responsibility from her family. The following week, Habiba decided that I should use the image. She was unsure about sending the pictures home. She liked the “before eating” and “just full” titles she gave to her images. Habiba said she had “more control” with snap writing than if the image circulated back to the village.

Sarah Pink (2001) and Heike Behrend (2002) use image production methodologies and analyses that function as powerful interpretive tools of social interaction. Pink’s (2001) photography with women in Guinea-Bissau during Carnival creates an experience that illustrates how ethnographers can collaborate with subjects with mutual success. Heike Behrend (2002) examines how Kenyan youth use portraits to express individual styles, authenticate ownership of consumer goods. Images function as an important system of exchange between friends. Images circulate among young Kenyans as products that articulate a resistance to youth marginalization and oppression in Mombasa (Behrend 2002).

Behrend’s work counters the dominant ideology that African young people are vulnerable and wholly disempowered (Panter-Brick 2002). Behrend (2002) and Pink (2004) recognize the remarkable initiative and ingenuity of young people in relationship to technology. Both these approaches oppose tendencies to represent Africans as victims of circumstance. Similarly, my methodological approach to photography is not to stimulate or “give” agency to kayayei but to use image production with young women to creatively

construct images about themselves and their surroundings (Rotzer 1996). It also raised questions about context that Habiba spent a considerable amount of time thinking about. In the end, she decided she would keep the photograph as a memento. She would share the picture with her family once she got back to the North.

During a topic conversation in June, Afushe tells me that the women decided to shoot fruit. On the days women brought film for me to collect and process, I dropped the rolls off at the photo lab before I head home. Image processing usually takes 3-4 days. Since the photography lab is in Osu Residential Estate, a neighborhood between my house and Makola Market, I usually picked up the images on my way to the market. The week women chose to shoot nude pictures was the same week they told Afushe “fruit” as the topic.

When I arrived at the market with the prints, I sat at Golden Stool, a restaurant and drinking spot in Rawlings Park. Kayayei milled the parking lot to unload delivery trucks. After a few minutes, Rahida walked by to greet me. As is customary in Ghana, introductions are more than quick exchanges. Goody (2005:47) notes how, “ Verbal greetings are compounded by greeting titles and they are usually accompanied by physical gestures...formalized greeting is a way of obtaining favors that are paid for in currency of respect and deference”. Greetings and introductions are a typical way to rank and place social functions that operate across ethnic and social class in Ghana. Rahida and I inquired about each other’s family. Rahida is from Tugu, a village near the Tamale-Yendi motorway. Rahida does not know how to read or write, but speaks Ghanaian Pidgin English learned from “her Accra boy friend”. When I asked if he was her boyfriend, she blushed, but insisted, “Just a little friend to have here in Accra”.

Rahida is the oldest of five daughters and spends the fallow period between groundnut harvests in Accra. She, like many kayayei, does not know her exact age. Rahida

says she became a woman right before her first time to Accra because that was when she had been “bleeding for a while” (menstruating) and engaged to be married. That was her explanation as to why it was okay to have “just a little friend” in Accra.

When I first asked about her age, Rahida teased that she knows “for sure” that she is “younger than me”. Since all of the kayayei I know are illiterate, we guess their ages based on specific seasons and socio-political events. All of them describe themselves as women based on the criteria that they were at marriageable ages, married, had children or at the very least, been menstruating for more than a year⁵.

This particular morning, after we exchanged our greetings, Rahida walked as she talked. We roamed the perimeter of the park before Rahida settled into one of the plastic chairs at the Golden Stool. Rahida bought a satchel of water from a pure water seller and offered me one. I asked Rahida if she also wanted a soda. She declined. Our conversation lulled into quietness. I knew Rahida was leading up to ask me something. Rahida is younger than me, but she led me to sit down at the restaurant. In Ghana, it is usually the senior person who invited a person to sit or offered drinks when in public spaces. Something was up. Rahida offered to buy me water and declined my soda. Whatever was on Rahida’s mind, her body language indicated that it was something serious.

I asked Rahida, “How is the market today?” This was the easiest way to offer Rahida an opening whatever was bothering her.

Rahida paused and lowered her gaze. Then she scowled and said, “Aunty, I do not like this girl.... Eku...Why is she helping you? Is my sister Afushe not good enough for you?”.

⁵ Initially, I spent a lot of time concerned about age stratification to find out a range of ages for the head porters I interviewed. I made efforts to connect ages to dates based on newspaper archives and email exchanges with Dr. Kwaku Obosu-Mensah, a Ghanaian sociologist.

Ekua was the 17-year old bead seller at Rawlings Park who often offered unsolicited advice about my fieldwork. She is a precocious teenager who was one of the many onlookers to my group conversations with kayayei. Rahida said she did not approve of Ekua as my new assistant. I was confused by the criticism. But I also could tell that Rahida was pissed off because she called me “Aunty”. She gave me the extra titling because she angry with me yet didn’t want to offend me. I had a few friendly conversations with Ekua. I had taken a friend to see Ekua to buy beads as souvenirs. When Ekua was confirmed at the Catholic Church, I bought her some ice cream to celebrate. We were friendly, because she was one of the many young people who worked around the park. But that was it.

I had no idea what Rahida was talking about and said so. Rahida explained how the day after our last snap writing topic meeting, Ekua told Habiba, Sakina and Kisu that she was my new “assistant”. As my new “assistant”, Ekua told the three women that I wanted one of their cameras to give to Ekua. Ekua approached them to collect. Rahida said Sakina and Amina were angry with me. None of them carried their cameras to market that day. None of them gave Ekua a camera. They argued with Ekua for a bit then decided to ignore her and wait for me to come to the market.

This conversation with Rahida was about a week after the disagreement with Ekua. Rahida said Kisu was my ally in the arguments because she did not believe I would hire Ekua. Afushe was already my translator. The women liked Afushe because, “she was a Northerner” like them. After Rahida explained that the women were “hot” with me, I looked around for Ekua. Ekua had been at the market every day from the start of my fieldwork. But the morning Rahida shared this story, Ekua was nowhere around. Rahida said, “Buy food today to cool our heads. Minerals (sodas) just make you thirst more. Buy small food”. Based on my conversation with Rahida, I did not have a solid idea of why Sakina and

Amina were angry. But I followed Rahida's advice. I bought fried yams as well as chicken gizzard with pepper for the snap writing conversation of the day. I ordered three bottles of water and waited for the women to come to talk.

When Sakina, Aissatou, Kisu and Amina arrived at the table, they glanced at the water. We exchanged our greetings. I repeated Rahida's admonition against soda, offered the water and told the women that food was coming. I asked Sakina to tell me what happened with Ekua as they sat around the table.

Kisu cut in and said, "We will eat. Then look at pictures". When the food arrived at the table, we washed out hands. Uncharacteristically, we ate in silence.

When the meal completed, I asked again about Ekua.

"Where are the photos?" Kisu responded. I handed Kisu the envelopes with the image. Kisu flipped through the images and handed them to Sakina. Sakina snickered as she looks through a few images and passed the prints to Amina. Amina laughed and hands the pictures to me. As I look through the pictures, there are topless shots of Amina, Ahjara, Sakina and Aissatou. A bit taken aback, I asked, "This is the fruit? What happened to the fruit?" Before Afushe made the translation, the women broke into peals of laughter.

Sakina thought it was a good idea to, "test my honesty" by taking nude photographs. A few days after they discussed the topic of fruit for images, Sakina asked Aissatou to pose without her clothes. As Sakina retold the story, Aissatou cuts in to say, "She takes a picture of my coconuts!". Because I promised to always give the photographers first look of their images, Sakina said, "We would know if you look at the pictures before you came. If you saw the pictures first, you would be shy to give them to us". I replied, "I didn't look. I didn't even think to look". I was often tempted to look at the prints before I arrived at the market, but I wanted to respect the agreements I had made with these women. Aissatou responded,

“Well, after what happened with Ekua, we didn’t know if you were honest. And you didn’t come for a while”.

