


FEATURED REVIEWS

Ray Kea and the Historians of the Gold Coast: Debates Over Continuity and Rupture in African and African Diaspora Atlantic Histories

Harry N. K. Odamtten 

Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, United States

Ray A. Kea, *A Cultural and Social History of Ghana from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century: The Gold Coast in the Age of Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 2 vols. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012. Pp. 686. \$199.95, hardcover (ISBN: 0773439102); \$99.95, paperback (ISBN: 0779904834).

Robert Hanserd, *Identity, Spirit and Freedom in the Atlantic World: The Gold Coast and the African Diaspora*. New York: Routledge, 2019. Pp. 232. \$120.00, hardcover (ISBN: 9781138104099); \$52.95, paperback (ISBN: 97803677860380); \$47.65, ebook (ISBN: 9781315102344).

Kwasi Konadu, *Akan Pioneers: African Histories, Diasporic Experiences*. Brooklyn, NY: Diasporic Africa Press, 2018. Pp. 336. \$19.99, paperback (ISBN: 9781937306663).

Walter C. Rucker, *Gold Coast Diasporas: Identity, Culture, and Power*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. Pp. 326. \$55.00, hardcover (ISBN: 9780253016942); \$9.99, ebook (ISBN: 9780253017017).

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The central role of Gold Coast societies, ports, and cities in the emerging Atlantic circuit is critical to understanding the history of the Atlantic world. The study of the causes and effects of Gold Coast societies' transition from African polities and economies to transatlantic entrepôts and trading emporiums and their subsequent impact on the Americas has been the hallmark of Ray Kea's scholarship. Since the beginning of his career, Kea has been a significant contributor to the study of the African Atlantic, and the field's various debates and disciplinary evolutions. While many scholars of the Gold Coast recognize Kea's work as foundational to scholarship on the Gold Coast, engagement with his work has not been rigorous. Kea is often cited in bibliographies and aspects of his work have served as benchmarks for other forays into Gold Coast histories. However, there is a need to go beyond an appreciation for Kea as a trailblazer, passing reference of his scholarship, and bibliographic citation of his work to a more thorough and consistent discourse with his major ideas and propositions. Kea has been, for example, adept at integrating innovations and ideas in various disciplinary arenas. He dexterously applies Marxist and postmodernist theories, diverse historiographies of the Atlantic world, and conceptual tools to traditional archival and oral historical data in his analyses of Gold Coast and diasporic societies. This review essay argues for Kea's importance and the need for a deeper engagement with his work in the field by putting his work into conversation with both classic Atlantic historiographies and recent scholarship that has built off Kea's.

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The essay is occasioned by Robert Hanserd's recent publication, *Identity, Spirit and Freedom in the Atlantic World: The Gold Coast and the African Diaspora* (2019), as well as two additional studies, Kwasi Konadu's *Akan Pioneers: African Histories, Diasporic Experiences* (2018) and *Gold Coast Diasporas: Identity, Culture, and Power* (2015) by Walter Rucker. All of these studies highlight the significance of the Gold Coast to the making of the Atlantic world, its history, commodities, trade in enslaved Africans, and exchange of cultures and ideas. Significantly, *Identity, Spirit and Freedom* also takes methodological and thematic inspiration from Kea's work on both the Gold Coast and the African Atlantic Diaspora, including both Kea's biographical profiles — more on this below — and his careful explication of Gold Coast cosmologies, which collectively make it possible to recover subaltern consciousness in the early modern Atlantic world.

In the last several decades, the study of Africa in the United States has evolved and expanded with histories that connect continental processes and the African Atlantic Diaspora. This expansion stemmed partially from crucial debates within the American academy, including the E. Franklin Frazier and Melville Herskovits debate on African cultural continuities and discontinuities in the Americas. Also significant was Sidney Mintz and Richard Price's *The Birth of African-American Culture*, which insisted on the need to focus on processes and sociohistorical contexts in the making of African diasporic cultures on both sides of the Atlantic.¹ Hanserd's work integrates Atlantic, African Diaspora, and Gold Coast historiographies. This amalgamation is immediately evident in the book title, which includes "Atlantic World," the "Gold Coast," and the "African Diaspora." Kea was the forerunner when it came to connecting these three distinct geographies into one analytical frame.

