African Authored Domestic Travel Writing and Identity: A Returnee Soldier’s Impressions of Colonial Life in Takoradi (Gold Coast)

Kwame Osei-Poku

Abstract
Employing close reading strategies, this article, analyses the issues regarding identity and ideology, within an interdisciplinary context in a travelogue by Moses Danquah ‘A Soldier Looks at Takoradi and is Perturbed,’ which was published in The West African Review in October, 1947. Moses Danquah was a returnee soldier from Burma, South East Asia, after serving with the Royal West African Frontier Forces in World War II. The focal points of this travelogue are the representations of the burgeoning urban space of Takoradi in the Gold Coast in the 1940s; the extensive importation of American culture, the lifestyles of the people, and the appeal of colonial military life. What is more essential to this article is a concern about how African travel writing, like Moses Danquah’s travel account, which have been consigned to archival crypts, can conceive notions about local identity, and contribute to an African ideological construction, while describing the details of adventures/travel in these coastal precincts. This article also highlights the silence that has engulfed the war stories and narratives of African soldiers who fought for the British Empire in South East Asia during World War II.

Keywords
Gold Coast, American popular culture, Hybridity, Urbanization, West African Frontier Forces
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Introduction

With the notable paucity of scholarship on African Authored travel narratives about Africa, especially during the colonial period, this article will concentrate on travel writing in the West African Review, as what is more essential to this article is a concern about how African travel writing might conceive notions about local identity, contribute to the ideological construction, and describe the details of adventures in the Gold Coast countryside or rural precincts. I suggest that a methodical perusal of the West African Review magazine travelogues of the pre-independence period (1930s-early 1950s), particularly the formation of ideologies and identities within the colonial state, suggests a way to re-imagine the centres and fringes produced and replicated by travel writing in general, which hitherto has mostly been focussed on Western or European authored travel writing. These Western authored travel writings always harped on the colonial-centre-(Metropole)-versus-periphery relationship to the detriment of outlying peripheries often represented in their travel
writing in the pre-colonial and colonial times. This methodical perusal of the travelogues in the *West African Review* magazine is adequately undertaken by engaging with the travel text in an interdisciplinary approach, and it becomes quite evident in the analyses of the travel text that there is a cross-hatching of history, anthropology, postcolonial studies etc. which contribute to the bringing to light the interpretations which is required by the travel text.

This article will focus on a travelogue which is titled: ‘A Soldier Looks at Takoradi and is Perturbed,’ published in *The West African Review* in October, 1947, and written by Moses Danquah, a returnee soldier from the Asian front of the Second World War. He was a soldier in the Royal West African Frontier Forces who were dispatched to fight the Japanese in South-East Asia, Burma. The interesting thing about this travelogue is that it is written about a locality in which the writer had at an earlier time transited to go to war in Asia. The changes that have occurred in that locality seems to leave an awestruck impression over the author as a returnee soldier, and as a result make his observations and impressions worth analysing within the purview of African authored travel writing.

During the pre-independence period (1930s and early 1950s) in colonial British West Africa, a minority of English-speaking intellectuals, either from the Gold Coast or other British crown colonies, published travelogues in the English-language news magazine, *The West African Review*. The *West African Review* magazine as well as other archived newspapers and news journals were some of the most widely circulated
news media in the Gold Coast during the stipulated period. These included a host of different newspapers and news journals such as: The Gold Coast Times, Gold Coast Aborigines, Gold Coast Chronicle, Gold Coast Independent, Gold Coast Nation, and The Ashanti Pioneer etc.; which were mostly inundated with political propaganda, commercial advertisements, news reports from other British West African colonies, and local announcements.

Some of the writers who published their travelogues in the West African Review essentially described their travels to the Gold Coast colony, a region that had been annexed, integrated, and expanded as at 1829 to 1901, by the British colonisers, bringing together a vast number of different ethnic groups and languages. The merits of these coastal/interior domestic journeys or travels are that it provides a mirror into the writers’ adventures to the rural and coastal areas as well as reveals their attempts to, as it were, interact with the ordinary people as well as cataloguing these travel experiences as a means of understanding themselves.