The disagreement the women had with Ekua spurred them to test my honesty. Sakina felt that if I did look at the pictures first, she would notice. She said that looking at the pictures would confirm dishonesty in me. It might have also given credence to Ekua’s efforts to swindle a camera from the porters.

With annoyance in her voice, Aissatou wanted to know, “And whose camera was she going to take?” Ahjara thought I bought food to say “sorry” for what I had done [hire Ekua and look at the pictures first].

I said defensively, “I was here last week. Remember my friend that you saw with me last time? We traveled to Cape Coast for a few days. I just came back”.

Ahjara thought Rahida sat with me to support a conciliatory gesture. Kisu added, “I didn’t think you would like Ekua more than us. I was on your side when they thought she was your friend passed us.”

The nude images, taken in a playful gesture, came to be a method to shock me. To these young women, Ahjara took a semi nude photograph of her friends so they can be, “the opposite of what is seen”. Amina breached expectations of modesty, knowing that I would see these images. Ahjara and Amina trusted me. The interest I had in their stories and with them sharing their insights and stories had helped bridge some of the gaps between us. The fact that the women were angry with me gives credence to their commitment as stakeholders in my research process.

The women’s emotional reactions--from the argument with Ekua to the impromptu trick they played on me were all tests of honesty. The interests these women held in photography created a contour of our relationship that they decided. The porters were angry

because Ekua attacked their legitimacy as photographers. They trusted Afushe as the bearer of meaning as a translator because she is an indigenous Dagbani speaker and also a Dagomba from the Northern Region. They subverted the expectations of modesty to proclaim their womanhood through nude imagery. Ekua was younger than the women and I.

The issue of the cameras and ownership are only a part of the conversation. Ekua's younger age, her ethnic difference from head porters and her forthright (and crafty) countenance were conspicuous differences that the women did not want to align themselves with. Through photography, these women created new ways of creating bodily sensations and a critique of their hypervisibility at the market. Instead of the nude pictures for display, the women chose a photograph of Rahida that Adisatu had taken as a "marker" of this conversation. Adisatu said, "She helped you know us. She is the most beautiful, even with cloth on".



Photograph 6.4: Portrait of Rahida, a female head porter.

In the beginning of my fieldwork, Sakina, Aissatou and I conversed about marriage and America. During my visits to Agbogbloshie, the women would often offer to “do my hair”. One day, I sat with Amina as she plaited my dreadlocks. She wanted to know why I locked my hair. Ahjara told me that it looked nice, “because its long hair. Long hair is

pretty”. This casual conversation reminded me of two things. One is the way in which we sit in the doorway of the lean-to. This was so similar to my childhood memories of my mother who combed my hair at the kitchen table while food baked in the oven. From where we sat, at the threshold of this moldy wooden shack, Amina and I had a vantage to watch the aluminum pot boil on the charcoal stove. The flimsy lean-to stood in a ragged pattern between a maze of similar structures, where men and women stir pots for evening meals.

The second thing this moment reminded me of was the politics of hair and how they operate across black communities. Black people’s hair is stigmatized all around the world (Mercer 1987). It surprised me to see so many kayayei with chemically straightened hair. Africa did not remain untouched by European standards of silky, long hair as an equivalent to beauty (Banks 2000). The moment, where Amina frankly stated that my hair “is nice only because it’s long” reminds me of the importance of touch to one’s sensorium (Ong 2000). My kinky knots would not have passed Amina’s tests of aesthetic beauty if it were not for the long length. When I asked Amina how she afforded to straighten her hair, she replied, “It is necessary. You have to do it for it to be nice. Other than doing this [straightening], your hair is ugly. I buy soap. I buy water. I buy the thing to make my hair straight. Unless its braids, its too hard to comb. I can’t be bothered”. Amina clearly rejected the possibility that kinky hair could be beautiful. Her perception that her natural hair had to be tamed echoed my childhood experiences. I would sit at the stove for my mother to press a hot comb through my hair in order to make it “more manageable”. My hair was not quite good enough for Amina because it was not straight. But I was still like a doll to her because my hair was long.

Amina and I sat stadium style on the concrete blocks turned steps, as she wove black threads through my braids to hold them in place. Amina and I watched pepper soup roll in a

pot nearby, we had settled in an experience that was common for both of us. Amina talked about braiding her sister's hair. She mentioned how she wants to chemically straighten her daughter's hair to make it "easier" to deal with when she is not in the village. I made Amina laugh when I told her the story about a comb being stuck in my hair as a child. My bangs had to be cut near my scalp to remove the comb. Amina recounted the first time she straightened her hair. As Amina styled my hair, we settled into a "ritual of restoration" that is so ordinary for us women with similar hair-stories (King et. al, 2005:497). Ong writes,

Touch registers extensions in space, and sight also gives immediate access to extension. Extension is thus a kind of bridge between touch and sight...As a field shared by two senses; extension can associate vision with the tactile feel for 'reality'. Once this association is effected and touch and sight have joined forces to define the real the other senses have a hard time at it (2000:172-173).

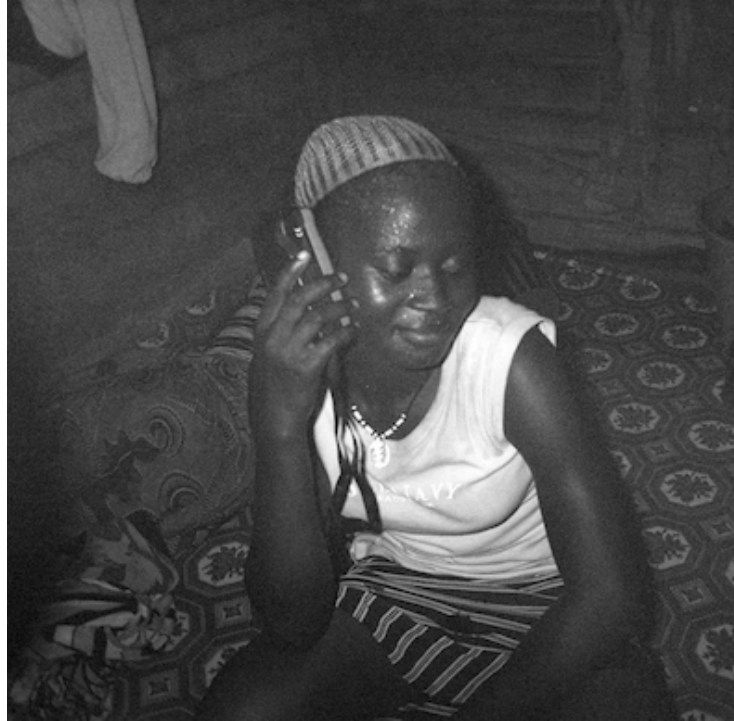
I ground peppers as Amina plaited. I felt more like my own self than "ethnographer". There was a familiarity that I felt as I sat with Amina in this interaction over our hair. Amina absentmindedly patted my arms as she did my hair. We watched the pots. We stirred. We chatted. My notebook was tucked in my bag. Afushe had come to Agbogbloshie to "chill out" and eat with us. Because we were relaxed and at ease, I decided to share what was on my mind without worry. I told Amina how I thought it seems counter-intuitive that kayayei wear skirts and dresses to do the laborious work of porters. Accra is hot and humid. Kayayei often have to carry loads through traffic and tight spaces. The skirts just don't seem very functional. I said, "I get it. Dresses and skirts are for women to wear...modesty... womanhood. All that. But still...it seems a bit much".