Kea is a tricontinentially trained scholar: a Howard University history graduate with postgraduate training at the University of Copenhagen, an M.A. from the University of Ghana, and a Ph.D. from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. In his most recent book, *A Cultural and Social History of Ghana* (2012), Kea continues to develop concepts that advance the study of African communities within the context of the vast Atlantic. One of these ideas includes his change from "coastal towns" to "sea-towns." The change in terminology represents Kea's ongoing efforts to examine the urbane societies on the West African Atlantic littoral through the idea of a "World Port" or entrepot. The shift to sea-towns denotes Kea's privileging of Gold Coast conceptualizations of the Atlantic. The term is literally and conceptually derived from *ɲshonaa manji*, a Gã-Adangbe term. It encompasses the nature of the sea-towns' high culture and urbanism. Kea elaborates on the sea-town's spatial nature and historical ontology as connected with an Atlantic web of African coastal and inland societies and an international trading network. The emphasis on Gold Coast residents' concepts and experiences has been a hallmark of Kea's work since his first publication.² He began his career working alongside colleagues in Ghana who were exploring local histories that had long been obscured by colonialism and the slave trade. Many of Kea's colleagues, such as K. Y. Daaku, in *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast* (1970), focused on the Gold Coast as a cultural region, which shaped the nature of emergent research in West Africa initiated from anthropological studies.³ While continuing to spend significant time in Ghana and seeking to ensure that cosmologies of Gold Coast societies, as well as African languages and oral histories,

¹Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

²Ray Kea, "Ashanti-Danish Relations, 1780–1831" (M.A. thesis, University of Ghana, Legon, 1967); Ray Kea, "Akwamu-Anglo Relations c. 1750–1813," *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana* 10 (1969): 29–63; Ray Kea, "When I Die I Shall Return to My Own Land: An 'Amina' Slave Rebellion in the Danish West Indies, 1733–1734," in *The Cloth of Many Colored Silks: Papers in Honor of Ivor Wilks*, eds. John Hunwick and Nancy Lawler (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 159–93.

³For more on cultural areas/regions, Africa, and anthropology, see Melville Herskovits, "A Preliminary Consideration of the Culture Areas of Africa," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 3, no. 1 (1930): 59–77.

remained critical companions and complements to his archival work, Kea also used Scandinavian and other Western archives.⁴

Kea, an African American, then expanded his research beyond his Ghanaian colleagues and other peers by focusing on the activities of enslaved Africans of Gold Coast origins in the Americas. Kea's innovations have since proved essential, as demonstrated by the recent turn to African cultural regions and a focus on transatlantic ethnicities and ethnic diasporas within transatlantic studies.⁵ Beyond demonstrating the primacy of Africa in African diasporic and Black Atlantic histories, Kea also demonstrated the interconnectedness of West Africa and Scandinavian history, first in "When I Die I Shall Return to My Own Land: An 'Amina' Slave Rebellion in the Danish West Indies, 1733–1734" (1996) and later "Crossroads and Exchanges in the Scandinavian Atlantic and Atlantic West Africa: Framing Texts of Eighteenth-Century African Christians" (2019).⁶ These articles published at different periods show Kea's consistent engagement with themes in his earlier scholarship. Thus, Kea marries multiple geographies with enviable methodological aptitude. In *A Cultural and Social History*, Kea employs biographical profiles to illuminate Gold Coast cosmologies, social relations, and Atlantic encounters. His is not simply a life history approach that emphasizes an individual's subjective experiences. Instead, as the phrase "social and cultural" in the title suggests, Kea utilizes an approach that goes beyond subjective experiences to highlight the individual's interpretation of society in relation to objective social conditions or values. Through this approach Kea adds analytical value to the life history archive (diaries, oral histories and traditions, letters) by explicating how individual lives were shaped by the social structures and processes that produced commercial linkages, circulation, accumulation, and dispossession of commodities, ideas, and people in Gold Coast sea-towns.

When surveying new research, Kea's influence is palpable. Hanserd's *Identity, Spirit, and Freedom* utilizes Kea's discussion of urbanization among and between the urban spaces of Akan, Gãmei, and Adãnme on the Gold Coast to frame his discussion of broader Afro-Atlantic Gold Coast identities (5–6, 29, 180). Konadu relies on Kea's *Settlements, Trade, and Politics* and his work on the Danish West Indies to understand the social upheavals on the Gold Coast and Gold Coast influences in the Danish West Indies, respectively (65, 99). Meanwhile, Rucker makes extensive use of concepts and interpretations from Kea's publications, especially Kea's work on state formation and banditry. Rucker explains Gold Coast political geographies by relying on Kea's definition of state formation. He also utilizes Kea's notation of the development of a "commoner consciousness" among the free but poor populace, as well as his analyses of the social imaginaries of different individuals who transitioned from being "politically prominent ruler(s) to a socially marginal bandit."⁷ Rucker does this as he narrates the events of the Amina slave rebellion on

⁴For some of Kea's experience in the European Archives see for example, Ray Kea, "A Note on the Town Archives of Amsterdam: The Notarial Records," *History in Africa* 7 (1980): 355–57.