In addition, there was a second category of travelogues in the West African Review magazine which focused on journeys to Europe or the West, and were authored by Gold Coasters, Togolese, and Nigerians who had the opportunity to travel to the Great Britain and beyond. The writers who authored these travelogues were from particularly diverse persuasions. Whereas some were newspaper editors travelling on newspaper assignments, civil servants on training programmes and students on scholarship in the UK, others were returnee soldiers, teachers, as well as other newspaper

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writers and intellectuals. It is important to note that important figures from the Gold Coast, Nigeria and the general print culture of British West Africa were also engaged in the enterprise of travel writing. Examples of some of these important figures include Adelaide Casely-Hayford of Sierra Leone and Gold Coast, H. O. Davies, a renowned Nigerian lawyer, and Peter Abrahams, a South African journalist/novelist who travelled through British West Africa on assignment while exiled in England as a result of the unpopular discriminatory Apartheid system of South Africa.

Whereas some travel writers who travelled within the Gold Coast were particularly concerned with negotiating and interpreting complex relationships they forged in places farther inland into the hinterlands, others sought to educate readers of the significance of the intellectual, social and cultural revolution that was happening in the coastal towns and cities. These relationships were manifested in the daily interactions of the local people whose way of life tended to confuse people from the larger towns and cities with whom they felt they had little in common, mainly as a result of the influence of Eurocentric education. Quite interestingly, the subject of the idea of the Gold Coast as a nation was rarely a matter of ideological or intellectual discourse for these travel writers.

Life in the Harbour City and the Influence of the West

Before delving into the core of this travelogue, it is of real significance to highlight the experiences of African/West African soldiers and their mostly unacknowledged efforts in
World War II. John Morrow\textsuperscript{2} identifies that the narratives of African soldiers who were key to the victory of the Allied Forces in North Africa, some parts of Europe, and in South East Asia during the Second World War, have virtually been consigned to the annals of history. He then emphasises that, these soldiers shed their blood for the right to equal treatment under their respective colonial regimes, and later for the independence of their respective African nations from the colonial yoke.

In British West Africa, the Eighty-First and the Eighty-Second West Africa Divisions of Black Africans were formed by the British colonial government,\textsuperscript{3} and it was these soldiers who took part in the Burma (Myanmar) campaigns in South East Asia. It is important to note that these soldiers were young men in their prime who were conscripted to fight for the British Empire with promises of substantial monetary benefits. A promise which was reneged upon after the war, which caused a whole lot of upheaval within the several British colonies and thus reinforcing the movement for decolonisation and independence. Many of these young men who were conscripted and sent to Burma, returned to see immense changes in the socio-cultural landscapes, spaces, and behaviours of the towns and villages they left behind, and it's on such ‘returning’ occasion that the present travelogue puts in perspective: a returnee soldier’s homecoming gaze,


\textsuperscript{3} James Luto and John Grehan, Fighting with the Fourteenth Army in Burma: Original War Summaries of the Battle Against Japan 1943-1945 (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2013).
observations and experiences of the familiar places he left behind.

‘A Soldier Looks at Takoradi,’ as is indicative of this travelogue’s title, is a description of the life and the lifestyles of the people in the coastal harbour city of Takoradi in colonial Gold Coast, during the period which spans the end of the Second World War. Takoradi was to become a hotbed of industrial and economic activities, not only as a result of the war effort, but as a result of the disembarkation of returnee service men/soldiers who fought with the British in the war as the Royal West African Frontier Forces and the West African Regiment.

During the war, Takoradi played a significant role in the British war effort. As the starting point of the British trans-African supply line to Egypt that became officially known as the West African Reinforcement Route (WARR), Takoradi became one of the most important bases for Britain’s Royal Air Force (RAF). On September 5, 1940, the first consignment of a dozen Hurricane and Blenheim fighter aircrafts in enormous wooden crates arrived at Takoradi by boat from the United Kingdom, and like many more shipments to come, they were offloaded and then assembled locally to be made flightworthy for the flight to Cairo. It was a six-day journey that was undertaken in stages with several rest and refuelling stops that included Lagos, Nigeria; Khartoum, Sudan; and Luxor; Egypt. Nelson Gilboe, Royal Canadian Air Force Diary of 1940 to 1946 (Supplied by his friend Red Schofield, Flying Gators-Gainesville, FL)

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5 Nelson Gilboe, Royal Canadian Air Force Diary of 1940 to 1946 (Supplied by his friend Red Schofield, Flying Gators-Gainesville, FL)
Hurricane pilot, even describes the Takoradi assembly plant as cut out of the dense forest with monkeys\(^6\) playing in nearby trees. The first delivery flight to Cairo left Takoradi on September 20, 1940.

The point that Takoradi played a key role in World War II, is emphasized forcefully by Moses Danquah in his travelogue. On his return to the Gold Coast during the receding moments of the war, he describes Takoradi as being an industrial city in its inchoating stages before he shipped off to war.