As I talked, Afushe opened my back and pulled out some of pictures. Amina recalled the day we flipped through the nude images. She said, "You asked more than five times why we don't wear trousers. Women wear skirts. Traders don't wear pants. All the women wear skirts. Every photography, we were skirts. It's the right thing to do. Since that is right thing

to do, we give you plus more. No clothes. Is it good for you? We give you more than you want. You have to understand now”. I nodded, but I wasn’t quite sure what Amina was getting at. She stood to check the pots. Amina said the photographs of the “fruit” went beyond modesty. I pulled out another photograph. Amina pointed to a nude photograph again. Amina concluded said kayayei have to wear skirts. Skirts are “proper for women of Islam”. She didn’t mediate her dress as a matter of choice. Amina didn’t understand my criticism of functionality because modesty was most important.

In this conversation at Agboghloshie, the touch of a photograph mediated our sight (Ong 1982). The touch of the photograph connected my conversation with Amina about hair stories, nude images and religious practice. Amina tenderly held the photography of her nude self as she spoke. Not only was the image held in Amina’s hand, but also the photograph indexed the “fluid continuum of touch and gesture cohering groups of interlocutors” (Edwards 2005:40). Our social practice of hair is informed by a shared subjectivity and recognition of a performative self and social connection. Her photograph and my hair were a materiality through which we were sociable (Wright 2004).

The snap writing is an important element of the fieldwork experience, but the “kitchen table/collaboration” is where we discussed problems of life (King et. al, 2005:497). Sakina arrived at the shack and greeted Amina, Afushe and I. Sakina sat beside me on the concrete block turned stepping stone at the entry way. Sakina said it was “always good” when I visit and cook because she enjoys my “talk”. I often spoke about my family and my first visits to Accra. Sakina and Amina laughed at my stories about embarrassing stories about my experiences in Accra. The women told me theirs. Tani said, “We are all strangers here. But we are all home too.”



Tani's photograph of Labari as she holds her camera to her face to imitate that she is on a phone call. Labari was teasing me because she said I am often on the phone. She said, "If you have that much to say, just go and visit the person". 2008

Photograph 6.5: Tani, a female head porter

Earlier in the chapter, I described kayayei as rural cosmopolitans. Rural cosmopolitanism is a difficult category to claim for African because cosmopolitanism often presupposes a cultural pastiche of practitioners who comfortably travel across transnational spaces (Hannerz 1996). Cosmopolitanism does not connote rural, traditional or parochial, which are categories so often assigned to kayayei. However, Tani's comment about being strangers in Accra, yet at home, brought me to conclude that kayayei embody a cosmopolitanism that often goes unnoticed.

The ontology of cosmopolitanism presumes boundaries about who is cosmopolitan in an uncritical framework of modernity (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003). This assumption stands on tenet that "people, places and cultures exist at different stages of development and those who are not cosmopolitan suffer from some sort of lack" (Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003: 334). However, cosmopolitanism is not invariably progressive according to modernization theory.

Head porter social space in Accra locates conventions of rural life because they temporarily leave them behind for work in the cities. Head porters do not, “undermine earlier political ecologies but rather enable their endurance despite a myriad contradictions and difficulties” (Katz 2001: 1224). Kaya work is a human creativity of labor, mediated through rudimentary technology. The type of informal work kayayei practice operated as a response to the diminished formal sector and the proliferating informal sector.

The migration of people to southern Ghana remains connected to the larger political economy. In interviews with traders who had more than 25 years of experience in Accra, most of them note how Nigerian men once dominated the kaya business. This coincides with the Alien Compliance Order of 1969, which led to an expulsion of Nigerian immigrants from Ghana. Fifty-two percent of Ghanaians identify as migrants living away from their birth communities.

Habiba started to porter to assert her position above her junior wife through the acquisition of household foods. She says, “When I sent money, it lets them know that I am there”. Seventy-six percent of those people remit portions of their income to someone outside of their household (GLSS 2000). Appiah states, “surely nothing is more commonplace...so cosmopolitanism shouldn’t be seen as some exalted attainment: it begins with the simple idea that in the human community, as in national communities, we need to develop habits of coexistence” (2006: xix). Rural cosmopolitanism takes place within the nation-state, rather than across nation-states. From this vantage, cosmopolitanism holds more relevance to the lives of most people when examined through the lens of autonomy (Appiah 2006).

The intentional remoteness of Ghana’s north operates as a survival mechanism in an increasingly subjective environment. Ferguson writes, “In our eagerness to treat African

people as (cultural) equals, Western anthropologists have sometimes too easily sidestepped the harder discussion about economic *inequalities* and disillusionments that threaten to make any such equality a merely ideal or sentimental one” (2007:34). Whether on popular television shows or in everyday discourse, “Northerners” are pejoratively described as “bush” and backwards. In July 2005, I listened to a popular radio station, Joy Fm (99.7). Talk show programs are widely popular in Ghana (Farndon and Furniss 2000). On that evening, I listened to a program, Talk in the Nation. The topic was female circumcision. All of the lamentations and commentary focused on female circumcision as a “Northern social ill”. Every respondent from across Accra, constructed the North as a backwards, barbarian and an overall “ghastly” place. One woman commented, “It’s the Northerners who do this sort of thing. It’s terrible and awful. They have no education, that is why they do this horrible foolish thing”.

Bayo Holsey (2008:95) discusses a similar conversation that took place on a television show in Ghana. In a conversation about female circumcision, a show participant expressed disdain for the “savage barbarianism” of the North. Holsey suggests, “Indeed the vulnerability of northern women’s bodies parallels the past vulnerability of the North as a whole to enslavement” (2008:95). The ethnic differences ascribed to “Northerners” are misrecognitions by most callers, who perceive the lack of education available in the North and the remoteness of villages and communities as the “natural order of things” (Bourdieu 1990b).

The lingering narratives and perceptions of northerners as slaves also worked in conjunction with the kinds of attitudes I encountered with Ghanaians who spoke about Northerners. These cultural and economic implications of these stereotypes carry power implications, informed by embodied histories that tend to be naturalized as cultural

inferiorities (Bourdieu 1990). When I was an adjunct instructor at a small college near Philadelphia, on the first day of classes, I asked my group of non-traditional students to introduce themselves. One of my students, a man in late forties said,

“I am from a small country in Africa that you have never heard of.”

“Try me.” I said, smiling.

“Its in West Africa. My country is called Ghana.”

“I know Ghana pretty well.”

“You’re joking”

“No, no, I’m serious. What part of Ghana are you from?” I asked.

“The North”

“What district?”

“Wow, you really know Ghana if you’re asking me about districts. A small village near Tamale, called Tugu”

I said, “I don’t know Tugu exactly but I know Tamale pretty well. I’ve visited there before. I like the pace there”.

“Oh, but nothing is like Accra”.

I replied, “Yes, Accra is pretty special”.

My student shook his head in agreement and added, “Well, when we Northerners were still swinging in trees, the people in Accra were civilized, reading and writing”.

Though these stories, conversations and media programming are anecdotal, they highlight some important issues related to the representation and self-representation of the North. My student’s commentary about “the North” revealed meanings about Northern Ghana through very a very explicit imaginary of underdevelopment and assumptions about civilization. Before the peak of the slave trade, people from what is now the Northern

Region of Ghana, were often prisoners of Asante slave raids who were then sold to Europeans. Osei Tutu I mandated that homelands of captives never be recognized or uttered. The term *obi nyere obi asi* (no one can disclose the origin of another) was widely used with reference to captives (Rattray 1929).

