

“WE SHALL REJOICE TO SEE THE DAY WHEN SLAVERY SHALL CEASE TO EXIST”: THE GOLD COAST TIMES, THE AFRICAN INTELLIGENTSIA, AND ABOLITION IN THE GOLD COAST¹

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I

The articulation of antislavery among Africans remains to be studied. Overall, the staple of animated questions, debates, and conclusions of the vast literature on abolition of slavery in the last two decades or so has neglected African contributions of ideologies of antislavery to the global abolition epoch in the Atlantic world.² Charting a new trajectory for the study of abolition in Africa, as well as the global abolition epoch, this study examines the ideologies of antislavery among Africans as expressed in the *Gold Coast Times* (Cape Coast) during the heyday of the British abolition of slavery in the Gold Coast in 1874-75.³ The study, echoing African agency, reveals the manifest presence of the

¹Quoted from *The Gold Coast Times* (30 October 1874). I wish to thank Rashid Ismail of Vassar College and Femi Kolapo of Guelph University for their insightful comments on this paper.

²The literature is vast, spanning nearly twenty years. See, for example, David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York, 1984); Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts, eds., *The End of Slavery in Africa* (Madison, 1988); Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life* (Cambridge, 1990); Paul Lovejoy and Jan S. Hogendorn, *Slow Death for Slavery* (Cambridge, 1993); Martin Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa* (Cambridge, 1998); Suzanne Miers and Martin Klein, eds., *Slavery and Colonial Rule in Africa* (London, 1999); and David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge, 2000), esp. 281-84.

³Following David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823* (New York, 1999), 17, I use ideology to mean “an integrated system of beliefs, assumptions, and values, not necessarily true or false, which reflects the needs and interests of a group or class at a particular time in history. By ‘interests’ I mean anything that benefits or is thought to benefit a specific collective identity. Because ideologies are modes of consciousness, containing the criteria for interpreting social reality, they help to define as well as to legitimate collective needs and interests. Hence, there is a continuous interaction between ideology and material forces of history.”

African intelligentsia abolitionists in the late nineteenth-century Gold Coast.⁴ The origin and timing of the African intelligentsia's antislavery attitudes in the Gold Coast are not made known in the sources. However, the sources do reveal that antislavery flowered in the littoral region between Elmina and Accra, the hub of precolonial intellectual activities, political activism, and diffusion of cultures, linked to the larger Atlantic world.⁵

Overall, I argue that antislavery existed among the African intelligentsia and that they articulated their ideologies of antislavery in several ways, both on the eve of the British colonial abolition of slavery and in its immediate aftermath.⁶ The study is divided into four main parts. The first section problematizes the sources and addresses some

⁴For a very recent articulation of a paradigm of African agency see Kristin Mann, "Shifting Paradigms in the Study of the African Diaspora and of Atlantic History and Culture," *Slavery and Abolition* 22(2002), 14-16. For similar methodological overviews see Darlene C. Hine and Jacqueline McLeod, eds., *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora* (Bloomington, 1999), especially chapters by Earl Lewis, Thomas C. Holt, and Elliot P. Skinner. For conceptual definitions of African intelligentsia see, for example, David Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928* (Oxford, 1963), 135-41; P.C. Lloyd, *Africa in Social Change* (New York, 1967), 125-31; Philip Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana* (Chicago, 1968), 48-69; and Mary McCarthy, *Social Change and the Growth of British Power in the Gold Coast* (Lanham, 1983), 107-25.

⁵Roger Gocking, *Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule* (Lanham, 1999); and John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra* (Portsmouth, NH, 2000). In fact most of the African intelligentsia had come from the coastal communities. See, for example, Isaac Ephson, *Gallery of Gold Coast Celebrities, 1632-1958* (Accra, 1969).

⁶For the processes of abolition in the Gold Coast, see, for example, Gerald M. McSheffrey, "Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade and the Impact of Abolition in the Gold Coast, 1874-1901," *JAH* 24(1983), 349-68; Raymond Dumett and Marion Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti and the Northern Territories" in Miers/Roberts, *End of Slavery*, 1-116; Peter Haenger, *Slaves and Slave Holders on the Gold Coast* (Basel, 2000); Kwabena Opare-Akurang [Akurang-Parry], "The Administration of the Abolition Laws, African Responses, and Post-Proclamation Slavery in Colonial Southern Ghana, 1874-1940," *Slavery and Abolition* 18(1998), 149-66; Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, "Slavery and Abolition in the Gold Coast: Colonial Modes of Emancipation and African Initiatives," *Ghana Studies* 1(1998), 11-34; idem., "'A Smattering of Education' and Petitions as Sources: A Study of African Slaveholders' Responses to Abolition in the Gold Coast Colony, 1874-1875," *HA* 27(2000), 39-60; idem., "Rethinking the 'Slaves of Salaga': Post-Proclamation Slavery in the Gold Coast (Colonial Southern Ghana), 1874-1899," *Left History* 8/1(2002), 33-60; idem., "'What Is and What Is Not the Law': Imprisonment for Debt and the Institution of Pawnship in the Gold Coast, 1821-1899" in Paul E. Lovejoy and Toyin Falola, eds., *Pawnship, Slavery and Colonialism in Africa* (Trenton, 2003), 427-47; and idem., "To Wassa Fiase for Gold: Rethinking Colonial Rule, El Dorado, Antislavery, and Chieftaincy in the Gold Coast (Ghana), 1874-95," *HA* 30(2003), 11-36.

methodological considerations. For its part, the second portion interrogates the comparative historiography on abolition, while the third section conceptualizes the African intelligentsia abolitionists and their association with the *Gold Coast Times*, the main platform for the African intelligentsia's espousal of ideologies of antislavery. Divided into two parts, the final section examines the African intelligentsia's articulation of antislavery both before and after the inauguration of abolition by the colonial state.

II

Writing in 1964 about abolitionism and African political thought, George Shepperson sounded a cautionary note that the "influence of the abolitionist epoch on African political thought poses many problems which can only be answered assuredly after much further research."⁷ Shepperson enunciated the probable effects of the epochal abolition of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries on continental African ideologies of liberation.⁸ More important, he posed the question of whether the abolitionist thought of diasporic Africans had influenced continental African political thought.⁹ With regard to the issue of abolition, Shepperson's question has remained unanswered in nearly forty years.

Unlike other regions of the Atlantic world, several factors explain why African ideologies of antislavery have not been empirically studied or theorized. First, despite the popular reverberations of African agency carefully encoded in prefaces and introductions, hegemonic histories and obscurantist theorizing still inform the writing of African history, especially the institution of slavery and its abolition, colonial rule, and the problems of postcolonial Africa.¹⁰ Thus, the effusive genres that

⁷George Shepperson, "Abolitionism and African Political Thought," *Transition* 3/12(1964), 26.

⁸*Ibid.*, 22-26. For the influences of diasporic African political thought on African political thought see *idem.*, "Notes on Negro American Influences and the Emergence of African Nationalism," *JAH* 1(1960), 299-212; E. U. Essien-Udom, "The Relationship of Afro-Americans to African Nationalism," *Freedomways* 2(1962), 391-407; Tony Martin, *The Pan-African Connection: From Slavery to Garvey and Beyond* (Cambridge, 1983), 3-29; Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionist Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge, MA, 1999); and Nemata A. Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808-1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester, 2000).

⁹Shepperson, "Abolitionism," 22-26.