⁵See Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Paul Lovejoy and David Trotman, eds., *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora* (London: Continuum, 2003); Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). For specific ethnic regions see Matt Childs and Toyin Falola, eds., *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Carolyn A. Brown and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Repercussions of the Atlantic Slave Trade: the Interior of the Bight of Biafra and the African Diaspora* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2011); Toyin Falola and Raphael Chijioke Njoku, eds., *Igbo in the Atlantic World: African Origins and Diasporic Destinations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016).

⁶Kea, "When I Die;" Ray Kea, "Crossroads and Exchanges in the Scandinavian Atlantic and Atlantic West Africa: Framing Texts of Eighteenth-Century African Christians," *Itinerario* 43, no. 2 (2019): 262–82. See also Ray Kea, "The Local and the Global: Historiographical Reflections on West Africa in the Atlantic Age," in *Power and Landscape in Atlantic West Africa: Archaeological Perspectives*, eds. J. Cameron Monroe and Akinwumi Ogundiran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 339–75.

⁷Ray A. Kea, *A Cultural and Social History of the Gold Coast (17th-18th Centuries)* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2012), 4.

the Danish West Indies island of St. Thomas, and the role of a Gold Coast elite, King June/Jama, who was transformed from a royal on the Gold Coast into an enslaved person in the Danish West Indies (37–8, 94, 148–50, 251, 290).

Kea's *A Cultural and Social History of Ghana* is a two volume, nearly-700-page work in tiny type-face. It is also a dense read, not easily accessible to those unfamiliar with Marxist analysis, Foucauldian theories, and other terms and lexicons in philosophy, postcolonial studies, and other specialized fields of knowledge. Konadu, Rucker, and Hanserd's books are easier reads, although no less complex, and reading them with Kea's masterwork demonstrates his importance for the field. Indeed, Kea initiated important discussions of argument, including on vital questions of scope, units of analysis, and theories.

Walter Rucker's *Gold Coast Diasporas* covers the 1680s to the 1760s, focusing on Gold Coast-derived "Coromantee" and "Amina" Atlantic identities. Rucker makes what he argues is an important distinction between these terms as referencing geographic places of origins and as ethnic identifiers. He then goes on to emphasize that encounters between Gold Coast peoples did not first occur in the Americas but in West Africa. Rucker emphasizes this point because, while several Gold Coast communities were linked by geography, culture, and language in the Gold Coast, for him, their collective identity in the Americas was more attributable to their collective experiences of capture, transportation, and enslavement in the Americas. He subsequently argues that Amina and Coromantee should be understood as "neo-African" (new African identities formed in the Americas), a point in a long cultural continuum of Gold Coast derived cosmologies (124–5) that Kea previously engaged with in "When I Die." Rucker employs an analytical arc that begins in the Gold Coast and ends in the formation of neo-African identities in the British Caribbean. This arc integrates various historiographical positions and camps in Black Atlantic literature that either emphasize the African past or center the North Atlantic experience. Rucker's approach therefore encompasses Gold Coast pasts, the trauma of the middle passage and social death, enslavement, and social resurrection through the exigencies of the lives the enslaved led in Atlantic plantation societies.

What sets Rucker's scholarship apart from the other scholarship considered in this review are matters of analytical and methodological emphasis. While all the historians considered here would agree that Gold Coast pasts were constructive to the emergence of neo-Gold Coast identities in the Americas, Rucker stresses that these Gold Coast pasts must be examined to avoid "monolithic and monolingual ethnic formations and modern Western Anthropological constructions," the so-called tribal approach (11, 13). Rucker's approach is appropriate, even if this argument works largely by making explicit assumptions which were implicit in the polycultural and multilingual scholarship of Kea and Hanserd. Indeed, their texts have thick descriptions of Gã, Guan, Ewé, and Akan languages, cultures, and histories. For this reason, it is not surprising that Konadu is the scholar whose work comes in for direct criticism by Rucker, who charges that Konadu's description of a "composite" Akan culture centers the Akan in the Gold Coast at the expense of other collectivities. Konadu's book does indeed focus on Akan speakers and their influence on the region, and while the work could indeed have been more expansive if its stated focus was Gold Coast ethnic formations or an elucidation of the Gold Coast as a cultural region comprising multiple ethnocultural entities, its argument is not positioned to exclude other ethnicities. Ultimately, the scholars' various approaches show that it is historiographically and theoretically defensible to write about an ethnic-African Diaspora like the Gã, Igbo, and Yoruba Diasporas, as Konadu has done with the Akan; in the same way, it is intellectually sound to conceptualize and engage with African Atlantic societies from a cultural regions perspective, as Rucker demonstrates with the Gold Coast Diaspora.