As Northern communities sought protection in nature against their vulnerability to weapons, they “produced” their remoteness and disconnectedness from the major trade routes that were institutionalized by the Ashanti (Ferme 2001). Communities relocated to inaccessible hills and rebuilt communities around caves (Goody 1971). Arguably, this remoteness was codified through the institutionalization of tribes during the colonial era. Groups of people with clear centralized governments, ‘civilization’ and above all, Christianity were seen as manageable (Ferme 2001). Northerners in the interior, with their adherence to Islamic traditions and animist practices, were viewed as “naturally” obstinate (Holsey 2008:97).

Similar to my student’s comments, and the callers on the radio program I listened to, ethnic differentiation play out in the informal economy of human labor in Accra. As a, “phenomenon of individual psychology and experience, as well as cultural categorization” different forms of institutionalized separation have been mediated over generations (Bakare-Yusuf 1997:26). With current trends in structural adjustments, economic downward mobility is increasingly common for many Northerners. Whether Kokomba, Dagomba, Frafra, Tallensi or any of people who hail from the Northern Region, most Ghanaians refer to them simply as “Northerners” (Lentz 2006). The term Northerners often denotes a singular geo-ethnic identity rather than a cartographic area with which diverse ethnic identities reside.

However, the ethnic differentiations that separate Northerners as others fissure at Makola Market. For kayayei, “Northerners” subdivide into good versus back women. The

head porters construct themselves as “good, hard working women”. When Ahjara’s cousin arrived at Makola, she could not find Rawlings Park. Instead of looking for her cousin, Ahjara’s relative worked between Tema and Tudu bus stations. She befriended a group of Mamprussi girls even though they were not “her people”. At Tudu Station, porters described Ahjara’s cousin as a “bush gal” who belonged at Rawlings Park because she was Dagomba. One afternoon, as Ahjara loaded a large package onto a tro-tro, she spotted her cousin. Before she could “even get happy” that her relative was in Accra, Ahjara said, “ I had to get her out of there. I don’t understand how she went to even be close to those girls. They fight constantly. That will cause you to lose money. I do not want her spending time with those whores. They were abusing her with words anyway. I made her go collect her things and meet me back at the station. She stays close to me now in Agbogbloshie”.



Photograph 6.6: Head Porters at Agbogbloshie

When the women talked about their identities, they would use the broad term, Northerner. When the women at Rawlings Park talked about other head porters at Makola, their regional affiliation fractured. Ethnic identity is fluid and mark a great deal of categories among the women. The porters at Rawlings Park would degrade the Mamprussi women who portered at Tema Station. Amina described Mamprussi as “sex ladies” rather than as head porters. The connection between expressive forms and political economic life are located in these ethnic disjunctions and alliances. Ahjara took the above photograph on a Friday afternoon. Ahjara said, “If you could see me here, you know I am well dressed. I am going for prayer. This girl, look at her shadda [clothes]. Her clothes are too sexy. Where is she going? She does not go to pray. Who wants to know a girl like that? I can tell she is a Mamprussi girl”. Ahjara, like most of the women I conduct fieldwork with identified as Dagomba or Kokomba. When the women were not portering, they would usually ignore people who did not speak Dagbani. This included the Mamprussi “girls” from Tema Station. The women took many pictures at Tema Station. They wanted to “prove” that they were “different” from the women at Tema Station.



Photograph 6.7: Head Porters at Tema Station



Photograph 6.8 Workers at Tema Station.



Photograph 6.9: Mariama's friend at Rawlings Park Square. Makola Market, Accra, Ghana.

Mariama said the women at Tema Station were, “going to live all of life” in Accra. Many porters who worked at Tema Station also resided there when the market was closed. For Mariama, this was evidence that these head porters “were going to stay in Accra”. She said, “They have all these children. They drink. They smoke. They do drugs. They don’t talk to their families. They are shamed to go home because they have had so many babies in Accra with different men.” She pointed to the image (above) where a group of children sit in the middle of patchy grass in the middle of a roundabout. Mariama said, “Where are their mothers? I know they were working. But you cannot just leave your children this way. Its not safe”. Mariama’s sense of self came from her place making. Her perception of Rawlings Park as a situated community functions because of the women at Tema Station. Mariama used her camera to demarcate her perception of her social cohesion with the women she worked with at Rawlings Park. Her images of Rawlings Park focused on the “work” space.

Photograph 6.10: Mariama's favorite picture at Rawlings Park Square.



Photograph 6.11: Porters working at Rawlings Park.

Kayayei documented numerous bodily symbols shared by women who dominate kaya business, from the kohl many use to line their eyes and the headscarves they wear, to the profusion of scars on severely dried hands and calloused feet. Kayayei quickly harnessed photography as “a social rite” and “a defence against anxiety, and a tool of power” (Sontag 1977: 8). Subordinated groups, like kayayei, have created “alternative publics” between parked trucks, cars and busses where women “invent and circulate counter discourses” (Fraser 1997:81).

Mariama distanced herself from the porters at Tema Station through imagery. When she took images at Tema Station, Mariama took pictures at Rawlings Park the same day. Like Ahjara’s conversation about her cousin, Mariama configured her alliances with porter at Rawlings Park through her perspective that they were all “hardworking Dagomba who work for the people at home”. In contrast, she described porters at Tudu and Tema Stations as “lifers in Accra”. Economic factors inform all of these women’s choices and the reasons reside or squat in various areas across the market. However, the economic dissonance of porter’s daily work is articulated in their conflation of hardship with ethnic identity.

As another reminder of their selfhood, several photographers took images of tattoos and burns they have on their forearms and wrists. Dagbani does not have words to linguistically differentiate burns, cuts, tattoos and bruises. Instead, these bodily impressions were simply described as ‘marks’. The emblematic polarities about the meanings of ‘marks’ came through conversation. Women commented on the ways in which Accra transformed their bodies through “the profusion of scars, scabs, and the calluses evident on people’s legs, arms and faces” (Dundon 2005:25). These marks are the responsibilities of work, which locate their feminine bodies and denote womanhood.

Almost all of the tattoos were of their first and surnames, as well as the names of their villages in Northern Ghana. Looking at the photographs of the images, Amina said, “her marks tell” the story that she does not have “bad character”. The tattoo was created by choice, while the foot burns from cooking pot embers are “marks of struggle” and womanhood.

Amina admitted that the variety of her “marks” made her question whether she is “broken”. Amina said, “Sometimes I’m hungry. Sometimes I don’t have money. When I came, I stole from people. I get depressed when I look at my arms and see where I came from. Cooking pot marks and my family marks. Together on me. All these marks from Accra. I see where I am now. I sometimes feel broken into by this place. Small small [little by little]”. Amina questioned whether her periodic cycles of hunger, lack of shelter and melancholy about the struggles in Accra have less to do with economic forces out of her control, but rather, are the result of a “strange” shortcoming in character. Ahjara shook her head in agreement as Amina spoke. Ahjara added, “No matter how hard I work, there is no cure. There is a just a little bit more suffering if you don’t have money and a little bit less suffering if you have some [money].”

One afternoon as I crossed a busy intersection around Rawlings Park, I saw Kisu riding in a BMW with the new manager of Golden Stool, Madam Gloria. Kisu smiled and waved to me. I snapped a photograph of Madam Gloria as she posed behind the wheel of the car. I watched Kisu busily unload crates of minerals from the vehicle. Later, when we met to walk home to Agbogbloshie, Kisu discussed why she carried crates of sodas for Madam Gloria every few weeks. Kisu earned about \$2 from Madam Gloria when she unloads sodas. Other than the moment where she praised Madam Gloria, Kisu and the other women spend a good deal of time expressing their anger about the ways in which clients

harass them at the market. Low pay and insults are part of their daily experience, particularly when goods are damaged. Kisu said, “I will just not carry soft things like eggs. I don’t even want to deal with that person if something should happen”. Kisu explained her rationale further,

Most of the time, we have to accept what they give us for payment. But sometimes I really do have to complain because they will take your time up and have you carrying loads for over an hour and then try to pay you some small amount. What can I do with 2,000 cedis (18 cents)? Buy one...single...fried...yam. Please!