So, this was Takoradi! I had known that embryonic microcosm of Gold Coast industrial life off and on since 1934. When I saw it again in 1942 the confident, sprouting city had been caught in the maelstrom of military activity, The Arcadian charm of its surrounding plains had been rudely broken by the raucous drones of squadrons of aeroplanes and the noise and bustle of the military camps which had sprung up like mushrooms all over the countryside.\(^7\)

Remarkably, even though Danquah’s return to the Gold Coast was at a time that the Second World War was climaxing in 1942,\(^8\) there is still, as at this time, the palpable evidence of substantial military activity and military infrastructure which

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\(^6\) To this date there are numerous monkeys of various species of modern-day Takoradi that still frolic in the trees of the Monkey Hill sanctuary about 500 metres from the Takoradi Harbour.

\(^7\) *West African Review* (October, 1947) p. 1161 (Henceforth, *WAR*).

\(^8\) 1942 is three years to the end of WWII when Germany had been defeated in North Africa El Alamein, Egypt and Japan had lost a critical battle in the South Pacific Midway Islands.
still populates a lot of the coastal areas in Takoradi as schools, naval/military depots, naval bases, and military officers’ mess halls.

Most importantly, in his travelogue, Danquah is practically re-evaluating the lifestyle of the people in Takoradi and how it had changed considerably over a short period of time; from the interval of the Gold Coast colony’s initial involvement in the Second World War to the announcement of victory by the allied forces in 1945. There are issues which direct attention on identity which is quite predominant in his travelogue. He mentions not only the change of the physical scenery of Takoradi, but also the ideological and attitudinal makeover of the people of Takoradi (both residents and migrants). For example, Danquah articulates his impression as follows:

The town, as I saw it on my return, had not changed much in its physical appearance, but it was soon evident that the people as a whole had undergone a transformation. The Takoradi of this generation has grown wiser in the material things of this life than its older and larger neighbours.⁹

Undoubtedly, industrialization and its concomitant features such as urbanization and popular culture, are the stimulating ideas that prompt people to either adapt or change their identities. Such adaptation is as a result of industrialization, materialism and the ‘Money Rules All’ ideals that had seeped deeply into the moral and cultural awareness of the people of Takoradi.

The ideals of reciprocity and a sense of community prescribe that the community offers the African man or

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woman the psychological and ultimate security as it gives its members both physical and ideological identity. The African mind-set, as popularly noted, perceives the community as a unit that remains as a long-lasting group entity, while the individuals, as persons, come and go. Some African writers tend to address the issue of reciprocity and sense of community in their works. For instance, in Ayi Kwei Armah’s *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) and *The Healers* (1967), he examines this theme of African communal living and reciprocity, ideals which seem not to exist anymore among the people of Takoradi in the travelogue. Danquah confirms this lack of reciprocity and a sense of community:

...for I soon discovered that though I was in the mood to bestow kindness, Takoradi was not prepared to do anything for me for love without money. Let me not be understood. I am not referring to the Government officials, the clerks of the banking and mercantile houses, the teachers and the many others who selflessly did their best to make life pleasant for us returning soldiers while we were there. I refer to the painted female vampires of the town, to its black-market racketeers, its army of shameless ‘pilots’ and parasitic gigolos, its swarms of clandestine peddlers of exorbitantly-priced and often spurious wares, who traded upon the credulity of a gullible and easy-going crowd of fighting men.10

This, seemingly sordid, description of the lifestyles of the people of Takoradi by Danquah, points to some of the deleterious effects of industrialization, urbanization, and materialism. Understandably, materialism and self-centeredness are acquired behaviours that are neither innate

10 *WAR* (October, 1947) p. 1161.
nor hereditary. They result from people’s faulty view of human life. A faulty view, in the case of Africa, which is largely propelled by colonialism and imperial capitalist ventures. It is a well-known fact that throughout history, some people view the world as a place which has to provide them with unlimited material things which Ayi Kwei Armah terms as the cargo mentality.\textsuperscript{11}

While it is important for every living human being to have access to material things which are fundamental to life, people should at the same time search for those moral and spiritual values such as reciprocity and a sense of community which make life worth living and gratifying. Furthermore, the embryonic problem of prostitution and male pimps in the urbanized space is another significant issue that is raised in the observations of Moses Danquah. Danquah observes the following: ‘…the painted female vampires of the town, [and] its army of shameless ‘pilots’ and parasitic gigolos.’\textsuperscript{12}

The increase in the rate of prostitutes and their male handlers or pimps in Takoradi, was largely seen as a deviation from age old cultural values of propriety and morality by some scholars and people in the Gold Coast. Prostitution became a lot more glaring in the emerging urbanized space of Takoradi mainly as a result of the construction of the Harbour, the resettlement of immigrant artisanal workers who were from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, The Ivory Coast, and Liberia; and the need to expand commerce as a result of migrant labour inflows. These ‘female vampires’ were often unknown to the indigenous people of Takoradi.