Linked to this question of the wheres and whens in processes of collective identity formation, are disagreements about the primacy of experiences of the Middle Passage and enslavement. Rucker expands on Kea's reconstruction of the rebels' Gold Coast leadership backgrounds by employing

the concepts of social death, commoner consciousness, social resurrection, and social immortality. Rucker argues that those people Kea considered politically prominent figures, socially marginal bandits, or commoners all experienced social death when they became engulfed in the throes of the transatlantic slave trade through conquest or capture. Although Rucker recognizes the contested nature of social death in the historiography, he sees social death like his interlocutor, Vincent Brown, who reinterprets social death as the dearth of sociocultural inheritance, and not as an actual state of being (10–12).⁸ This move is problematic because even if social death is metaphorical, it is still inconsistent with enslaved Africans' agency, knowledge, and ability to resist, create anew, or recreate new social relationships rooted in tangible epistemologies of history and culture. I take the position of James Sweet: "Slaves might be pushed to the precipice of social death. But the strands of social belonging were always there to seize and claim one's personhood. Few let these opportunities pass."⁹ Both commoners and elites in Rucker's text demonstrate this striving by the enslaved for wholeness. Nonetheless, it appears that despite these limitations, Rucker must use social death in order to get to social resurrection and bolster his argument for the newness of neo-African identity. When it comes to prominent figures, Rucker engages the much-critiqued notion of social death by arguing for its social reality in the Americas, but then somewhat contradictorily employs the notion of social resurrection in the Atlantic world.

This tension in Rucker's argument leads him to sometimes lean into and other times qualify arguments offered by Kea and Konadu. In building on Kea's engagement with the socially marginalized, Rucker argues that the availability of Gold Coast iconographies and symbols of power enabled these commoners to resurrect Gold Coast ideologies even as they created new Atlantic identities and cultures. Rucker opines that in the Americas both groups sought social resurrection; political elites like the eighteenth-century figure King June attempted to restore Gold Coast hierarchies in the Americas. Rucker, however, sees Kea's commoners as being guided by a different democratic and egalitarian ethic. Thus while Rucker appears to extend Kea's use of commoners in his earlier work, both Konadu and Kea would problematize Rucker's specific use of the term. Without dismissing its Marxist analytical thrust, Kea's use of commoner is meant as a systematic explication of the ethea of Gold Coast social organizations, their junctures and cleavages, distinctions, and tensions, and less a reference to internecine class struggles. Konadu, in distinction to Rucker, groups commoners and elite together as "pioneers" of Gold Coast worldviews in the Americas.

Konadu builds on his pioneers thesis in his 2018 *Akan Pioneers*, expanding and revising *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* (2010).¹⁰ He describes a composite Akan culture on the Gold Coast, which comprises the intangible or spiritual, the tangible, and values or ideations. Thus, for Konadu, all Gold Coasters were participants in the creation of a composite Akan culture, which some then carried with them into enslavement in the Americas. Konadu first engages the epistemological foundations of Akan culture, in order to understand both the ontological and contextual manifestation of Akan cultural ideations among Akans and non-Akans in the Gold Coast. In the book's second half, he examines maroonage, rebellions, revolts, oath-taking, and other cultural adaptations or transformations among Akans and Akan-influenced peoples in the Americas. The final chapter extends into the twentieth century, a rarity in recent studies of the African Atlantic, in which Konadu considers African American and Caribbean efforts to establish and maintain connections with Ghana and Akan culture in particular. Building off of Kea's oeuvre, Konadu shows how a "conjunction" of African and African diasporic histories was achieved, looking not only for straight genealogical and ethnic linkages between Africa and its diasporas but also examining the lives of diasporic Africans engaged with and performing Akan spiritual principles.