Sakina bitterly added:

The rich people who park in the fancy parking areas are trickish [the recently constructed multi-level parking decks behind Standard Chartered Bank]. They will have you follow them through the market aaaaaahhh [a long time]. Shop shop shop. It’s a game. You think they will pay you well because they are going to these big people cars. But they can be very evil. You reach the car park. The elevator never works so you climb the stairs, three or four levels. You load the car. They spend big money in the market and sometimes they give you a good amount, sometimes even 10,000 cedis (\$1). Then other times, they walk you a lot, get to their cars and tell you, I don’t have change. One day a woman said she was going to get change, got in her car and never came back. I stood there for more than an hour, hoping she would come back. I knew she wouldn’t come. She wants me to let her go get change but she didn’t want to let me go get change. I would go get change but even when I begged the woman for this money, she drove off and left me there. If I see her again, I will show her something she won’t like. She could have given me paper.

Sakina and Kisu highlighted a common occurrence in Accra. Kisu refused to carry fragile goods because regardless of how they are packaged for transport, patrons hold kayayei responsible for their safety in transportation. Sakina said she started fighting in Accra after a client forced her to empty her pockets of all her money when she dropped a box of cookies. Kisu was hurt when she lifting heavy goods or tripped as she walked along, yet there was “never anyone to feel sorry” for her pain. Usually, “people just curse” for her to get out of their way as they hurried to their destinations. The economic and social

peripheralization of kayayei and their labor is legitimated through their treatment as “bush” Northerners.

Khadija, Amina and Kisu have a type of anonymity at the market, but that did not preclude them from having aesthetic, cultural or epistemological concerns. Amina complained that, “People say we are not raised well and lack respect. I work hard like everyone else. We respect like anyone else. It’s nice to be nice. But when you insult me, I will insult you too”. During the women’s idle time at the market, they spent their time between trucks on shady patches of grass and concrete. They snacked and told stories about conflicts with sellers. These arguments sometimes ended in the physical exchange of body blows. Several women came from villages where no one owned a car. They retold stories about near misses with taxis when they first arrived in the city. On a regular basis, someone asked other head porters to provide shoulder and back rubs to alleviate the aching soreness of throbbing limbs.

Foucault (1980) describes these occurrences as the “the swarming of disciplinary mechanisms” that operate in the everyday experience. Where the head porters acquired information about food, a place to stay and micro-credit, are all operated through close and distant networks. But that discipline also occurs between head porters at Rawlings Park. When Khadija anticipated that the carrying fee she might collect is ‘too small’ or worth less than her time, Kisu quickly accused her of laziness and take the customer. When a woman is too tired to carry a customer’s load or picks a load that is too heavy, other women will quickly aid her to her destination. The stronger woman expects to collect most of these carrying fees.



Photograph 6.12: Kisu at work at Rawlings Park

In mid-July, a heated exchange took place between Giftey and Khadija. Giftey is a tomato seller who carried her basket around the perimeter of Rawlings Park and across the parking area. Giftey and Khadija both recalled the incident that led up to the argument on a scorching warm Thursday. Giftey cursed at Khadija because she stopped to pick a load. This blocked a view to Giftey's neat rows of yellow peppers and pyramids of tomatoes spread on the sidewalk. Giftey temporarily used the sidewalk space because a friend who usually works the space was ill and did not come to trade.

The sale of goods, the conditions of the sales, including locale and presentation reveals hierarchical patterns of trade and structures of power that take place at Makola Market. Very young women sell water on their heads and roam through the market. Women

from diverse ages sell baked goods and snack foods prepared earlier in the day at home. The “most comfortable conditions are those within the established market stalls. Here is where one will find the most expensive items such as imported cloth for sale, as well as staple foods, canned goods, jewelry and a few special services such as sewing” (Chamlee-Wright 1997: 21). Giftey combined the friend’s peppers with her tomatoes to make a colorful roadside presentation. Giftey said she was, “happy not to roam the market in order to sell”. The sedentary space, regardless of the passing foot traffic, was a step up for Giftey that day.

When a customer called Khadija to place a bag of rice and bottle of palm oil in Khadija’s white and grey speckled pan, she stopped near Giftey’s pepper display. Giftey called Khadija a “nuisance” and “pest”. Giftey told Khadija to “move away” and shouted for her to “make fast” and hurry. The customer asked Giftey to, “take [her] time”. Giftey used that moment to solicit the customer to buy tomatoes and peppers. The shopping woman stopped and purchased a small satchel. The customer continued her trip into the market but not before Giftey mumbled a curse to Khadija in Dagbani. The space between Khadija and her customer widened as she stopped to confront Giftey.

As Khadija told me her version of the story, she stretched her arms outward and raised her voice. Khadija shouted to Giftey, ‘What makes you think you are better than me, stupid?’ Khadija pointed to the goods in her pan and screamed, ‘I am helping you sell and you curse me?!’ After her outburst, Khadija quickly scrambled to catch up with the woman whose goods she carried in her pan.

A few days later, Giftey passed a place where Khadija and I sat eating peanuts. Giftey was not at her temporary selling place on the sidewalk. She arrived late and an onion seller had already lined the ground with his pile. When Giftey approached where we sat, Khadija dropped her peanut shells on the ground and grabbed her camera. Just as Giftey turned

sideways to avoid the swell of people ahead of her, Khadija snapped a photo. Rivulets of sweat poured down Giftey's face. Her left arm shook as she balanced a heavy load of tomatoes on her head. Giftey saw Khadija take her picture. Her temper flared. Giftey stopped and asked, "Why did you take my picture? Who are you to take my picture? You don't ask. You just take my picture. You are a bad girl".

Giftey approached me and said, "What have you done? Take that camera from this small girl".

"It's not my camera," I replied. "I can't make her do anything".

"Oh please," said Giftey. "You gave her this camera. Teach that girl a lesson in manners".

A small group of people gathered around, including Ekua who had avoided me since her attempt to swindle a camera. Giftey started to shout insults about Khadija and me. She moved to grab Khadija's camera. Amina and Kisu joined the group of onlookers. They made a motion to knock down Giftey's tomatoes. Giftey moved from their reach. Amina and Kisu pantomimed stomping on the ground.

The argument provided an opportunity for other sellers to weigh in their opinions on a range of issues. Patience, a young handbag seller with a two-year-old son, Sammy, wanted to know, "What are you doing with these girls and the cameras?" Another onlooker asked, "What is the purpose of working with these women. They are not *real* sellers". I ignored them as Giftey accused Khadija of, "Snapping her an ugly picture" [sic].

Khadija triumphantly replied, "And so what?" with a shrug of her shoulders. Her donut shaped neck support cloth fell on Giftey's tomato basket. Giftey spat on the sidewalk and yanked the cloth off the basket she had placed on the ground. Giftey then shoved Khadija and stormed off. The crowd stood a while. Fred, the bartender at the Golden Stool, asked what was going on. Kisu, Amina, Khadija and I walked to the area between the trucks

where kayayei usually sat. Khadija laughed at, “the good and ugly picture” that she “snapped on purpose.” Khadija explained how her photographic act is retaliatory for the incident a week prior when Giftey “shamed her” in front of a customer.