\textsuperscript{11}‘Cargo mentality’ is used by Ayi Kwei Armah in \textit{The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born} (Oxford: Heinemann, 1968).
\textsuperscript{12}\textit{WAR} (October, 1947) p. 1161.
Akyeampong, citing Busia, makes mention of the fact that, ‘the prostitutes were often outsiders with no kinship ties in the communities where they practiced their profession’ (157). Akyeampong again asserts that, ‘the sale of sexual services could secure migrant women their first, temporary place of residence.’ This assertion follows on the idea that the prostitutes who settled in Sekondi-Takoradi principally came from Cape Coast, Axim, with a significant contribution coming from Nigeria and Liberia. The migrants from Liberia were known as the Kru people and they became a major influence of the popular culture of the developing industrial rail and Harbour enclaves of Takoradi.

Many of the migrants who came to Takoradi, during the construction of the railway infrastructure and the Takoradi Harbour, were from Liberia and were known as the Kru. The Kru were the ethnic group who can be found along the south-eastern coastal areas of Liberia. They were mostly recognised for their prowess in seafaring and their strong resistance to capture by European enslavers during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. They were known for their ability to effortlessly navigate the seas. Their skills in both canoeing and surfing the strong ocean currents brought upon much recognition which later afforded them work on British merchant and warships in the 18th century. As a result of

16 Robin Dunn-Marcos et al., ‘Liberians: An Introduction to Their History Culture,’ in Culture Profile No. 19 (The Center for Applied Linguistics, April, 2005).
their exposure to work on several European, and subsequently American merchant ships and frigates, the Kru had an immense impact on the lifestyles of the people of Takoradi. The Kru had largely adapted to American popular culture, as a result of their long-held association with sailors from America and Europe. Not surprisingly, the Kru were the main source of transmission of American popular culture in the Gold Coast, beginning from Takoradi. The American Influence in the Gold Coast during the 1930s was a phenomenon that Moses Danquah observes when he starts going through his routines in Takoradi after his disembarkation at the Harbour.

Danquah’s perspectives and observations on the subject of American cultural influence on the people of Takoradi, and by extension the people of the Gold Coast, bring out one of the essential discussions in his travelogue. Danquah’s observation about American influence in Gold Coast youth culture is quite evident:

Throughout the three weeks we stayed in Takoradi one fact that constantly impressed me was the American influence upon its youth. Throughout the day and night, in the streets and in the lanes, swaggering, flashy-dressed gigolos could be seen escorting gilded beauties… Dressed in typical Wild West Style, in baggy-seated, hair-fringed cowboy trousers and flamboyant-coloured, bold checked shirts, with wide-brim sombreros hanging precariously at the backs of their heads, and with loud-coloured kerchiefs round their necks, you could see them ‘piloting’ sailors and other foreign visitors, chatting with them in the latest American slang, sharing with them their beer, their cigarettes and…

17 *WAR* (October, 1947) p. 1161
The infusion of American popular culture and lifestyles in the Gold Coast, especially Takoradi (the main harbour town), during the period of the Second World War, is an indisputable fact. This infusion of American popular culture was mainly necessitated by the start of operations of the Takoradi Harbour in 1928, which saw the massive inflow of American sailors and American commodities into the Gold Coast as well as the influx of Kru ship and dock workers as stated initially in the discussion. This situation stimulated the assimilation of American slang English language among the local people of Takoradi, especially the people who had the opportunity to work in some of the American ships as civilian seamen and ship dock workers.\(^\text{18}\)

By and large, the mass importation of American popular culture into the Gold Coast was not solely instigated by the American seamen, but also by artefacts of American culture such as music and film (Hollywood Wild West cowboy films). The people of the Gold Coast and their fascination with American Wild West films is duly represented in the 1965 novel of Cameron Duodu; *The Gab Boys*, which is a fictional recollection of the protagonist’s childhood and adolescent memories of life in the Gold Coast before and during the early stages of independence.