¹⁰For variations of this critique see, for example, Tiyambe Zeleza, *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (Dakar, 1997); Oyekan Owomoyela, "With Friends Like These . . . A Critique of Pervasive Anti-Africanisms in Current African Studies Epistemology and Methodology," *African Studies Review* 37/3(1994), 77-101; Lansine Kaba, "The Atlantic Slave Trade Was Not a 'Black-on-Black Holocaust,'" *African Studies Review* 44/1(2000), 4-15; and Elliot P. Skinner, "Hegemonic

seek to give voice to the subalterns still bear the redoubtable scars of Eurocentrism. Second, excepting a few studies, the intellectual history of much of Africa, including that of the Gold Coast, is yet to be fully studied.¹¹ At best, the available studies offer variations of the same theme: all trace the institutional evolution of the littoral intelligentsia and their visceral attachment to the European presence.¹² Thus the historiography lacks systematic accounts of the ideologies of the African intelligentsia—the opinion leaders and a pressure group in the colonial setting—based on their writings, collective biographies, family histories, genealogies, and the local newspapers which they patronized.¹³

Abolition of slavery in Africa coincided with colonial rule, and this has resulted in submerging the study of abolition under African resistance to colonial rule. The staple assumption is that Africans resisted abolition as much as they confronted colonial rule.¹⁴ Scholars have written about African “collaborators” or agents in the European colonial enterprise, but failed to use similar models in the study of abolition that occurred in the same period. Finally, the lack of interest in the subject may be due to the paucity of sources, but this methodological problem should not detract from the importance of theorizing and hypothesizing the subject of African ideologies of antislavery in the context of the global abolition epoch.

In fact Shepperson’s cautionary note still applies today to research on the topic and thus warrants several caveats. The sources for the section on the African intelligentsia’s ideologies of antislavery are wholly derived from the *Gold Coast Times* and so are not as diverse as could be wished. However, the information is adequate and provides us with strong grounds for historiographical revision: there were African abo-

Paradigms and the African World: Striving to Be Free” in Hine/McLeod, *Crossing Boundaries*, 45-70.

¹¹E.g., Robert July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought* (New York, 1967); idem., *An African Voice* (Durham, 1987); and Philip S. Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects: An African Intelligentsia and Atlantic Ideas* (Charlottesville, 2000).

¹²E.g., James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley, 1963); Kimble, *Political History*, and Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*.

¹³For an exception see Margaret Priestley, *West African Trade and Coast Society: A Family Study* (London, 1969); and Toyin Falola, *Yoruba Gurus: Indigenous Production of Knowledge* (Trenton, 1999). For studies that make use of newspapers see Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*; and Rina Okonkwo, “The Lagos Auxiliary of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Rights Protection Society: A Re-Examination,” *IJAHS* 15(1982), 423-34.

¹⁴Studies of African resistance to colonial rule have been fruitful in demarcating specific responses, e.g., rural-based ones from littoral ones and those led by the chiefs from those championed by the African intelligentsia. See A. Adu Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism* (Baltimore, 1994), 27-93. Similar approaches that seek to detach abolition from colonial rule can enrich our understanding by capturing the differing and intersecting nuances of both processes.

litionists in the late nineteenth-century Gold Coast. Additionally, important thematic questions like the origin of the African intelligentsia's antislavery, its timing, and how the issue of compensation affected the African intelligentsia's antislavery position will have to await future research.¹⁵

Others are the biographical accounts of the African abolitionists, the organization of antislavery activities, and the connections between the Gold Coast African abolitionists and those in other colonial enclaves in Africa and the larger Atlantic world.¹⁶ The rest are whether there were dissenting and conflicting voices, the duration and extent of the antislavery campaigns, and why Governor George Strahan, the architect of the British colonial abolition of slavery, failed to accept the African intelligentsia's perceptive abolition proposals.¹⁷ In sum, future research may plumb the depths of the African intelligentsia's antislavery to find out whether it was culturalist, nationalist, or internationalist in nature, and also assess its susceptibility to problems of doctrinal quarrying and epistemological inconsistencies.

III

A spate of studies has emphasized the centrality of Africa in the making of the Atlantic community.¹⁸ Kristin Mann, articulating that genre, and championing African agency in the formation of the Atlantic community, has forcefully explained that "influences moved not only back and forth between specific regions of Africa and the Americas but also between different parts of Africa and the Americas. Indeed, they circulated in flows of differing reach and proportion all around the Atlantic

¹⁵For a discussion of the problem of compensation and abolition in the Gold Coast, See Akurang-Parry, "Slavery and Abolition," 27-32.

¹⁶Several studies have identified the close relationship that existed among the African intelligentsia in the West African region, e.g., Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*, 8-9; and Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 20.

¹⁷Strahan had a low opinion of the African intelligentsia. See, for example, *Further Correspondence Relating to the Abolition of Slavery on the Gold Coast, Parliamentary Papers*, 1875, C. 1139 (hereafter C. 1139); and *Further Correspondence Relating to the Abolition of Slavery on the Gold Coast, Parliamentary Papers*, 1875, C. 1159 (hereafter C. 1159).

¹⁸The literature is vast, but see Franklin Knight, *The African Dimension in Latin American Societies* (New York, 1974); Gwendolyn M. Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1992); Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (2d ed.: Washington, 1993); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, 1993); Darien J. Davis, *Slavery and Beyond: The African Impact on Latin America and the Caribbean* (Wilmington, DE, 1995); and Isidore Okpewho et al., eds., *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities* (Bloomington, 1998).

basin."¹⁹ Mann's essay of synthesis stresses the osmosis of ideologies on both sides of the Atlantic basin. But overall, studies that have examined the epochal abolition of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have celebrated Euro-American agency to the total neglect of continental African initiatives and contributions.²⁰ Recent scholarship on the Atlantic community has also accentuated diasporic African contributions to the emergence of ideologies and epistemologies of liberation, but failed to give the same credit to continental Africans.²¹

For all their arguments that have informed African history, revisionist scholars have failed to theorize African ideologies of abolition. The composite thematic thrusts of their conclusions have been the augmentation of slavery in Africa and African contributions to the making of the New World slavery.²² Mann is indeed right in charging that "[w]ithin the mainstream of the discipline, many, perhaps, most historians are still unable to conceive the history of the Atlantic basin in ways that adequately recognize African contributions."²³

The cumulative history of antislavery and emancipation in Euro-America has been embedded in Enlightenment discourses and religious revivalist epistemologies.²⁴ Conversely, the history of antislavery and emancipation in Africa has been anchored in terrains of static models of intractable African kinship dependencies.²⁵ The functionalist-assimilationists' position that the generality of slaves chose to stay with their holders in the aftermath of abolition raises an obfuscating paradox: it was not only African slaveholders who resisted the European abolition of slavery in Africa, but African slaves as well.²⁶ Historians have overemphasized spontaneous slave flights stimulated by colonial rule as if in the precolonial period enslaved Africans did not seek liberation on their own.²⁷ Indeed, only a few studies have examined precolonial

¹⁹Mann, "Shifting Paradigms," 10.

²⁰E.g., Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*; and Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*, 281-84.

²¹See, e.g., Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*; Hine/McLeod, *Crossing Boundaries*; and James Walvin, *Making the Black Atlantic: Britain and the African Diaspora* (New York, 2000).

²²E.g., John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 1992); and Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery*.

²³Mann, "Shifting Paradigms," 14.