The act of taking the picture, rather than the image itself is a holding place for Khadija and Giftey’s cultural memory. Khadija imaged a control over Giftey through the camera in a way that her work did not allow her. Khadija “reshaped the course of her social engagement” with Giftey to memorialize an experience (Jackson 1998:14). The structural violence of Makola Market obscures the ways in which kayayei respond to injustice because women in kaya work are highly visible. Visible may mean useful, but that does not translate to lucrative social value (Apt, Greico and Fouracre 1996, Opare 2004, Clark 1994). Sontag notes, “As photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure” (2003:9).

Khadija took a photograph of Giftey as a material inscription of a social memory. Bodily understanding of the manifestations of structural violence emerged in action. Structural violence is “a broad rubric” that encapsulates the pathology of assaults on human dignity, including poverty, racism and gender inequality (Farmer 1996: 261). The verbal (and occasional physical) conflicts kayayei had with sellers and among themselves are articulations about the impact of “violence of everyday life”(Kleinman 1997).

Khadija embodied her assertion as a photographer. There is no singular definition of embodiment but Khadija’s photo praxis involved the focus away from the body as representational, to the body as a situated experience that creates knowledge. Embodiment is the “perceptual experience and mode of presence and engagement with the world” (Csordas 1990:12). It is the relational way in which humans connect to the world. The conflict between Khadija and Giftey suggests how the experience of being subjected and having an

awareness of that (through the practice of being a photographer) enabled certain types of oppositional gazes (hooks 1992). Khadija's photograph was purposefully transgressive of Giftey's personal space. The photographic moment froze Khadija's gaze and offered her an opportunity to create an alternative visibility.

The act of taking a picture, as well as the printed photograph became an avenue for Khadija and her friends to scrutinize their often-terse relationships with market sellers even as their own livelihoods depend on a seller's trade. Patience and Giftey evoked blame to me since I gave Khadija the camera. For months that follow, Patience did not greet me. She guided her son away from me when I tried to play with him. Khadija legitimized her ability to produce meaning, but that moment further strained my relationship with traders on the square. As I continued to lose elements of my "Accra lady" status, I gained access and trust among head porters. I garnered forgiveness from Patience when my friend from abroad purchased a messenger bag from her. Patience complained that "kayayei have bad character" and are "hot headed". But she conceded that she would "break" under the bodily burden of carrying her own wares across Makola.

The politics of visibility are apparent in the abject scrutiny the women and I faced when we spent time together at the market. On several occasions, shoppers encroached our conversations. Jonah, who sold pirated DVDs from Thailand, asked one day if our, "husbands gave us permission to talk like this". Stall traders like Akikey expressed jealousy that I had, "chosen kayayei over them". The women with retail shops, replete with air conditioning and clothes imported from Europe, infantilized kayayei and our photography. A "big woman" trader, with a large electronics and appliance depot thought it was, "sweet" that I was doing something "nice" and "fun" with the "small girls". One morning, a taxi driver tried to shoo Sakina and Khadija away from me as though they were pigeons. When I

confronted the taxi driver, he said I shouldn't associate with kayayei because they have "bad character".

Passers-by unabashedly, and without usual social custom of greetings, questioned the capabilities of the women to use cameras. People claimed that, "most of the women are illiterate" to implicitly doubt the abilities of kayayei to do anything besides porter. Sakina, Amina, Rahida and Ahjara are the only women I interviewed who had ever attended primary school. The rest are unschooled. Ghana's literacy rate is 73 percent (UN 2005). Much of this grumbling commentary equated literacy with photographic efficacy. Most kayayei are illiterate, which is common since Dagbani has no uniform standard for the written language.

Bystanders often voiced their assumption that kayayei were incapable of comprehending the technology of the 35 mm cameras. A few taxi and truck drivers thought it was "silly" that kayayei used cameras at all. Seth, a 20-year-old Fante man who served as a second driver for a delivery company in Ghana's central region, said, "Cameras are for people with class, not these street children". Sakina responded to Seth's comments by taking his picture. Though this act, Sakina's image "is both a product of, and a commentary on, contested cultural identities" (MacDougall 1997:285). Sakina said, "I can't read. I don't write. Does that make me stupid? I don't know what class means, but I am not trash here. No, he is stupid because he thinks I am". Sakina asserted a certain power over Seth by making him feel "silly" She socially climbed when she asserted how I was her "scribe for snap writing". Sakina became the person in control of the conversation because "the very medium of photography has the uncanny ability to index the presence of the photographer" (Poole 2005:166). Because camera ownership remains rare throughout Ghana, Seth and other people's comments expressed annoyance that I had facilitated kayayei crossings of class boundaries with photography.

The use of collaborative ethnographic photography does not strive to “give” agency to kayayei but to use image production so that young women creatively construct images about themselves and their surroundings (Rotzer 1996). Kayayei and I examined Makola through photographs, which, “provides a powerful tool for understanding why it is that images, works of art, media, figures and metaphors have ‘lives of their own’” (Mitchell 2005:352). This move away from grappling with individual representations per se creates a “more complex discursive and political landscape opened up by the concepts of media” (Poole 2005:159).

Mariama repeatedly asked if I could be the subject of her photograph during our discussions about my research project. She wanted to know if she could take pictures of anything she likes. After I say yes, Mariama frequently commented, “Don’t forget that I am in yours, you too will be in mine”. Mariama wanted images of me to take home as “proof” of a foreign friend. Pictures of me will increase Mariama’s social capital and cosmopolitanism among her peers. By taking my picture, Mariama affirmed a projection of herself as someone who successfully navigates Accra. Our relationship was mutually beneficial. Her friendship with me and her photographic evidence are markers of that success.

This circulation of images, from Accra to the village, along with remittances and cloth form what Appadurai describes as the “migrant archive” (2003:23). Fatima rarely took photographs of people with her camera. Very often, she documented the market goods that she found “pretty”. Fatima said, “I want some of these things. I will get them one day. But I

have this to hold while I work on it". Fatima labeled these two images, "the truth of Accra".



Photograph 6.13 Fatima's "Truth of Accra"



Photograph 6.13: Shoes for Sale at Makola Market

On a morning in June, Sakina came to the market in tears because her camera had been stolen. As I consoled her, Kisu joined us where we sat on large steel pipe. Kisu asked Sakina why she was crying. When Sakina told her what happened, Kisu explained how she had brought Sakina's camera to the market. Kisu had collected all the women's cameras and brought them to the market. She suspected a friend of theirs was going to try to steal them while they were at work. Kisu showed Sakina where she hid the cameras in the safe that behind the bar at a restaurant we sat at. We had befriended the bartender Fred, who was from Tamale. Fred promised to keep a close watch on the cameras, "whenever they wanted" so far as they "snapped him a picture everyone once in a while". Whenever Fred brought his two-year-old son, Ephraim to Makola, they would both be stylishly dressed. Some of the head porters would pinch Ephraim's cheeks. On every occasion Fred brought his son, Lahari excitedly lined Ephraim's eyes with kohl and took pictures for Fred to send home to his family.

By the time I left the field, Fred was safeguarding money, clothes and an assortment of mementos head porters brought for him to keep in the safe at work. Kisu said Fred was, "the most honest person" she had encountered in Accra. Trust and honesty were hard to come by in Accra. Theft is high at the market and in the slum village of Agbogbloshie. Felix, an occasional pickpocket that I sometimes chatted with said, "Don't sleep on it. Thieves earn a living wage inside people's pockets".

When women saved their money and procured goods to send home, they often had a hard time entrusting these items to people to take. Every porter I spoke to had a story about being robbed or the losses in income. Friends who agreed to take remittances to their family often spent porter's monies for their own transportation costs. There were inter-

country agencies to transport money, but they are prohibitively expensive given the frequency that women send money to the village. Kisu commented, “Fred does not have a hard heart. Yet. But it will come. He has not been here long enough. He still acts like people back home. Accra will change that. Then I will go back to keeping my money in my under clothes”. Ahjara added, “You cannot fully trust anyone. Everyone’s stomach is flat. We are all hungry. I get angry because people thief me. But if my stomach is empty, I will thief you too”.