Danquah once again observes another aspect of the American legacy to Takoradi as he describes a scene at a café where he had gone in order to drink some beer:

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\(^{18}\) To this date, Takoradi is popularly known for its Americanized seamen and their slang English language that is parodied in most popular Ghanaian music and movies.
For its size, Takoradi has a plethora of restaurants, bars and hotels...Eager to slake my thirst on the good old ‘Club’ beer I had missed for so many months, I visited just such a café with a friend... Through a loudspeaker, a gramophone blared forth floods of music. As we sat down to our drinks, a party of young boys took their places in the cone of light in the doorway, quietly fitted beer bottle grip-caps between their toes and, without warning, tapped away with a rhythm and gusto which a Fred Astaire\(^{19}\) might have envied\(^{20}\)

The dance moves exhibited by these young boys per the description of Danquah, reflected the vaudeville\(^{21}\) dance and comedy films that were in existence during the period that Danquah writes his travelogue. Certainly, these young boys may have watched and incorporated these dance moves from the cinema and the concert party tradition of the Gold Coast, which had begun a decade earlier. Under these circumstances, there is clear indication of the American popular culture influence on the people of Takoradi. It is important to note that the development and influence of American popular culture began in the late 19\(^{th}\) century and increased greatly in the twentieth century due to advancement in technology,

\(^{19}\) Fred Astaire, original name Frederick Austerlitz (born May 10, 1899, Omaha, Nebraska, U.S.—died June 22, 1987, Los Angeles, California) American dancer of stage and motion pictures who is best known for a number of highly successful musical comedy films in which he starred with Ginger Rogers. He is regarded by many as the greatest American popular-music dancer of all time. See, Michael Freedland, *Fred Astaire: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1976).

\(^{20}\) *WAR* (October, 1947) p. 1161.

\(^{21}\) Vaudeville is a theatrical genre of variety entertainment. It was especially popular in the United States and Canada from the early 1880s until the early 1930s. See, Frank Cullen, Hackman, Florence; McNeil, Donald, ‘Vaudeville History,’ in *Vaudeville, Old & New: An Encyclopedia of Variety Performers in America.* (London: Routledge, October 2006) pp. xi–xxxii.
especially the media. American popular culture largely comprises the attitudes and perspectives shared by the majority of United States citizens. These attitudes and perspectives are fueled by mass media outlets such as television and films, sports, music, and fashion.

Undoubtedly though, the issue of American and Kru cultural influence on the people of Takoradi all combine to affect the identity of the people. Under such circumstances, it would be noticed that a form of multiculturalism is occurring which inadvertently may result or has resulted in the birth of a new cultural form among the people of Takoradi. This idea of multiculturalism, however, may reflect on the ideas of Homi K. Bhabha’s cultural hybridization, which posits that there is always an unequal position of power within which hybridity is created. Thus, it is very difficult, for instance, for an African who has been exposed to the inflexible hegemonic tutelage of British rule, to adopt behaviours or cultural ideals from the British without suppressing his or her own way of being or self/group identity. Cultural hybridity within a colonialized space, such as the events happening in Takoradi during the pre-independence period, will always present a situation where there is strong pressure to quickly acculturate to the norms of the influential and hegemonic culture, which sometimes entails check-mating a thick accent, assimilating a new religion, or changing one’s dress styles or habits in order to fit in or take advantage of economic opportunities.

As a returnee soldier, one would expect Moses Danquah either to be disenchanted with the war, or to be full of nationalistic verve in his travelogue of Takoradi. On the

contrary, although Danquah’s travelogue seems to be engaging with the European tradition of travel writing, he does not engage in ‘writing back’ to the tradition. Danquah is more preoccupied with what Jones (2014) describes as local and social networks, as well as the description of local/town histories.23 Because he is not deliberately engaged in ‘writing back’ to challenge the preconceived notions and negative stereotypes about Africans, and is writing during the colonial period and within a colonial context, Danquah’s travelogue could best be described as a ‘Paracolonial’24 text—a text that exists within the scope of colonial rule and interact with the colonial situation ‘as a consequence of the British presence but not as its direct product.’25

On account of such local/town histories, Danquah, after raising issues about the American influence on the lifestyles of the people of Takoradi, subsequently observes and describes one other major aspect of the lives of the people of Takoradi which is still as important as it was in the 1940s, as he recounts ‘a much-publicized football match between teams rejoicing in the titles of the ‘Sekondi Eleven Wise’ and the ‘Cape Coast Mysterious Ebusua Dwarfs.’ These two teams were the top football clubs that represented Sekondi-Takoradi and Cape Coast respectively. Football had become the most popular sport in the Gold Coast, since its inception.