²⁴E.g., Davis, *Problem of Slavery*. One recent epitome of this genre on Africa is Sanneh, *Abolitionist Abroad*.

²⁵See, e.g., Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, eds. *Slavery in Africa: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives* (Madison, 1977), 73-75; Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Context of African Abolition" in Miers/Kopytoff, *Slavery in Africa*, 497-502; and Dumett/Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery," 85, 88-89.

²⁶E.g., Dumett/Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery," 85, 92; and Igor Kopytoff, "Cultural Context," 485-503.

²⁷For the summary of such studies see Paul Lovejoy, "Fugitive Slaves: Resistance to Slavery in the Sokoto Caliphate" in Gary Okihiro, ed., *In Resistance: Studies in*

African resistance to slavery.²⁸ For the most part, the subject has remained marginalized, especially as an epitome of organized and ideologically crafted antislavery.

Ismail Rashid has cogently argued that the history of antislavery in Africa has been framed in epistemological contexts that pay obeisance to European agency.²⁹ In their introduction to *The End of Slavery in Africa*, Richard Roberts and Suzanne Miers write:

Abolition—the declaration by the government that slavery was no longer legal—was not an indigenous African concept. . . Full scale abolition was a western European idea born of the conflicts generated in the eighteenth century by the expansion of capitalism and profound ideological changes which accompanied it.³⁰

This suggests that on the eve of formal colonial rule in the 1880s no indigenous African government had set about the task of organized, state-wide abolition of slavery, but this was not always the case.³¹ Besides, the comparative literature shows that state intervention in slavery had been preceded by individuals, social movements, and public opinion that had put pressure on the state, forcing it to use its enor-

Afro-American, African and Caribbean History (Amherst, 1986), 74-77. For specific studies, see, e.g., Martin Klein and Richard Roberts, "The Banamba Slave Exodus of 1905 and the Decline of Slavery in the Western Sudan," *JAH* 21(1980), 375-94; and Manning, *Slavery and African Life*, 157-64.

²⁸E.g., John Adams, *Remarks on the Country Extending from Cape Palmas to the River Congo, Including Observations on the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants with an Appendix Containing an Account of the European Trade with the West Coast of Africa* (London, 1823), 86-86; and T. Winterbottom, *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighborhood of Sierra Leone to Which is Added an Account of the Present Medicine Among Them* (London, 1969), 154-58. I thank Femi Kolapo for drawing my attention to these two sources. For studies of resistance to slavery in the precolonial period see Richard Rathbone, "Some Thoughts on Resistance to Enslavement in West Africa," *Slavery and Abolition* 6(1985), 11-22; Winston McGowan, "African Resistance to the Atlantic Slave Trade in West Africa," *Slavery and Abolition* 11(1990), 5-29; Lovejoy, "Fugitive Slaves," 74-77; Ismail Rashid, "Escape, Revolt, and Maronnage in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Sierra Leone Hinterland," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 34(2000), 656-83; and Femi Kolapo, "Documentary 'Silences' and Slave Resistance in West Africa During the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade," paper Presented at the Harriet Tubman Seminar, Founders College, York University, 9 October 2002.

²⁹Rashid, "Escape, Revolt, and Maronnage," 656-62.

³⁰Richard Roberts and Suzanne Miers, "The End of Slavery," in Miers/Roberts, *End of Slavery in Africa*, 8-9. See also *ibid.*, 10-25.

³¹For example, the Dahomian state, in collaboration with the British authorities, had made efforts to abolish slavery; see Robin Law, "An African Response to Abolition: Anglo-Dahomian Negotiations on Ending the Slave Trade, 1838-48," *Slavery and Abolition* 16(1995), 281-310.

mous political weight to abolish slavery.³² In the case of Africa, the colonial onslaught did not allow that to happen: Philip Curtin, commenting on “Westernization” and cultural change, notes that “[w]hat this West African movement toward modernization might have amounted to, were it not for the European conquests that began in the 1880s [1874 in the case of the Gold Coast], is hard to predict.”³³ True, one can also evoke Curtin’s concept of “defensive Westernization,” that is, the mechanisms used by some African leaders to forestall Western assertions of African backwardness, in this case the problem of domestic slavery. But such “defensive Westernization” was the result of African initiatives, but not the product of an European agency.

Above all, Adu Boahen has convincingly argued that on the eve of the colonial conquest, “Africa had experienced a series of far-reaching revolutions . . . and by 1880 was in a mood of optimism and seemed poised for a major breakthrough on all fronts.”³⁴ Therefore the key question regarding Roberts’ and Miers’ conclusion should be whether there were African or African-led movements that championed anti-slavery, however incipient, prior to the colonial conquest or in the course of the colonial abolition of slavery. Lamine Sanneh has noted that “Africans were no exception to the rule of righteousness, a rule opposed to any compromise with slavery and its supporting structures.”³⁵ As this study shall demonstrate, in the case of the Gold Coast a budding antislavery movement had sprouted before the colonial conquest. Unlike the magisterial conclusions of Roberts and Miers, there is no reason to believe that the burgeoning antislavery in the Gold Coast was wholly an European concept.

IV

This section explores the relationship between the *Gold Coast Times* and the African intelligentsia—its readership—specifically, the use of the former as the political platform that disseminated antislavery ideologies to the latter. Due to the organic connection that existed between the *Gold Coast Times* and the African intelligentsia, I have

³²Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (New York, 1975), 3-7; David Turley, *The Culture of English Antislavery, 1780-1860* (New York, 1991); Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870* (New York, 1992); and J. R. Oldfield, *The Mobilization of Public Opinion Against the Slave Trade 1787-1807* (New York, 1995).

³³Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* (Cambridge, 1990), 182. For a detailed account of cultural change on the eve of colonial rule see, e.g., Boahen, *African Perspectives*, 1-26.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 1

³⁵Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad*, 156.

used both interchangeably to give voice to the extent and form of abolitionist perception and actions. Following Philip Foster, I use the term "African intelligentsia" to show that "a considerable heterogeneity [existed] within the . . . group itself."³⁶ As a group the African intelligentsia were agents of creolization, social and economic change, cultural transmission, Euro-Christianity, and political transformation. While the African intelligentsia may be seen from two contrasting perspectives, as noble altruists of social change or agents of cultural benightedness and colonial rule, the former is more applicable to the thrust of this study than the latter.

There is a glaring neglect of the interior African intelligentsia in the extant literature, combined with an overemphasis on the littoral African intelligentsia.³⁷ The latter included the descendants of the unions between Africans and Europeans; diasporic Africans, including African-Caribbeans and African-Brazilians who had settled the coast from the 1830s; autochthonous literate Africans; and those from the west African littoral. These have been generically described as the new elites, social elites, Afro-Europeans, Euro-Africans, the Western-educated elites, and, rather narrowly, as the Anglo-Fantis.³⁸ The concepts Euro-African and Afro-European, and similar conceptual designations underline the exclusivist, Eurocentric, and genealogical emphases of the literature.³⁹ Such concepts deny membership of the group to Africans without European, diasporic, and littoral roots, and hence marginalize their contributions to the history and culture of the Gold Coast. Indeed the efflorescence of Christianity, social change, and economic transformation in the interior states of Akuapem, Akyem, and Krobo from the mid-1850s had produced a dignified ethnocultural group of African intelligentsia.⁴⁰ The two groups, especially the interior intelligentsia,

³⁶Foster, *Education and Social Change in Ghana*, 68.