Many of the stories women shared about images encompassed cultural mediations between themselves and technology, as well as the ways in which photography imaged the dynamics of their tenuous relationship with sellers, customers and other kayayei at the market and in Agbogbloshie. The photographs kayayei took amplify the complexity of their social relationships, which emphasized the subtle dynamism of their sense of place in at Makola Market and beyond. Working jointly to decide what is studied, what is written and what ideas are explored through image making with women allowed me to foster a research experience that was mutually beneficial (Lassiter 2005). Photography technology enabled conversations about women’s structures of feeling and their self-aware reflections of their personhood. Sometimes, these women’s sense of place creates a covalence with a specific locality of their villages and hometowns. Other moments highlight the increasingly frequent in-between-ness of their lives (Ferguson 1999, Stoller 2008). In their work practices across economies of interpenetration, kayayei move between farm and city and create new forms of cohesiveness through their participation in shifting social lives.

There are few scholars who explicitly address the north-south economic disparities that influence a migrant’s choices to leave home or the structural violence women encounter in the city. Rather, state efforts to improve social conditions of “street children” market

ideals of “protected” childhood in order to secure funding (CAS 2000). Kayayei and other transporters are viewed as “impediments” to state development (GNA 2006). Head porters physically represent the “failure of modern” Ghana to project a thriving economic identity (Opare 2003).

The frequent images of head porters in print media with associated articles that discuss their “tribulations” and “self-imposed exile” in Accra evoke pity about migrant women (Okaitey and Daabu 2007). These representations operate in conjunction with the stereotype of Northerners as bush and uncivilized. Head porters are constructed as either a symbol of failed modernity, a casualty of educational disparities between males and females, victims of arranged marriages or as scapegoats for the proliferating informal economy. The state’s primary concern is the maintenance and control of its citizens because, “they are categorized, defined and rendered knowable through specific tropes of disciplinary technologies,” whose purpose is to create docile bodies which, “may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault 1991:136). State officials regularly issue statements calling for the removal of hawkers and kayayei from public space (GNA 2006).

Frosh asks, “To what extent has public visibilities become independent of the seeing eyes of actual viewers?” (2001: 47). The women’s vulnerable sleeping arrangements in open spaces and the overwhelming number of kayayei who clamor for customer’s fuels the public discourse of kayayei as a “nuisance” and contribute to the public image production of kayayei (Apt, Greico and Fouracre 1996).

The politic of my fieldwork was to produce stories about kayayei in their own words. I wanted to see if images would adhere to, subvert or acquiesce to the stereotypical assumptions about head porters in Accra. However, I did not reduce the camera to an instrument of surveillance in order to converge with Foucault (1990) about technologies of

discipline. Rather, cameras use with kayayei was an instrument to investigate a particular cultural biography about experience. Photographs by kayayei are visual narratives of the negotiation and construction of their daily worlds and contextualized the embodied sociality of Makola.

Photographs are not in these porter's lives as "weapons of the weak" (Scott 1976). Rather, photography is their documentation of their account of "performances of representations" (Frosh 2001:430). Sight is a sensory perception. Imbued by technology, photography insisted on a communicative relationship between the body and what it culturally manifests. Drawing on film critic Christian Metz who coined the phrase, Martin Jay (1991) describes 'scopic regimes' as a way of denaturalizing vision as a universal.

Feldman explains,

A scopic regime, like Foucault's panopticon or Lacan's mirror stage, is an apparatus that has no human eye as its point of origin, for *seeing*, no matter how privileged: it is but a position internal to, and a function and product of, the total scopic apparatus. Hence, the distinction between the eye and the gaze. The latter is a mechanism of power, the former a sensory organ that can be socially appropriate to channel and materialize normative power in everyday life. Here human vision becomes an adjunct, an instrument and an automation of the scopic regime (1997: 33).

The eyes are a guide where one's, "mobile body makes a difference in the visible world, being a part of it; that is why I steer it through the visible. Conversely, it is just as true that vision is attached to movement. We can only see what we look at" (Merleau-Ponty 1964:162). There are a myriad of ways in which Amina, Ahjara, Tani and the rest of the women constitute themselves in arenas of power (Achebe and Teboh 2007). By applying ethnographic photography to the system of analysis for meaning making, this work provides insight into modes of agency and subjection embedded in gender performances.

Women's experiences with image making highlight not only one their social words are "unmade by violence but also how they are remade" (Das et al 2001). Women maintain

networks of fictive kin through everyday acts of sharing that build social cohesion (Aretxaga 1998). The public recognition of the harm that head porters endure does not translate into attention to the social conditions that they struggle against. Kayayei engage with work, religion, geography, politics and economics to demonstrate how assumptions about stability are often under pressure in an increasingly dynamic and complex urban Africa. Thus, I do not offer this discussion of ethnographic photography as a corrective to the public discourse or grapple with the symbols of head porters per se. Rather, I chart some of the contours of having a particular kind of body and how photography with kayayei unpacks some contradictions of head-porters existence. These include their fragile relationships with market women, the ways that the circulation of images of labor inform the female body and the restorative relationships women have to counter the structural violence of their daily lives. Life is precarious for most people in Accra, but kayayei demonstrate how stability—whether in work, households and community requires constant improvisation.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

African social formations are not necessarily converging toward a single point, trend, or cycle. They harbor the possibility of a variety of trajectories neither convergent nor divergent but interlocked, paradoxical [...] Research on Africa has hardly stood out for out for its attempts to integrate nonlinear phenomenon into its analysis. Similarly, it has not always been about to account for complexity (Mbembe 2001:16-17)

Women in Ghana have remarkable roles as traders who financially dominate the sale of various market goods. With the goal of thinking about African realities in a non-linear complexity, this dissertation focuses on internal migrants who work at the prominent Makola Market in Ghana as head porters known as kayayei. My dissertation expands our knowledge about the anthropology of market women, gendered technology and the role of normative behavior for human transport. Head porters come to Accra with scant social networks. Some expect to enter trade (Opare 2003). Kayayei represent another interpretive community about African market women that move beyond dichotomies of liberated or subjugated women. This dissertation addresses numerous stereotypes about Africa--- to power and resistance, articulations of identity as well as its disjunctures and the limits to autonomy--- through the sensuous regimes of kayayei within the typologies of the urban Ghana.

Scholarly attention to kayayei in the context of migration is fairly new. Most studies focus on the last fifteen years and are primarily in geography and urban studies. In general, the epistemology of women's migration from rural to urban areas in Ghana focuses on three prominent areas. Scholars primarily offer a restudy of migration in Ghana in order to address the historical neglect of women's migration (Little 1973, Sudarkasa 1977). Little (1973) argues that women's movement to cities and towns reveal the sharp economic changes that occurred throughout Ghana at the dawn of independence. Argawal (1997) examines how

gender differentiations among migrants are informed through sprawling informal transportation sectors in Accra (Argawal 1997). Kayayei vulnerability increases as their economic marginalization runs alongside the polarities in urban-rural development in Ghana.

In the third chapter of this dissertation, I connected these foci on migration to analyze the historical referents of gendered migration in Ghana. Lentz (2006) outlines how women's migration from Northern Ghana to Accra has roots in pre-colonial and colonial household systems that have previously gone unnoticed. I explored how informal transportation functions as a flexible response to the choked conditions of Accra's streets. These flexible responses principally operated through migrant labor efforts. These differentiations in utility between motorized versus non-motorized transportation informed the level of economic agency each of these modes affords practitioners. I connected work practices to gendered non-motorized transportation to gain a deeper understanding of kayayei labor.