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in Cape Coast in 1903.\textsuperscript{26} With the construction of the railway lines earlier in Sekondi and later in Takoradi during the construction of the Harbour, football life in the Sekondi-Takoradi area began as most of the very good players were employees of the railway workshops. These players developed over time and consequently a dominant non-departmental team, Eleven Wise was formed in 1919,\textsuperscript{27} and this marked the foundation of soccer growth in the Sekondi-Takoradi area.

The observations of Danquah about football in Takoradi, had to do with two main issues. First, the speed of the football game, and second, the role of juju in football. On the issue of speed, Danquah observes that ‘speed is the main characteristic of African soccer\textsuperscript{28} and that was how they (African Soldiers) were able to dictate the pace of the game when they were in the ‘East,’ although speed could not compensate for precision of play:

I was anxious to see this match because both teams had a reputation for skill and sportsmanship. The game, which ended in a draw of one goal each, was contested at high speed throughout. Speed is the main characteristic of African soccer. It was always our trump card in the East, we were almost invariably able to force the pace of the game to such an extent that our opponents were practically immobilized towards the closing stages. In doing so, however, one big fault was obvious — a fault which frequently came in for friendly criticism from sports observers. Commenting on the crack West African team (the Jhansi Bombers) tour in Bombay, during which they won

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{27} \textit{Ibid}.
\bibitem{28} \textit{WAR} (October 1947) p. 1162.
\end{thebibliography}
three out of the four matches played, a correspondent writing in the magazine *Off the Record*, asked: ‘Are they’ meaning the West Africans, of course, ‘sacrificing accuracy for speed? It is a thought worth contemplating for those who are responsible for their training’.

It can be noticed from this extract that ideology in the African travelogue does not only refer to political, economic, or cultural ideologies per se, but it may also relate to sporting and recreational activities as well. Interestingly, in contemporary Ghana, the debate about sacrificing speed for accuracy in the game of football is still ongoing. This continuous debate relates to the effectiveness of the Ghana national team (The Black Stars) and their persistent failure to win football accolades in international tournaments. This constant failure to win international tournaments has been attributed to a myriad of reasons which includes showboating football, bad coaches, and inaccuracy on the part of the players in scoring goals.

On the issue of juju in the football game which he makes mention of, Danquah merely makes a tangential statement to the effect that he wishes he could run a football club, have his players wear boots like the ‘Jhansi Bombers’ wore when they were touring Bombay, take them to tour the whole world, and for the players not to be able to recall anything that has to do with juju:

If I had a few thousand pounds to play with I would run a football club, train the players to look on speed as a handmaid and not the mistress of accuracy, make them play in

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29 *WAR* (October 1947) p. 1162.
boots as the Bombers did in India, let them forget all about juju, and send them out into the world…30

The phenomenon of juju is and has always been a major concern in African football. Danquah’s mention of this phenomenon, although tangential to his major observations, gives credence to the fact that the use of juju in soccer games was thriving, and as such was a worry to most people as it is now in 21st century Ghana. Many names have been attributed to this phenomenon known as juju. Some people refer to it as gris-gris, witchcraft, voodoo, magic, ‘ways and means’ or ‘African electronics,’ but it all settles down to this singular phenomenon.

The occurrence of this juju in football may be recognized in the following ways: for instance, when football players wear white handkerchiefs, necklaces and other talismans; players refusing to change in the dressing room; players refusing to shake the opponent’s hand; the goalkeeper hiding something inside his goalpost; football team fans sleeping over at the stadium a night before the game; etc. Pannenborg31 describes juju as a belief system whereby specialists use plants, herbs, fetishes, animals, spirits and rituals to attain certain goals.32 Juju may appear in many forms. Sometimes a concoction in a folded paper or a carefully folded white handkerchief—enclosing for instance the head of a cat, pins and needles, and/or a piece of paper

30 WAR (October 1947) p. 1162.
with the names of the rival team players—may be buried on the field, within the goal post, or near the opponent dugout in the stadium. There are times that spirits too may appear on the football field in the transmogrified forms of a dove, a mouse/rat, or frogs to disrupt play.

In a pre-publication of his PhD research project, which deals with money, politics, and power in African football, 33 Arnold Pannenborg 34 observes:

Africans are deeply religious. Most of them are either Christian or Muslim and it is common to see players pray before the start of the match. There is also a widespread belief in witchcraft, sorcery and magic. This so-called juju or muti is widely used in football matches. Whoever wants to set up a football-related project should be aware of these spiritual practices.