³⁷See, e.g., Kimble, *Political History*; Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*; and Parker, *Making the Town*.

³⁸Richard Rathbone, "The Gold Coast, the Closing of the Atlantic Slave Trade, and Africans of the Diaspora" in Stephan Palmié, ed., *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery* (Knoxville, 1995), 57-63. Rathbone delineates several groups within the African-Caribbean and African-Brazilian groups. Within the African-Caribbean groups were repatriated African soldiers, who had served in the Dutch East and West Indies. They were "predominantly Moslems" and had settled between Elmina and Cape Coast. The African-Caribbean group also included African-Jamaicans recruited by the Basel Mission and Africans drawn from the British Caribbean serving with the British West Indian Regiment. The African-Brazilians included those deported in 1831 and 1835 following a series of slave revolts in Brazil, and who settled between Cape Coast and Winneba. This group also included Christians who intermarried with the local African elites.

³⁹Kimble, *Political History*; Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*; and Parker, *Making the Town*.

⁴⁰See Akurang-Parry, "'Smattering of Education'," 49-50. See also M. A. Kwamena-Poh, "The Basel Mission Period 1828-1918: The Planting of the Presbyterian Church

assiduously grafted their dominant Africanity onto the ethos of the Euro-Christian culture. Thus the generality of the African intelligentsia may have “faced two ways,” to borrow from the title of Roger Gocking’s recent study of the littoral societies, but their relational pathways of change focused more on Africa than Europe.⁴¹

Furthermore, stressing violent and overt forms of resistance, historians have tended to situate the timing of effective African agency in transforming colonial rule in the first four decades of the twentieth century.⁴² Thus, the quasi-legal and constitutional methods used by the Gold Coast African intelligentsia in the late nineteenth century to oppose objectionable colonial policies have been considered as reformist instead of revolutionary nationalism.⁴³ The African intelligentsia’s weapons of opposition and resistance to the imperial ethos were by no means violent or cataclysmic. Regarding Africa as a whole, Boahen has shown that in their responses to the European imperial presence the African intelligentsia used local and international newspapers, colonial courts, strikes, petitions or memorials, delegations to European governments, millennialist movements, and pressure group tactics.⁴⁴ These vehicles of opposition, resistance, and protest politics were based on diffusion of innovation, the result of the Afro-European contact. However, some of these mechanisms of seeking redress, for example, the use of the courts, petitions, and pressure group tactics were rooted in indigenous African cultures.⁴⁵ Hence, even the so-called Euro-Africans did not wholly abandon indigenous ways for European ones; rather it was systematic borrowing and negotiations across demarcated, but organic cultural lines.

in Mamfe-Akuapem, 1858-1993” in *Presbyterian Church of Ghana: Dedication of the Emmanuel Presbyterian Chapel, Mamfe, On Sunday 9 May 1993* (n.p., n.d.). 11-22. I thank my sister Gladys Akurang-Parry of Adenta-Accra, Ghana, for bringing this essay to my attention. The essay reveals that by the 1880s there were several Akuapems working as teachers, pastors, catechists, traders, and farmers. Kwamena-Poh’s essay points to the rich possibilities of the historical reconstruction of the intelligentsia in Akuapem.

⁴¹Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*.

⁴²See, e.g., Coleman, *Nigeria*, esp. 169-77;

⁴³For this argument see Akurang-Parry, “‘Smattering of Education’.” For the reformist interpretation that inform the literature see Kimble, *Political History*, 537-62.

⁴⁴Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, 67-75.

⁴⁵This perspective has been mostly used to explain the continuity in women’s activism in the colonial period. See, e.g., Cheryl Johnson-Odim, “Actions Louder than Words: The Historical Task of Defining Feminist Consciousness in Colonial West Africa” in Roach Pierson and Nupur Chaudhuri, eds., *Nation, Empire, Colony: Historicizing Gender and Race* (Bloomington, 1998), 81-82; and Ifi Amadiume, *Daughters of the Goddess, Daughters of Imperialism: African Women’s Struggle for Culture, Power and Democracy* (London, 2000), 7.

One such remarkable anticolonial agency was the *Gold Coast Times*. Edited and published by James Hutton Brew at Cape Coast between 1874 and 1885, this newspaper, the only one in existence at the inception of colonial rule in the Gold Coast, became the mouthpiece of the African intelligentsia.⁴⁶ Overall, the *Gold Coast Times* and other West African newspapers served as a formidable political platform for the African intelligentsia.⁴⁷ Evelyn Rowand writes that “it is clear that, in the absence of elected representatives in the local government, educated Africans valued the press as the only vehicle by which public opinion could be expressed and, it was hoped, heard and acted upon.”⁴⁸ In his study of the littoral communities under colonial rule, Gocking notes that “the well-established newspaper traditions . . . reflected the literate nature of these communities.”⁴⁹ In sum, the indigenous newspapers became a “nationalist, epistemological agency of cultural assertiveness against assumed European superiority and Christian missionary teachings that undermined African worldviews and ontology.”⁵⁰

Brew was a legal advocate for the “Kings and Chiefs” on numerous occasions. He authored the Gold Coast abolition petitions of 1874 that sought to rectify Governor Strahan’s misguided abolition policy.⁵¹ Brew’s role in the African intelligentsia’s overall activities during the early colonial period has been interpreted differently by historians. In her study of the press and opinion in West Africa, Rowand notes that Brew’s views were “too strident” and he frequently alienated those “whom he wished to influence.”⁵² Here Rowand was not dealing with the content analysis of Brew’s editorials and other writings, but rather his incendiary style of writing. Others who have examined Brew’s ideas have been more generous. Margaret Priestley notes that:

⁴⁶For biographical account of Brew see *Gold Coast Times* (30 November 1874); and *African Times* (1 March 1875). For a fuller biographical exposition see Kimble, *Political History*, 409-20; Margaret Priestley, “The Emergence of an Elite: A Case Study of a West Coast Family” in P.C. Lloyd, ed., *The New Elites of Tropical Africa* (London, 1966), 87-99; idem., *West African Trade*; and Akurang-Parry, “Smattering of Education,” 55-58.

⁴⁷E.g., July, *Origins of Modern African Thought*, 345-73.

⁴⁸Evelyn Rowand, “Press and Opinion in British West, 1855-1900: The Development of a Sense of Identity Among Educated British West Africans of the Later Nineteenth Century” (Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 1972), 4.

⁴⁹Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*, 10.

⁵⁰Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, “‘We Cast About for a Remedy’: Chinese Labor and African Opposition in the Gold Coast, 1874-1914,” *IJAH* 34(2001), 370.

⁵¹*Gold Coast Times* (30 November 1874), and *African Times* (1 March 1875), 30.

⁵²Rowand, “Press and Opinion,” 47-52.

After 1874 . . . Brew's main purpose was to secure the recognition of African rights... he exerted pressure on the colonial administration through organized channels. Indeed, for the first twenty-five years of its existence, the Gold Coast Colony had no more forceful critic than James Hutton Brew.⁵³

According to K. A. B. Jones-Quartey, the editorials of the *Gold Coast Times* "were packed with trenchant comment and criticism on any kind of wrong that came under Brew's notice."⁵⁴ Jones-Quartey concluded that Brew "was the first of the line of forceful, fearless Gold Coast public leaders."⁵⁵ For his part David Kimble disclosed that Brew, a staunch pan-Africanist with strong anticolonial views, was considered by the Colonial Office as a troublemaker.⁵⁶ Indeed, a close reading of the *Gold Coast Times* and *The Western Echo* (also Cape Coast and also founded by Brew) reveals that the vectors of Brew's anticolonialism and contributions to African nationalism remain to be fully explored.