Women's migration in Ghana is informed by ethnicity and the construction of "the North" as a holding pen for Ghanaian Others. Trouillot (2003) notes how anthropologists did not invent the concept of the savage. However, the invention of tradition and traditional cultures is the otherness by which the West measured its civility against. The construction of knowledge that operates between the rural and urban in Ghana delineate along ethnic lines. Ethnic identity often acts as a biological imperative in Ghana, rather than a social construct. Hierarchical categories of savages and tribes function in the political history of Ghana. I focus on the political economy of Northern Ghana because of the large number of kayayei migrate from the Northern Region (Opare 2003). Monographs in social anthropology contributed to the construction of tribes and natives. I examine how notions of tribes mark

hierarchies of production, consumption, religion and marriage and why these hierarchies remain salient in public discourse and state development programs.

In the narratives of twelve of the thirty head porters I spent a majority of my fieldwork with between 2007 and 2008, I deconstruct and write against problematic representations of migrant women. For many women at Makola, their economic agency diminishes as development policies broaden to encapsulate the informal work sector. In order to give greater breath to the manifestation of these processes in daily work, I focused on the sensory codes of market women to narrow in on the issues of politics and gender that embodies feminine work at Makola Market. There is no singular definition of embodiment but it generally involves the focus away from the body as representational, to the body as a situated experience that creates knowledge. Embodiment is the relational way in which humans connect to the world relationally (Csordas 1990).

The tussle between the commonplaceness of kayayei presence abuts against the overwhelming perceptions of their work as naturalized gendered behavior. Sensory processes imprint bodies to abstract concepts of “society, gender, nation, structure and history”(Jackson 1989:7). I examine the consequences the “savage slot” for kayayei labor in the city and how economic peripheralization acts out through porter work (Trouillot 2003).

In chapter five, I delineated how I use photography to explore beyond individual identities of kayayei, and moved towards an investigation into the relationships between head porters that operate within their struggle for control in their intersubjective lives. Violence is often conceptualized as physical harm that identifies individual acts (Farmer 2009). However, through collaborative photography and the discussions about images, I was able to reveal how societal dimensions of violence manifest as social and economic suffering throughout Makola Market. Where women acquire information about where to buy food, a

place to stay and micro-credit, are all operated through close and distant networks. Close networks include sisters, co-wives and other women from the village who have traveled for work and returned. I used photography to gain knowledge about these networks that are often overlooked in ethnographic projects about kayayei.

Media such as photographs, produced by anthropologists, are difficult to differentiate from tourist snapshots or artistic images--even when documentary production are the aims of the ethnographer. However, my dissertation makes no claims about the actual meanings or encoded content of the photographs. Rather, this dissertation used image production to create a shared research communities with kayayei. The aim was to equalize access to data, provide wider anthropological contexts to urban markets in Ghana and enlarge the ethnographic scope of how bodily understandings of place emerge in action.

Jean Rouch's ethnographic film, *Jaguar* (1967) illuminates quite well how the rural-migrant experience links phenomenology to embodiment and the possibility of ethnographic collaborations to reveal these connections. The scenario follows three friends, Lam, Illo and Damoure who, in search of adventure and wealth, travel through the rural landscape of Togo, to Ghana's metropolis of Kumasi and Accra. Throughout the film, each man narrates his perspective of the diversity of the landscape experience, from an encounter with exotic others (the nude Somba people), eating coconuts and a swim in the ocean near the Togo-Ghana border. The hope for urban financial success is equally as seductive as the potential social capital that comes from the migratory experience and the transformation to a "jaguar".

In his ethno-fictive novel of the same title, Paul Stoller describes jaguars as "sleek young men who in the 1950s appeared in the market towns of Ghana's colonial Gold Coast... Capitalizing on their adaptability and their market smarts, the Jaguars rapidly

integrated themselves into the local economic scene, making themselves aware of fashion trends. In this way, they quickly transformed their knowledge into profits” (1999:14).

These ethnographic examinations of jaguars are significant on several levels. In the film *Jaguar*, migration is more than shifting locations. The narrators and Rouch demonstrate the ways patterned cultural beliefs inform perceptions of identity, status and adventure. The context of the men’s analysis comes through the analysis of film. In a similar way, photographic narratives with kayayei highlight the social contradictions and negotiations that envelope the gendered autonomy kayayei experience in Accra.

Photographs engendered creative dialogues and provided a reference point through which kayayei to illuminated aspects of their reality they deemed important. The conversations about images enabled dialogue about the complex negotiations involved in their independent migration and the friendships they develop in the city. Kayayei’s visual renderings and discussions about their images reveal how all practices are nuanced. Thus, sociality, enmeshed in realities of objects, is imbued with subjective meanings and destined. Head porter’s experiences expressed a myriad of articulations of identity in an African city.

Throughout this dissertation, I developed why collaborative photographic praxis creates an “action-centered” approach to material culture (Gell 1998). Embodiment reinforces the idea of the here-and-now presence people have with one another, relationally (Seremetakis 1994). Photographs, then, serve a mediatory role (Gell 1998:6). The photographic praxis may have empowered kayayei, but more importantly, the practice contributed to these women’s ability to generate interesting theories and observations about themselves and the world. To engage with the emotional as well as the intellectual process of constructing knowledge, kayayei are not subjects of my research, but authors of deep analysis. This collaborative search for a new way to express an idea moved away from an

orthodox scientific method or hypothesis and towards a valuation of the imaginative that brings into focus a much needed perspective of the emergent and enduring gendered labor practices within the informal economy in Ghana.

Through image production, the painstaking resilience that kayayei embody comes into sharper focus. A contentious issue for head porters was not the subjection to invasive stares. Head porter's sense of belonging is often opposed through the everyday discourse and social other that takes place at the market, by their invisibility. Jackson notes how "equilibrium is a matter of striking a balance between the countervailing needs of self and other" (1996:19). These characteristics have not gained attention as most studies focus attention to the suffering women endure, rather than observe their resilience and creative struggles for autonomy. Through image production, kayayei sanctioned and legitimized a different kind of looking at Makola Market. The women's acts of "seeing through pictures" are an embodied social practice they created that was repeatedly constituted (Ruby 1981).

Representations often rely on visual formats, whether text, images or the notes anthropologists use to do fieldwork. Sensory perceptions rely on the physical experiences as well as the senses that are important part of social relationships. This dissertation explores the ability of photography to illustrate how head porters engage in a myriad of cultural and economic negotiations as they work to construct livelihood in the city. While photography highlights the most accessible of these senses, one's sight, the use of visual media also allowed me to access the importance of touch for the construction of knowledge and shared values.

Throughout the dissertation, I examined how kayayei experiences connect to historical processes of migration and separation that are often overlooked in contemporary discourses about migrant women in the city. Using a phenomenological theoretical vantage

point, in conjunction with a feminist narrative turn, I explored how head porters discuss the complexity of their realities. Kayayei are multidimensional and their survival and success is predicated on their ability to rebound from setbacks and hardship. Yet, I argue against a reading of kayayei hardiness as commonplace. To do so could reify their social suffering and naturalize the women's collective reactions to trauma (Aptekar 1994). Head porters do represent an important interpretive community on the subject of African market women especially because kayayei endurance is situated in the political economy and historical nodes of cultural change. The insights of twelve women invaluablely broaden the anthropological understanding of internal migrants and the part they play in the shape of urban Africa. These intricacies are illuminated in their narratives about love, migration as well as their struggles to eat and play amid the hardscrabble livelihoods they cobble together in the city and beyond.

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