⁸Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1231–49.

⁹James H. Sweet, "Defying Social Death: The Multiple Configurations of African Slave Family in the Atlantic World," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2013): 257.

¹⁰Kwasi Konadu, *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Analytically, without negating the experience of the Middle Passage, Konadu is anchored in the Gold Coast and is concerned with how Gold Coast groups and individuals (and particularly the Akan) evolved culturally, the specific historical contexts of their evolution, and how they self-identified in spirituality, language, and culture. These are key to Konadu's approach to the activities of Akan/Gold Coasters in the Americas. This approach stands in contrast to that of Rucker, whose insistence on the centrality of social death foregrounds the distinctive experiences of the Middle Passage and enslavement as more important to the evolution of Gold Coast influenced cultures and identities in the Americas.

Hanserd's *Identity, Spirit, and Freedom* productively builds off of these preceding studies. What is distinct is how Hanserd pursues a specific concept, namely "philosophies of freedom" or "ideations of liberty" (1–2). For Hanserd, "freedom is relative" as "local traditions shaped perceptions of who was free and who was not" (1, 9). Hanserd examines freedom in stages. First, he observes the pursuit of freedom in specific historical events among the Adangbe, Akan, Gã, and Guan peoples of the Gold Coast. He then considers how Gold Coast cosmologies and articulations of freedom shaped Maroons, enslaved Blacks, and free Blacks. Finally, Hanserd offers a comparative examination of Gold Coast ideas of freedom and Enlightenment articulations of liberty. Hanserd uses oral accounts, myths and legends collected in the field, primary archival, and other secondary sources, to examine the "chronological and cultural parameters of a Gold Coast Diaspora" (1). Primarily centered in the eastern Gold Coast and Asante, the book focuses on Guan, Gã, and Akan societies and people.¹¹

Here we must note a fundamental distinction between Kea, Konadu, and Hanserd's approach to the Gold Coast Diaspora compared to Rucker. First, for the former, the social and cultural creations of the Gold Coast Diasporas in the Americas were vitally and inextricably linked to the Gold Coast societies where the enslaved Gold Coasters originated. Further, there is no evidence in Kea's work or the recent work of Konadu and Hanserd that recognizes the social death of Gold Coast personalities enslaved in the Americas. In my reading, their works reflect and articulate an amalgam of continuations, adaptations, and transculturation of Gold Coast philosophies and cultures in the Americas. Rucker has admittedly tried to avoid the drawbacks of essentialism and the cult of continuity. However, this has led him to adopt an approach to the Black Atlantic — with an emphasis on newness — that critically interrogates African participation in the cultural creations of the New World. Rucker's rightful interrogation of this African participation is reflected in his concession that his neo-African identities emerged from enslaved Gold Coaster's deployment of remembered histories, symbols, and iconographies from the Gold Coast. This effort is a laudable attempt to offer a dense and complex systematic structure to interpret or understand Gold Coast Diasporas in the Americas. However, there remains a contradiction: the Gold Coast cultures and histories were supposed to have "socially died," and the nature of their resurrection remains unclear given the lack of sociocultural inheritance. When Kea wrote about Gold Coasters' participation in the Amina rebellion, he did not need social death to argue or show the Gold Coast-derived actions of the Amina rebels, who believed that they would spiritually return to their Gold Coast lands when they died. Thus, Rucker does not need the concept of social death to make the vital point about new African identities in the Americas. The absence in the Americas of the same material and ecological conditions that spawned Gold Coast cultures was a historical reality. Therefore, the encumbrances of social death overly complicate Rucker's goal to show how Gold Coasters recreated or reconfigured Gold Coast cultural and philosophical practices in the Americas.

Further, we can resolve the debates and tension amongst these scholars on the Gold Coast by noting how new concepts and ideas from the vast field of African diasporic studies are utilized

¹¹Hanserd ought to be commended for the very intentional inclusion of the Guan peoples in examining what Kwaku Larbi Korang refers to as transethnic mutualities and interdependencies: *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa: Nation and African Modernity* (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2004), 94.