The *Gold Coast Times* covered events throughout the Gold Coast and circulated in the littoral region between Elmina in the west and Keta in the east. It had correspondents in most of the coastal towns, and letters to the editor came from several communities along the coast. The *Gold Coast Times* also covered events in the rest of Africa, the Americas, and Europe, especially England, and culled information from west African and British newspapers. The newspaper's editorials dealt with anticolonial themes that sought to better conditions in the Gold Coast.⁵⁷ Daily circulation of the *Gold Coast Times* had exceeded 500 by 1880.⁵⁸ The African intelligentsia formed the readership not only of the *Gold Coast Times*, but other newspapers, including the London-based *The African Times*, *The Times*, and the *Standard*.⁵⁹

⁵³Priestley, *West African Trade*, 166.

⁵⁴K. A. B. Jones-Quartey, "Thought and Expression in the Gold Coast Press," *Universitas* 3(1958), 73.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Kimble, *Political History*, 91.

⁵⁷E.g., *Gold Coast Times* (9 June 1975).

⁵⁸Gocking, *Facing Two Ways*, 10.

⁵⁹See, e.g., *African Times* (23 August 1866), 16. On page 22 of the same issue, an African responding to Colonel E. Conran's disparaging reply to a petition submitted to the colonial authorities by Accra merchants regarding a colonial expedition to the Voltaic districts and the persistence of declining trade due to slavery and violence, noted that the European authorities in the Gold Coast did not like the *African Times*, but the African intelligentsia and Africans in general did. Also, in 1865 the African intelligentsia of Sierra Leone paid a special tribute to the *African Times*. See the *African Times* (23 December 1865), 64. For the Gold Coast readership of the other British newspapers see Bannerman to Rowe, 21 December 1881, Encl. in No.

Thus, editorial views, letters to the editor, and opinion pieces represented the African intelligentsia's microcosmic perspectives.⁶⁰ Also the Europeans on the Gold Coast, including the colonial authorities, patronized the *Gold Coast Times*.⁶¹ Thus the resident Europeans were aware of the African intelligentsia's antislavery ideologies, some of which were meant for the eyes of the colonial authorities.

The above provides several solid conclusions. The readership of the *Gold Coast Times* was relatively large, hence the information it disseminated reached a large audience. The newspaper was popular and widely read, so it is not surprising that it became the forum for the dissemination and propagation of African ideologies of antislavery, among others. Critics may contend that it is naive to assume that private letters or newspaper editorials, not to mention petitions, are a pure reflection of their author's antislavery. But that such sentiments existed should be recognized as a potential antislavery capital. Overall, antislavery ideas espoused by the newspaper might have been known to a considerable number of the African intelligentsia.

This does not mean that every member of the intelligentsia shared the newspaper's antislavery message. In fact Zachernuk has clarified that "the bulk of the intelligentsia were those who followed the questions of the day, occasionally criticizing or endorsing the leading figures, without being primarily occupied with intellectual life."⁶² Thus warranting further research, a cross-section of the African intelligentsia held abolitionist views propagated by the *Gold Coast Times*. Brew, the editor of the *Gold Coast Times* and a leading figure, certainly served either as an unofficial antislavery spokesperson for the African intelligentsia or an opinion-former who used the *Gold Coast Times* to broadcast popular ideologies of antislavery.

V

Commenting on African response to the Basel Mission's slave emancipation policy of 1861, John Parker shows that budding antislavery sentiments existed in the Ga littoral region: "There are indications, however, that both the ideology and mechanics of slavery started to become a conscious "issue" in the minds of some free-born people of Accra."⁶³

16, in *Further Correspondence Regarding Affairs of the Gold Coast, Parliamentary Papers*, 1882, C. 3386 (hereafter C. 3386).

⁶⁰E.g., Rowand, "Press and Opinion," 1-63.

⁶¹Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, "Ritual, Rumor, and Colonialism: The Alleged Human Sacrifice of Two-Hundred Girls by Asantehene [King] Mensa Bonsu in Asante and the Gold Coast in 1881-1882," unpublished manuscript.

⁶²Zachernuk, *Colonial Subjects*, 12.

⁶³John Parker, "Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra, 1860s-1920s" (Ph.D., University of London, 1995), 124. See also Parker, *Making the Town*, 83. For a

Parker cites the following evidence in the footnote to support the above conclusion:

William Addo (d.1876), for example, one of the wealthiest Ga merchants in Nleshi, consistently stated when giving testimony in court cases concerning slavery that he refused to keep slaves or pawns. Even if this was not the case, the mere fact that it was stated indicates the creeping influence of anti-slavery rhetoric.⁶⁴

Elsewhere Parker writes that:

[R]esistance on the part of the slave-owning Euro-African merchants was constrained by an often strident espousal of Victorian ideas of civilization and progress. Attempts to defend in writing the institution of slavery in Accra, typically comparing its benevolence with the harsh treatment of slaves in Asante, only betray the difficulty that the literate elite faced in rationalizing their role as the "great upholders of slavery."⁶⁵

This traces the burgeoning of antislavery to an external agency: the messianic intervention of the mid-Victorian civilizing mission. The Ga and Fante intelligentsia's dichotomous interpretations of the littoral and the interior slave systems were based on their assimilation of the prejudicial attitudes of the Europeans toward the interior peoples, especially the Asante.⁶⁶ More important, that the littoral intelligentsia, notwithstanding their self-serving interpretations of slavery, used anti-slavery rhetoric at all, is an ample testimony to the flowering of ideologies of antislavery.

For his part, Larry Yarak, writing about the early nineteenth-century Afro-European slaveowners of Elmina, states that:

It is striking to note the number of prominent Elmina Afro-Europeans whose estates included no slaves at all. It is difficult to be certain that

detailed account of the Basel mission's slave emancipation efforts of the 1860s see Haenger, *Slaves and Slaveholders*, 1-111.

⁶⁴Parker, "Ga State," 124n37.

⁶⁵Parker, *Making the Town*, 95.

⁶⁶There are numerous examples of the coastal people's condescension and a feeling of moral superiority toward the interior peoples in the Gold Coast. See, e.g., *Gold Coast Times* (20 April 1874); and *Gold Coast Times* (24 December 1881). The reason for the uneasy relationships between the littoral states and Asante was the latter's political and economic threat to the former in the African-European trade. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the increasing presence of the Europeans on the coast and their incipient colonial policies had exacerbated the conflict between the coastal states and the Asante kingdom, see, e.g., Kimble, *Political History*, 267-70.

such estates were not the result of some last minute selling off of slave property when as the quaint Dutch phrase had it, "the certainty of death" loomed. I have seen no direct evidence which suggests that such course of action might work to the advantage of a dying vrijburger.⁶⁷

Critics who are looking for mountains of evidence in order to raise the issue of African ideologies of antislavery may not be convinced that not owing slaves in a society where slave ownership was ubiquitous was the same as expressing antislavery sentiments. But Yarak's study provides adequate evidence of the prevailing antislavery that existed among the African intelligentsia. Servile labor had been used by the Afro-Europeans in the preceding centuries, therefore, the transformations in labor in the nineteenth century, which negated the use of servile labor, show that antislavery was growing among the African intelligentsia.