Although the assertion by Pannenborg about Africans being mostly Christian or Muslim may not be entirely accurate, it will be apt to state that ‘juju’ as a term is a misrepresentation of African beliefs and practices from the perspective of Eurocentric observers. Interestingly, the indigenous African religious rites and rituals are still being resorted to by these same devout Christian and Muslim adherents for various useful or functional reasons. Pannenborg 35, again, asserts that ‘The fact is that the majority of football teams are in one way or the other involved in these spiritual practices.’ Many football teams in Africa, have once or on several times in their

33 A. Pannenborg, Football in Africa: Observations about political, financial, cultural and religious influences (NCDO Publication Series Sport & Development, December 2010).
34 Ibid, p. 33.
existence probably dabbled with such cultic measures in order to win their matches. Undoubtedly, whether the phenomenon is mere perception or reality, juju pervades most sporting competitions as far back as the beginnings of football in the Gold Coast, as well as these recent times, to the extent that even primary school pupils and junior high, up to senior high school students seem to have some sort of facilitation in engaging with the phenomenon during their schools’ sports competition.

On a penultimate note, Danquah’s observations and descriptions concerning football and the society brings him to point of self-recognition of his circumstances as a returnee/ex-soldier who was going to battle the reality of life in colonized Gold Coast. After fantasizing about owning a football team, he simply dismisses the thought by stating that: ‘…but there is nothing astronomical about a soldier’s gratuity, so, well—till some day!’36 From this point, he begins to contemplate the ‘ghoulish, menacing and disturbing’37 actuality of his surroundings.

In spite of the many forms of moral and economic corruption of Takoradi, there could not have been a better place for the release of the returning soldier. That statement may appear contradictory, but it is nevertheless true, for, in spite of the dangers, sufferings and discomforts of army life, the average soldier is a dreamer, living his service days in a sort of lotus-land with his dream-crammed head resting blissfully in the clouds. And perhaps it is good that it is so, for now that I come to think of it, I cannot see how he could have endured so much without at times escaping

36 WCAR (October, 1947) p. 1162.
37 Ibid.
from the reality all around, so often ghoulish, menacing and disturbing.\textsuperscript{38}

When the true realisation of how difficult things are in the Gold Coast begin to sink into the consciousness of Danquah, he increasingly becomes disillusioned about the preconceived ideas regarding the returnee soldier and his heroic status in society — an idea which was jettisoned during and after the First World War. This foreboding sensation notwithstanding, Takoradi’s cosmopolitan nature, and its role as a transit point for discharging the returnee soldiers, plays a critical role in moderating or dousing the zealous expectations of these returnee soldiers, as Danquah aptly recounts:

Yes—Takoradi did its job. It brought us back from the clouds and set us down on the firm ground. It brought us back from idealism to reality. For the dreams we dreamt—dreams of the ‘land of the yellow metals,’ dreams of employers embracing us, begging their conquering heroes to enter into their business paradises; dreams of fabulous gratuities that would never give out—all those dreams were rudely shattered on the granite rocks of Takoradi reality. For three weeks this city of hard bitter facts taught us our lessons and gave us a foretaste of the new world across whose threshold we were just being ushered.\textsuperscript{39}

A sense of unexpectedness characterized the new world for the returnee soldier. Their circumstances were not clear-cut, as they had to jettison their regimental life for the laxer life of civilians. Remarkably, the people of Takoradi and the Gold Coast in general were not so fascinated about the

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{WAR} (October, 1947) p. 1162.
\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Ibid.}
returnee soldiers and their reception towards the ex-service men was ultimately detached. Danquah discovers this nonchalance towards returnee servicemen when he and some of his companions decide to journey into other towns and villages along the coast.

I journeyed with a party of fellow ex-servicemen going to villages and towns along the coast. As we passed through Sekondi I noticed with, I must confess, a pang of disappointment, that news and sight of soldiers had palled on the imagination of the inhabitants. We had expected to find along the way from Sekondi excited crowds of townsfolk and villagers running out from their houses, lining the streets and generally, making a Roman holiday. But we saw nothing of the sort...It required little imagination to realize that the people of this country were bored stiff with the war and its heroes.\(^4^0\)

What was the returnee serviceman to aspire to? How was he going to influence his society? Since the people they thought they were fighting to protect did not seem to recognize their achievement. This new life was going to be difficult times for the returnee soldiers, and Danquah again describes his sense of the ominous:

For the reflective, days of orgy were followed by nights of contemplation and appraisal. Except among the foolish, the old traditional, carefree life of soldiery gave way to one of caution and thought.\(^4^1\)

\(^4^0\) *WAR* (October, 1947) p. 1162.
\(^4^1\) *Ibid.*
He completes the description of his ominous feeling stylistically by quoting from Shakespeare’s *Henry V* (act 2, scene 3): ‘Let senses rule; the world is pitch and pay; Trust none; for oaths are straws, men’s faiths are wafer cakes… Therefore, caveto be thy counsellor.’ There is a popular but astute anecdote that is attributed to Dr. Johnson (Samuel Johnson), the famous eighteenth century English poet, literary critic, essayist, and moralist; which states that ‘The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality and instead of thinking how things may be to see them as they are.’

Thus, Moses Danquah’s high expectations are checkmated by the reality of his ability to travel through Takoradi.

Indeed ‘oaths are straws,’ as a year after the publication of Moses Danquah’s travelogue in the *West African Review*, and about six years after his repatriation from Burma, some unarmed ex-service men who were conscripts of the Gold Coast Regiment of the Royal West African Frontier Forces, on 28th February 1948 in Accra, marched on the seat of the colonial government at the Christianborg Castle, to petition the governor of the Gold Coast requesting the disbursement of promised pensions and other compensations, for their gallant efforts during the World War II, which had not been paid to them since their discharge from the military service after the war. It is a well-known fact that these ex-service men were shot at and prevented from presenting their petition to the governor. The shooting and subsequent deaths of three ex-service men and injuries to sixty other ex-service

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men sparked the famous 1948 riots\textsuperscript{44} of Accra led by key traditional rulers of Accra and supported by the key political figures of the Gold Coast.

Finally, one key issue which keeps coming up throughout Danquah’s travelogue was the idea that military life and the war was all pleasurable and full of adventure. He does not, even for once, describe the effects of the war on his person or psychology in relation to his repatriation from the ‘East’ and eventual disembarkation in Takoradi. His sentiment towards his retirement from a soldier’s life, conveys palpable outlooks of positive reminiscence and nostalgia, which follows the very popular statement that ‘old soldiers never die, they just fade away’.\textsuperscript{45}

I could hardly believe my senses. Never again the regimental bugle; never again the Sergeant Major’s whistle. No more parades. No more fatigues. No more officers to harass my life. No more dams. No more curses, imprecations or foul language. But, for some inexplicable reason, I felt as I stretched myself on my unaccustomed soft bed, afraid. Afraid even to step out on to the verandah, into the yard, into the street, and into the world. The old faithful comrades had gone; the blustering, tea-quaffing, blundering but protecting officer had also gone. The Army had withdrawn its maternal wings from over me.\textsuperscript{46}

It is often said that being in the military is not a job or a career, but it is a way of life. It is, thus, expected that the changeover to civilian hood will not be an easy one, even


\textsuperscript{45} This statement was made by General Douglas MacArthur on April 19, 1951, as part of a high-profile ‘farewell address’ to a joint meeting of both houses of Congress of the United States of America.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{WAR} (October, 1947) p. 1162.
under the best of circumstances. Transitions are difficult in general as can be attested by Danquah’s expression of reminiscence and nostalgia for the army. However, since his travelogue of Takoradi does not seem to communicate any traumatic experience of Burma as a result of World War II, it can be said, and quite obviously so, that he may have chosen to keep silent about his traumatic experiences to rather focus on the issues concerning Takoradi and the enticement of cosmopolitanism and growing urbanization.

Danquah inscribes the sprawling harbour city of Takoradi in the Gold Coast as a colonized space that represents the reality of the colonized subjects in diverse aspects of their lives. It is has emerged clearly from the facts of Danquah’s travelogue that the colonized Africans of the then Gold Coast saw a substantial influx of foreign cultural influences of which the people had to assimilate in order to fit in with the complexities western cultural hegemony. All the same, the obvious fault of this travelogue which is the non-personalisation of the narrative with respect to the concealment of bad experiences in the military during the Second World War, is also the strength of this travelogue, as this enables Danquah to highlight the various aspect of life in Takoradi during the stated period.

Danquah’s travelogue about Takoradi does not only serve as a sociohistorical material for the pre-independence period of the Gold Coast, but it also draws attention to prospective research into the traumatic experiences of African ex-servicemen in WWII, and how their distressing experiences may have eluded focus in their personal narratives or travelogues, and the general reportage of the war itself.