

## **FIELDWORK REPORT**

### **Royal Holloway/Santander Travel Award**

#### **Project Title: Ideologies and Africa's International Relations**

(Emmanuel Siaw)

With much thanks to the financial support of the Royal Holloway Travel Award, I was able to travel to Ghana with the objective of gathering primary data for my PhD thesis.

My PhD thesis primarily seeks to answer the question *What is the relationship between the ideologies of African governments and foreign policy decisions?* Almost all of the works that try to answer this question have either used Western-oriented typologies of ideology or too narrow a scope to capture the dynamics or shifting realities of Africa's international relations. Instead, this study intends to proffer a more contextualised framework. This is based on the belief that existing studies have downplayed how Africa's environment and experiences have cumulatively shaped ideologies that go on to shape foreign policy – a phenomenon I call ideological contextualisation. My thesis focuses on whether Africa's international relations can be explained in part as a product of the distinctive political ideologies of diverse post-colonial governments. I do this with Ghana as the case study. Ghana is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence hence making it the nation with the longest span of undertaking extra-national relations as an independent country in sub-Saharan Africa. Its foreign policy, over the years, have consistently had the objective of pioneering African renaissance and has had a lasting impact on the continent. These features, among others, make Ghana a viable case for a study of foreign policy making in Africa.

The nature of my research demands that I speak with people who are/were directly involved in the formulation and execution of Ghana's foreign policy. Since this is an under-researched area, more primary information in the form of first-hand documents, news and eyewitness or participant accounts of events and policies need to be gathered. Most of these data are in Ghana, which explains why I had to go to Ghana for my fieldwork. I intended to collect data through in-depth interviews and archival studies. Regarding the interviews, the objective was to speak with former and current government officials/ministers, ambassadors, representatives of policy think-tanks, academics and journalists totalling about 30 elite respondents. These respondents are spread across at least 2 regions in Ghana as some of them have retired, but a significant part of the work will be done in the Greater Accra region. I also intended to visit the national archives for data on early post-colonial government. This research is useful because it highlights the missing piece in existing analyses of Africa's international relations. It also explores diverse ways of conceptualising ideology and making it a more viable tool for policy analysis.

The Royal Holloway Travel Grant made it possible for me to visit Ghana to gather these data that will be critical for my study. The grant covered my return ticket to Ghana and some aspects of internal travels in Ghana. I got to Ghana on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019. I began with a visit to the Kumasi Public Records and Archives Department (PRAAD) where I surveyed archives mainly on Gold Coast and Ashanti colonial relations; Ashanti's relationships with surrounding French colonies; and documents on epochal events such as the commemoration of the centenary of the bond of 1844.

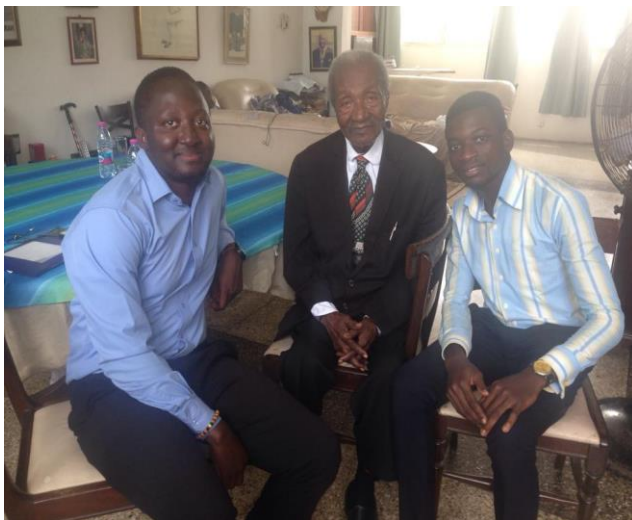
During the same period, I arranged for some elite interviews in Accra. Therefore, I moved to Accra to conduct elite interviews while continuing a survey of archives at the PRAAD Head office in Accra. Also, in search for archives and public/private documents, I frequently visited the University of Ghana Balme and African Studies Library, Ghana News Agency (GNA), and the Parliament house, all in Accra.

Intermittently, I secured and organised interviews with targeted respondents. The main challenge for this fieldwork has been the difficulty in scheduling elite interviews. Some were unwilling to talk while

others continue to reschedule. However, I conducted interviews with respondents related to the three administrations I am studying. One memorable interview was with a 91-year-old former diplomat (Ambassador E. M. Debrah) who is a forerunner to the establishment of Ghana's foreign service in the 1950s and is Ghana's first ambassador to the OAU (now

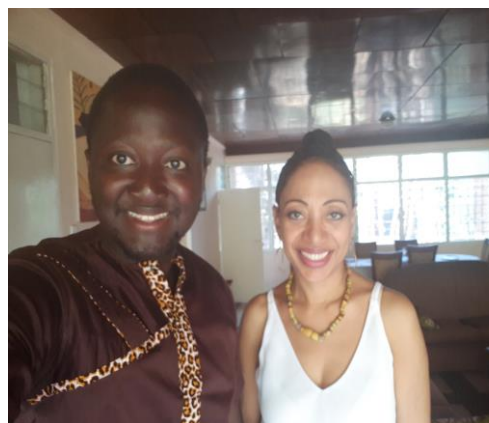


***PRAAD Kumasi Office***



***Picture taken after an interview with Ambassador E. M. Debrah***

AU). Eventually, I collected some vital information from the archives and the interviews I conducted with politicians, civil servants, experts and journalists. The data collected will not only shape and be beneficial to the conclusion of my doctoral thesis but also it introduced aspects of foreign policy making in Africa that I am willing to pursue further after my PhD. One



***Picture taken after an interview with Samia Nkrumah, the President of the Kwame Nkrumah Pan African Centre and daughter of Nkrumah.***

area is the role of First ladies whose 'unofficial' position came up, in some discussions with my respondents, as a vital driver of foreign policy.

The initial findings from this fieldwork will form an empirical basis for my intended paper presentation at the African Studies Association of Africa (ASAA) to be held at United States International University-Africa Nairobi, Kenya from 24-26 October 2019. My paper is titled ***Deconstructing the varieties of Nationalism as an ideology for African Agency in international relations: the case of Ghana.***

All these would not be have been possible without the generous support of the Royal Holloway University through the Royal Holloway Travel Award. I am profoundly grateful to the Royal Holloway travel award for making this fieldwork possible and in turn, offering a vital turning point for my PhD thesis.