Additionally I have reframed the intellectual history of the African intelligentsia and abolition.⁶⁸ I argue that scholars have not paid attention to the African intelligentsia's use of constitutional antecedents and legal precedents at the dawn of abolition because, unlike the kernel of African resistance, the use of petitions did not lead to cataclysmic events.⁶⁹ More important, I called attention to the fact that the African intelligentsia confidently expected the colonial state to implement vigorous antislavery policies. Hence, when they concluded that the colonial abolition policies were aimless and ineffectual, they condemned the policies and Governor Strahan, the architect of the policies.⁷⁰ In sum, the fact that there were such antislavery signposts patently indicate that, at least, antislavery, championed by the African intelligentsia, existed in the nineteenth-century Gold Coast.

The *Gold Coast Times*, the main African voice and agency at the inception of colonial rule, supports the above conclusions and also provides additional evidence and profound insights that are lacking in the comparative literature on slavery and abolition in Africa.⁷¹ In October 1874 an editorial plaintively commented that

[W]hat our views on the subject are, we have again and again expounded. We shall rejoice to see the day when slavery shall cease to

⁶⁷Larry Yarak, "West African Coastal Slavery in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the Afro-Europeans of Elmina," *Ethnohistory* 36(1989), 48.

⁶⁸Akurang-Parry, "'Smattering of Education,'" 48-55.

⁶⁹For this conclusion, see Dumett/Johnson, "Britain and Suppression of Slavery," 108. They assert that abolition was "a quieter revolution."

⁷⁰Akurang-Parry, "'Smattering of Education,'" 48-49.

⁷¹Miers/Roberts, *End of Slavery*; and Miers/Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule*.

exist on the Gold Coast in any shape or form, when all shall be free; anything short of this will be but trifling with the question, and will but be deferring the inevitable.⁷²

This passage affords a number of tenable historiographical revisions. It reveals that the African intelligentsia had contemplated the demise of slavery long before the British abolition was inaugurated on 17 November 1874. This is adequately supported by the Cape Coast-based correspondent of *The Scotsman*, who noted that “the people expect [slavery] to be put to an end, and will be astonished if it be allowed to go on.”⁷³ The normative use of the pluralities of “we” and “our” refer to the generality of the African intelligentsia’s antislavery viewpoints in popular currency. Placed in the context of formal abolition, the passage illustrates that the African intelligentsia had accepted the inevitability of the demise of slavery and hence placed a higher premium on abolition than slave-holding. Finally, it explains the point I made earlier—that the African intelligentsia may have been slaveholders but just like slave-holding elites elsewhere they realized the need for abolition.

The African intelligentsia expressed the tenets of their abolition ideology in several ways. One was that, in order to make abolition very effective, the colonial state should clearly demarcate the boundaries of the Gold Coast Colony. Indeed, the failure of the colonial authorities to do so explains the protracted nature of abolition.⁷⁴ The British defeat of the Asante kingdom in 1873-74 led to the paradoxical decision by the British government to impose formal colonial rule on the littoral states, their allies. Consequently the problem of territorial extent of the Gold Coast Colony engaged the attention of the British Parliament.

Following a series of parliamentary debates in June 1874, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Colonies, James Lowther, stated in his official capacity that the Gold Coast was “the land occupied by Government buildings, constituting the rest of the territory a Protectorate, where their influence could be used to soften and gradually destroy slavery without their authority being called to abolish it.”⁷⁵

⁷²*Gold Coast Times* (30 October 1874).

⁷³See *African Times* (29 August 1874), 16. Several of the British newspapers had correspondents based on the Gold Coast due to the coverage given to the Sagrenti War (Sir Garnet’s war in the local parlance) or the Anglo-Asante War of 1873-74. It is not clear whether the correspondent was an European or an African. See, e.g., *African Times* (29 August 1873), 173.

⁷⁴Akurang-Parry, “Administration,” 149-50.

⁷⁵*African Times* (30 June 1874), 69. See also C. 1139, Carnarvon to Strahan, 20 August 1874, No. 2; and “Draft Proclamation Defining the Nature and Extent of the Queen’s Jurisdiction on the Gold Coast” in C. 1139, Encl. No. 2. *The British*

Additionally he made a “distinction between bona fide British territory within which slavery never had and never would be allowed to exist and the territory commonly called the Protectorate” where slavery would be recognized.⁷⁶ Lowther’s proclamation reveals that slavery would be proscribed in the colony, but that the colonial government would have very little to do with slavery in the adjoining territories.⁷⁷

In the aftermath of Lowther’s proclamation, the African intelligentsia called on the colonial government to clearly demarcate the geographical extent of the Gold Coast. In October 1874 the *Gold Coast Times*, writing about the impending meeting between Governor Strahan and the chiefs at Cape Coast, stated that:

[W]hatever may be the motive [of abolition], whatever the cause... The one which strikes us, first and foremost, is the extent and limits of the so-called Colony. We say so-called [sic: italicized] because in our idea it does not yet answer to its designation. The extent of British jurisdiction must be clearly and distinctly defined.⁷⁸

The African intelligentsia had identified the rigorous delimitation of the proposed colony as one of the most important policies that would go a long way to making abolition a success. The *Gold Coast Times* continued that the colonial government must make it clear if the Gold Coast Colony included what was then known as the protectorate, that is, the region between the coastal enclave and the backwater borderlands of Asante.⁷⁹ The newspaper argued that “[i]t will not be safe any longer not to define the extent of British jurisdiction; it must be thoroughly effective and authoritative.”⁸⁰ It concluded that a well-defined

Parliamentary debates were published verbatim in the *African Times* and the Gold Coast newspapers, including the *Gold Coast Times*. The Gold Coast newspapers also culled news on the Gold Coast from British newspapers. The *Gold Coast Times* issue of 24 May 1874, included the British government’s official policy statement on colonial rule in the Gold Coast, sub-titled “British Policy on the Gold Coast” from the following British newspapers: *Manchester Guardian* (29 April [1874]); *Times* (28 April [1874]); *Morning Post* (28 April [1874]); and *Standard* (29 April [1874]).

⁷⁶*African Times* (30 June 1874), 69.

⁷⁷See, e.g., C. 1139, Carnarvon to the Officer Administering the Gold Coast, 21 August 1874, No. 3; and C. 1139, Strahan to Carnarvon, 19 September 1874, No.

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⁷⁸*Gold Coast Times* (20 October 1874). Strahan had met the chiefs of the Central and Western Provinces to prepare them for the impending abolition. See C. 1139, Strahan to Carnarvon, 19 September 1874, No. 5.

⁷⁹This falls within the area of British jurisdiction that came with the Bond of 1844, which enabled the British authorities to intervene in African affairs. For a fuller account of the Bond see Kimble, *Political History*, 193-95. For a copy see J. E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London, [1903] 1970), app. D5., 367-80.