in the more specific study of the Gold Coast. Clear canonical delineation of the distinctions in recent Black Atlantic and African Diaspora scholarship is necessary. The literature on cultural regions, ethnic diasporas, and transatlantic ethnicities show that one could certainly write about a Diaspora of Fon speakers in the Atlantic world. However, one would require a different approach to a text focusing on a Bight of Benin Diaspora in the Americas. Thus, concerning Gold Coast or Ghana Studies, works concerning a Gã and Dangbe, Akan, or Guan-speaking Diaspora from the Gold Coast would be different in style and tone from a manuscript about the Gold Coast Diaspora. Hanserd is concerned with a Gold Coast Diaspora. Unlike Rucker, and more like Kea, Hanserd is concerned with how Gold Coast cosmologies, spirituality, and sociocultural practices traveled rather than how they died. He examines cultural and social biographies of royals and priests who were custodians of power, belief, and knowledge systems in the Gold Coast as a stepping stone to understanding the activities of others of similar creeds and hermeneutical leanings who were enslaved in the Americas. Hanserd's study focuses on the life story of one of these actors, the priest Okomfo Anokye (c. 1635–1720), at length. Okomfo Anokye rose from subalterity to prominence as the spiritual cofounder of the powerful Akan kingdom, Asante, which wrestled itself from the suzerainty of another Akan kingdom, Denkyira. His road to prominence included repelling an Akwamu army that sought to capture and enslave members of his natal Guan community, Awukugwua. Hanserd uses Okomfo Anokye's story as an example of freedom defined as liberation or "reject [ion] of hegemonic political systems of dominance" (9).

Hanserd utilizes these histories to consider how Afro-Atlantic peoples exhibited spiritualized mastery over iron, blood treaties, and oaths, as well as rebellions, in pursuit of freedom. Just as Kea initiates a discursive engagement with Western intellectual canons and Gold Coast knowledge systems, Hanserd brings Anokye, Gã, and other Gold Coast spiritual practitioners into dialogue with Hegel and Enlightenment scholars. The insertion of African oralities, knowledge systems, and notions of freedom reframe the Atlantic past. Thanks to Hanserd's methods, the epistemological foundations of the actions of enslaved Africans in their varied encounters with Europeans in the Americas become much more apparent.

Read collectively, Kea and this subsequent generation of historians offer a panoramic perspective of the Atlantic that illuminates the significance of the Gold Coast in Atlantic history. I will conclude with some observations. The first concerns the distinctive contributions Gold Coast Studies makes to the study of the Atlantic world. The four books in this review essay show that diverse peoples of the Gold Coast had a relatively homologous or similar worldview, even though the Gold Coast itself was a multiethnic, multilingual, and culturally heterogeneous geography. The Gold Coast, its history, and people can be fruitfully studied from multiple perspectives, whether a comparative, ethnic, or cultural-regional approach, or a combination of methods. A multifaceted approach may reveal a much larger impact of the Gold Coast on the Americas than previously estimated. Finally, researchers of the Gold Coast should also be conscious of the trend to privilege the cultural ideations of the more populous or culturally-dominant groups over others while examining Gold Coast cultural encounters. There remains a need for scholarship that provides a clearer picture of the influence of the region's autochthonous Guan groups in their encounters with the Adãnme, Gã, and Ewé peoples. Konadu has given us an optic of these cultural contacts or transculturation process via an Akan ideational lens. Hanserd does highlight the Guan through Okomfo Anokye. However, we remain in need of the historical process from several lenses — ethnic, cultural, political, and geographical. Albert Adu Boahen's attempt at offering us a transculturated vision of the Gold Coast in "The State and Cultures of the Lower Guinea Coast" needs some reviewing and expansion, and Kea's ideas on state formation and sea-town networks will be useful in such a revision.¹² All of the

¹²Albert Adu Boahen, "The State and Cultures of the Lower Guinea Coast," in *UNESCO General History of Africa V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Bethwell A. Ogot (London: Heineman, 1999), 399–433.

texts, to varying extents, carry a diasporic African vision, viewing African and African diasporic societies histories as inseparable.

This is perhaps Kea's most enduring legacy. Since the 1960s, he has been engaged in this vision of a Black Atlantic that centers Africa and conjoins Africa with the African Diaspora before the burgeoning and recent popularization of the field. He also belongs to the cohort of academic and professional Black activists and voyagers — including W. E. B. DuBois, Maya Angelou, Tom Feelings, Malcolm X, Kamau Braitwaite, George Lamming, and Walter Rodney — who returned to or visited Africa, specifically Ghana, at the height of the Civil Rights Struggle in the US and the fight for independence in Africa. Now an Emeritus Professor of African History, Kea should also be celebrated as a pioneer in Atlantic and Black Atlantic Studies. Konadu, Rucker, and Hanserd's recent publications demonstrate why this should be done.