⁸⁰*Gold Coast Times* (20 October 1874).

boundary of the Gold Coast Colony would clearly help to demarcate the extent of the British jurisdiction and help colonial officials to know where exactly to implement abolition.⁸¹

In March 1875 Lord Carnarvon, the Secretary of State for Colonies, finally demarcated the boundaries of the Gold Coast: they “extend only to the forts, or at most, to so much of the lands immediately adjacent as may be required for defensive, sanitary, or other purposes essential to the maintenance of the British position on the Coast. All beyond that area is foreign country.”⁸² Variations of this policy statement, mirroring Lowther’s earlier official boundary proclamation, became the subject of several official correspondence between Carnarvon and Strahan before the inauguration of abolition in November 1874. The correspondence illustrates that colonial rule would be nominal in the protectorate and virtually non-existent in the area between the protectorate and Asante.⁸³ Thus abolition would be confined to the colony, and true to the official delimitation of territory, in November 1874 Governor Strahan proclaimed abolition for Cape Coast, then the colonial capital; Accra and its immediate localities; and the Eastern districts—Abokobi, Aburi, Akropong, and Odumasi Krobo—and “the mouth of the Volta.”⁸⁴ These were the areas of major European activities in the pre-colonial period. Indeed, news about the proclamation spread to other areas, but well into the 1880s the colonial state was not particularly concerned with abolition in the ambiguously demarcated protectorate.⁸⁵ This was one of the major factors that prolonged abolition in the Gold Coast because the protectorate regions remained as major sources of slave supply to the colony well into the early twentieth century.⁸⁶ Had the Colonial Office vigorously defined the boundaries of the Gold Coast—colony and protectorate—abolition would have been more effective.

Additionally, the African intelligentsia asked the colonial government to establish villages for would-be freed slaves.⁸⁷ On the eve of abolition, the *Gold Coast Times* had stated that

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Quoted by the *Standard* (no date) and culled by the *Gold Coast Times* (31 March 1875).

⁸³See, e.g., C. 1139, Carnarvon to the Officer Administering the Gold Coast, 21 August 1874, No. 3; and C. 1139, Strahan to Carnarvon, 19 September 1874, No. 5.

⁸⁴C. 1139, Strahan to Carnarvon, 28 November, 1874, No. 17.

⁸⁵See Akurang-Parry, “Administration of Abolition Laws,” 152-53.

⁸⁶Marion Johnson, “The Slaves of Salaga,” *JAH* 27(1986), 349-58; and Akurang-Parry, “Rethinking the “Slaves of Salaga,”” 40-48.

⁸⁷For freed slave habitats or homes in the colonial period see, e.g., G. O. Olusanya, “The Freed Slaves’ Home—An Unknown Aspect of Northern Nigerian Social History,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 3/3(1966), 523-38; and C. N.

[t]he Government had better purchased land or acquire some territory by treaty with the Kings and Chiefs on which it could keep, in unison and support the slaves emancipated before it talks of the abolition of slavery. We state that slavery exists here and will continue to exist in the face of a thousand such speeches.⁸⁸

This means that the colonial state should create autonomous abodes for freed slaves, protected by the colonial government, to serve as congenial habitats for the transition from bondage to freedom. The African intelligentsia saw this as a crucial necessity, without which abolition would remain a paper tiger. They argued that, lacking autonomy, social choices, and economic opportunities, freed slaves would revert to forms of bondage and dependency.⁸⁹ Once again the colonial state disregarded the African intelligentsia's proposal: their call for the establishment of freed slave villages was not implemented.⁹⁰ In sum the autonomy of former slaves was constrained by their dependence on former slaveholders due to the lack of government assistance, economic choices, and social support.⁹¹ The lack of freed-slave villages became one of the perennial problems that faced freed slaves.⁹² This may explain why freed slaves failed to capitalize on abolition or returned to their former owners even after the courts had freed them.⁹³ Hence it disputes the views of colonial officials, echoed by Raymond Dumett and Marion Johnson and recently stressed by Akosua Perbi, that former slaves chose to stay with their former owners because slavery was benign and that slaveholders were generous.⁹⁴

Ubah, "The Colonial Administration of Northern Nigeria and the Problem of Freed Slave Children," *Slavery and Abolition* 14(1993), 208-33.

⁸⁸*Gold Coast Times* (20 November 1874).

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰Freed slaves themselves developed autonomous villages near the active centers of colonial rule, for instance, on the Accra plains; e.g., Lees to Hicks Beach, 5 July 1878, Encl. in No. 2, in Report by Sir David Chalmers on the Effect of the Steps Which Have been Taken by the Colonial Government in Reference to the Abolition of Slavery Within the Protectorate, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1875, C. 2148 (hereafter C. 2148); and Fraser to Hodgson, (n.d.), Encl. 27 in No. 59, in *Correspondence Respecting the Slave Trade*, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1890 (hereafter C. 6053). For a fuller account see Dumett/Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery," 89-90.

⁹¹For this argument see Roberts/Miers, "End of Slavery," 56-57.

⁹²See, e.g., Case No. 104, 3 November 1875, National Archives of Ghana, Accra (hereafter NAG/A), SCT 17/4/2; Despatches from the Governor to the Secretary of State, 1879-80, 7 February 1880, No. 57, NAG/A ADM 1/23; C. 6053, Holmes to Hughes, 27 July 1889, Encl. 26 in No. 59; C. 6053, Cole to Hughes, 17 September 1890, Encl. 8 in No. 59; and No. S.P.11/09, 21 June 1909, in Slave Children, National Archives of Ghana, Cape Coast (hereafter NAG/CC).

⁹³See Dumett/Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery," 90-91; and Akurang-Parry, "Administration," 156-58.

⁹⁴There were several official expressions that slavery was benign. See, e.g., C. 6354, Griffith to Knutsford, 26 January 1891, No. 7. See Dumett/Johnson, "Britain and

VII

The African intelligentsia's use of petitions as a form of protest politics against Governor Strahan's perilous abolition policy has been studied.⁹⁵ Therefore this section deals with a major subject that has been obscured in the slavery historiography on Africa: how the African intelligentsia, the opinion leaders, reacted to the substance of the spate of colonial abolition proclamations and what the reactions reveal about their perceptions of abolition.⁹⁶ It should be stressed that just like the pre-proclamation period, the *Gold Coast Times'* concerns regarding the post-proclamation period were not about minimizing any post-proclamation disorder that could have an impact on the fortunes of slaveholders. Rather the concerns were a clear demonstration of overt anti-slavery. Overall the responses of the Gold Coast African intelligentsia support the argument that they were avid abolitionists who believed that Governor Strahan's abolition had not gone far enough, hence could not root out slavery in the Gold Coast. Additionally, their responses affirm that they did question objectionable colonial policies and did not always go with the flow of imperial ideas in currency.

In the first place, the African intelligentsia were furious that Governor Strahan did not have any ordinance in hand when he proclaimed abolition. The editorial of the *Gold Coast Times* disclosed that "[t]he Government are now preparing an Ordinance to that effect, and that Governor Strahan's speech was merely to give the people a warning of that which is to be done."⁹⁷ This enriches the literature in several ways. First it affirms the Colonial Office's fears that Strahan had too hurriedly declared abolition without adequate preparations.⁹⁸ Second it shows that the African intelligentsia had profound knowledge of legal and constitutional issues regarding abolition.⁹⁹ Most significantly, it buttresses the fact that the African intelligentsia were committed to

the Suppression of Slavery," 90-91, and Akosua A. Perbi, "A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana from the 15th to the 19th Centuries" (Ph. D., University of Ghana, 1997). 262-63.

⁹⁵Akurang-Parry, "Smattering of Education'."

⁹⁶E.g., Miers/Roberts, *End of Slavery*.

⁹⁷*Gold Coast Times* (30 November 1874). Akurang-Parry, "Smattering of Education'," 58, has argued that historians of slavery in the Gold Coast have overlooked this flaw in the abolition process. Most scholars writing about the subject have presumed that abolition inaugurated on 3 November 1874 was supported by a legal document in hand. See, e.g., John Grace, *Domestic Slavery in West Africa* (New York, 1975), 36; and Dumett/Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery," 80.

⁹⁸For this explanation, see Grace, *Domestic Slavery*, 37-38; McSheffrey, "Slavery," 354; and Dumett/Johnson, "Britain and the Suppression of Slavery," 80.

⁹⁹For this argument see July, *Origins*, 327-35.

having an effective abolition devoid of incantatory and impractical undercurrents.

Furthermore, the editorial explained in no uncertain terms that without a legal document or an ordinance:

The speech will no more have the desired effect unless backed by law than an edict issued prohibiting the sale of the necessaries of life... To dwell on the nature of the speech, its figure and purport, would be to stigmatize it as a failure.¹⁰⁰

The concern was that the abolition proclamation was made on 17 November 1874, but was promulgated only on 30 December 1874, the latter being the date on which the African intelligentsia had sent the second abolition petition to the Colonial Office.¹⁰¹ The position of the African intelligentsia was that, lacking a law to back it, Governor Strahan's speech—and for that matter abolition—would be taken lightly, despite the fact that the “The question is of too great importance—of vital importance—to the peoples of the Colony.”¹⁰² The editorial insisted that “we do not think that there is a single person in the Protectorate who believes that it can put a stop to the buying and selling of slaves. . . . if you are determined to put an end to slavery and the pawning of people, make laws on the subject but do not speechify.”¹⁰³ This was an emphatic, solicitous African agency at work: the African intelligentsia were overly worried about the probable failure of abolition and its implication for the colony. It is therefore not surprising that the *Gold Coast Times'* criticism was picked up by the London-based *African Times* that echoed: “was it after all, only a vain and empty boast with no intention on the part of the Governor . . . to insist on obedience.”¹⁰⁴

The African intelligentsia were also overly critical of the content of Strahan's abolition speech. The editorial of the *Gold Coast Times* plaintively noted: “[w]hoever drafted out the speech has not much to be proud of; the rant probably was worthy of the occasion and was much as might be acceptable to a number of ignorant natives.”¹⁰⁵ Here the issue of elitism, simply the quest for a polished, inspiring speech encoded in a language of exclusivity and advanced intellectual and cultural sensibilities, can be used to explain this response. But more impor-

¹⁰⁰*Gold Coast Times* (30 November 1874).

¹⁰¹C. 1159, Strahan to Carnarvon, 8 January 1875, Encl. 1 in No. 2.

¹⁰²*Gold Coast Times* (30 November 1874).

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴*African Times* (31 December 1874/1 January 1875), 8.

¹⁰⁵*Gold Coast Times* (30 November 1874).

tantly, an exegetical reading of the evidence suggests two things. First, the dichotomous reference to “ignorant natives” contrasts with an “enlightened” intelligentsia, showing that the African intelligentsia had expected Strahan’s proclamation speech to be clearer and more concise so that the illiterate masses could understand. Second, it removes any residue of frivolity based on class and intellectual insurrectionism. In sum, the African intelligentsia’s critical content analysis of Strahan’s speech illustrates their guarded stewardship of a seamless and uncircumscribed abolition.

In a more emphatic tone, the editorial of the *Gold Coast Times* stressed the implications of the lack of intellectual and purposeful rigor that informed the speech:

But it should have been borne in mind that whatever was uttered on the occasion was spoken to the world. . . . Hearing and knowing that the British Government were about giving the deathblow to slavery here, all nations and peoples have been on the alert, watching closely the measures they would adopt for its abolition.¹⁰⁶

Thus the concerns were not only about how the uninformative speech would affect abolition locally, but also how outsiders would perceive the dynamics of abolition in the Gold Coast. The African intelligentsia believed that the proclamation speech could not fulfil the hopes of using the form abolition took in the Gold Coast as a blueprint for future abolition elsewhere. Overall, from the African intelligentsia’s standpoint, Governor Strahan’s dismal proclamation had let down the people of the Gold Coast. In sum, the *Gold Coast Times* insisted that as result of the ineffectiveness of the speech and the fact that there was no law to back it, “people” had interpreted abolition “in their own way such as will suit their own ideas of affairs.” It argued that slavery and pawnship would continue, revealing that “slaves have been bought and sold and pawns taken since the publication of Her Majesty’s message.”¹⁰⁷ This shows that even during the crucial days that followed the proclamation, slave-trading occurred at Cape Coast and its immediate

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid. For the expansion of pawning in the aftermath of abolition, see Dumett/Johnson, “Britain and Suppression of Slavery,” 94-95. Others agree with Dumett and Johnson, but have argued that post-proclamation pawning involved more females than men. See Gareth Austin, “Human Pawning in Asante, 1800-1950: Markets and Coercion, Gender and Cocoa” in Toyin Falola and Paul Lovejoy, eds., *Pawnship in Africa: Debt Bondage in Historical Perspective* (Boulder, 1994), 119-59; Beverly Grier, “Pawns, Porters, and Petty Traders: Women in the Transition to Cash Crop Agriculture in Colonial Ghana” in *ibid.*, 178-82; and Akurang-Parry, “‘What is and What is not the Law’.”

environs due to the popular disregard for Governor Strahan's proclamation.

VIII

This study has raised the question of African ideologies of antislavery and tenets of abolition in the Gold Coast prior to and during the early stages of the British colonial abolition of slavery. It is patently clear that the *Gold Coast Times*, patronized by the African intelligentsia, blazoned with abolitionist ideology. The evidence adduced is sufficient to encourage research on the extent and form of abolitionist words and actions among Africans in the Gold Coast and their linkages with abolition in the larger Atlantic world. Due to the paucity of sources, we cannot deduce the exact percentage of the African intelligentsia that espoused ideologies of antislavery, but there can be no doubt that antislavery was articulated among the African intelligentsia and that the *Gold Coast Times* served as the standard-bearer of antislavery ideologies. Hence I have used the *Gold Coast Times* and the African intelligentsia interchangeably to illustrate the organic connection that existed between them. I have queried the staple assumption that generations and the totality of the African intelligentsia membership were slaveholders, and so resisted abolition to the very end.

That domestic slavery increased in some parts of Africa, including the Gold Coast, after the British abolition of slavery in 1807 and the subsequent development of the so-called "legitimate trade," is not in dispute. What should also be recognized is that by the 1870s local winds of antislavery were remolding the slavery landscape of the Gold Coast. The evidence of ideologies of antislavery is based on compelling pronouncements and realistic proposals that had nothing to do with minimizing the effects of emancipation in order to benefit slaveholders, but had everything to do with antislavery. The African intelligentsia's antislavery campaigns preceded formal colonial rule and the inauguration of abolition in November 1874 by the colonial state. Had the Colonial Office and Governor Strahan listened to what the African intelligentsia had to say—for instance, about the development of freed slave villages—the course of abolition in the Gold Coast would have been different.

Certainly European colonial rule was instrumental in the demise of slavery in Africa, hence it is appropriate to credit European agency in abolition. But the fault line, as is evident in a corpus of studies on the end of slavery in Africa, is the Eurocentric grip that has prevented scholars from raising, even if at the theoretical level, the question of African ideologies of antislavery and the possibility of African "collab-

oration” with the European agents of abolition. Happily, the *Gold Coast Times* has bequeathed to us adequate evidence with which to rethink abolition and emancipation in Africa. Indeed, there were Africans clamoring for abolition and who yearned to rejoice on the day when slavery would cease to exist.